Sustainable Utilisation of Non-Timber Forest Products Project Vietnam

Report of the Internal Review

by

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Contents

Acknowledgements

The review team would like to gratefully acknowledge the support of the project team, the staff of the NTFPRC, CRES, ECO ECO and IUCN Vietnam during the mission. We are particularly grateful to Dr Le Thanh Chien for his support and patience during the review. Our special thanks to Mrs Tran Thi Kim Ngan for interpretation services.

Abbreviations

CRES	Centre for Natural Resources and Environmental Studies
ECO ECO	Institute for Ecological Economy
FSIV	Forest Science Institute of Vietnam
IUCN	World Conservation Union
MARD	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development
MoSTE	Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment
NTFPRC	Non Timber Forest Products Research Centre
NGOs	Non governmental Organisations
NTFPs	Non Timber Forest Products
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal
RRA	Rapid Rural Appraisal
SNV	Netherlands Development Organisation

Executive Summary

The internal review of the Sustainable Utilisation of Non-Timber Forest Products Project was undertaken by William J Jackson, Nguyen Van San and Harry van der Linde. It was guided by the following objectives:

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Ø **Recommendation 17** The project should continue to closely monitor the gender equity issues of

Introduction and Background

This document summarises the findings of the internal review of the Sustainable Utilisation of Non-Timber Forest Products Project (hereafter called the project) undertaken by IUCN – The World Conservation Union, in association with the other project partners. The project began operation in the second half of 1998 and is currently approaching the mid way point. Details of the project's design and implementation strategy can be found in the Project Document, the Inception Report, the first Six Monthly Report and the report of the Technical Review and Assistance Mission.

The project focuses on the role of non-timber forest products (NTFPs) and biodiversity in relation to socio-economic development in Vietnam. The goal of the project is *to promote biodiversity conservation through the sustainable use of Non-timber Forest Products*. Its objectives include:

1. To strengthen the Non-Timber Forest Products Research Centre (NTFPRC) and make it the pre-eminent national centre for NTFP development and management;
2. To organise in each pilot site appropriate collaborative management systems, which will promote and maintain sustainable use of NTFPs;
3. To develop and implement an effective awareness raising campaign, specifically directed at NTFP users within the pilot sites;
4. To ensure that the management of the project is effective and efficient.

Note:- the project added the fourth goal after the project commenced.

The project has three features that are relatively innovative for Vietnam. First, the project is focusing both on biodiversity conservation and socio-economic development of local communities through the ecologically and economically sustainable use of NTFPs. Second, the project is being implemented through a partnership between a government agency and NGOs. Third, the project is using a learning approach that aims to integrate research with field-based action through selected pilot sites. These three innovative features present a considerable challenge to implementing the project, particularly as there is limited experience in implementing such a project in Vietnam. Nevertheless, an approach that links socio-economics and biodiversity, works with a range of partners and emphasises learning by doing would seem to be well suited to the current social, political and economic context of Vietnam.

The project document stresses that the project is not simply about finding technical solutions, but also about linking NTFP users with improved management practices and supportive institutions. Furthermore, the document emphasises that the 'whole context of NTFP use is continually evolving and changing so the

Results

The project has made remarkably good progress given the sort time that it has been operational and particularly given that the project is still within the 'start-up phase' identified in the project document. The detailed findings of this review are presented below.

Assumptions

The success of a project is often determined by the **assumptions** behind the project being clearly identified. Although several assumptions have been identified in the Project Document, the project would benefit from more clearly identifying and testing these underlying assumptions.

For example, CRES has identified a number of key questions that could be easily converted to assumptions, these include:

- Can the production of alternatives outside the forest contribute to forest conservation, or should the solution be sought in the sustainable harvesting of products inside the forest?
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The review team notes that objective One (strengthening the NTFPRC) has received considerably more attention since the technical review and assistance mission in May 1999. The Centre has developed a strategic plan that identifies the niche of the Centre. Further efforts by the project to strengthen the Centre

should be fostered by the project. At the M&E workshop conducted as part of the present review, the value of action-research in a situation of great complexity and changing circumstances (as typified by the project field sites) was highlighted.

The review team noted that the preliminary market channel analysis for Ba Be has been completed and the report for Ke Go was being prepared while the mission was underway. The reports of the team identify and prioritise NTFPs that are most suited to marketing. The results of the market channel analysis and of the RRA/PRA will be used to guide the project's intervention strategies in the field sites.

- **Recommendation 4** The project should assist the NTFP RC to assess the potential for using the marketing analysis and development method (and possibly also the RRA/PRA methods as adapted by the project for NTFPs) to raise the profile of the Centre as an institution capable of developing, applying and supporting others in the use of innovative methods for NTFP use and management.

- **Recommendation 5** Developing the strategic plan for the NTFPRC's should continue to be given high priority. The government has identified the role of the Centre. The project and NGO members should support the Centre to build its capacity and link it with lessons from the field sites

Activities in the Field Sites

In the first year of the project, activities in the field sites focused on using an 'extension model' to promote agroforestry by transferring technology and funds to selected farmers. The technical review and assistance mission (Ingles, 1999) suggests that the approach adopted by the NGO partners is based on the following two assumptions:

1. The rural development approach which has been promoted previously by ECO ECO is completely compatible with the goal and objectives of the NTFP Project;
2. ECO ECO understands already the best NTFP based forest conservation activities to be done at each site.

The project has encouraged both NGO partners to broaden their approach to design activities based on an analysis of needs and opportunities using participatory techniques (RRA/PRA assessments and market analysis and development). Training of field teams and Centre staff in RRA has been undertaken and initial RRAs and market analyses have been completed. The project intends to continue to build on this approach, and it notes the success of the approach will be determined by the rate of adoption of the techniques by the NGO partners.

Whilst the RRA approach has been useful to refocus the project field work, the project still needs to more broadly consider the role of NTFPs in terms of major land use and land tenure issues within the pilot sites (including State Forest Enterprises lands, the protected areas and non-agricultural communal lands). In other words, a more systemic approach is needed to lift the project beyond the current emphasis on agroforestry within the buffer zone. The long term sustainability of rural livelihood strategies needs to be considered in a broader context than is currently the focus of the project. The links between various land use, land tenure types and livelihood strategies have not been investigated adequately and the strategies adopted by the project to date may not lead to sustainable use of natural resources. To begin with, the project could develop a clearer understanding of the land use zoning in and around the protected areas, and the constraints and opportunities that these zones provide. Such information would be used to guide the design of future field activities.

In the medium to long term, the project should seek to strengthen its relationships with the State Forest Enterprises and the Protected Area Authorities with a view to examining opportunities for jointly working

with local farmers to address core conservation problems and to develop more sustainable and equitable arrangements for the use and management of areas under the control of these two authorities.

The review team wishes to emphasise that it is not suggesting a major refocus of the project to SFE lands

activities that are most likely to achieve the results of the project. In any case, activities that are being undertaken on behalf of the project should avoid unnecessarily putting farmers at risk or cutting off future options.

Relevance of Project Approach and strategy

The complexities of the project's partnership approach that involves both a government agency and NGOs reflects a broader process of change in Vietnam. There is a risk of considerable overlap of processes and functions as both NGOs and government agencies find new roles in the transition to market economy. There is a need for all partners to work more closely together. The project can help the partners to find solutions through developing the NTFPRC's strategic plan, conflict management, developing joint working plans and prioritising activities that have direct impact on conservation.

The NTFPRC and the project are encouraged to document and share lessons learned about these and other issues.

Approach to pilot studies

ECO ECO

The participatory action research approach adopted by the project – learn – reflect – design – test and learn, is appropriate. However, many of the initial field activities undertaken under the umbrella of the project began without a clear understanding of the issues and a top-down and technical approach to solutions. A village head we met in Ba Be told us that the project should first talk to the farmers about their problems, needs and interests and then look at the physical possibilities in the area (soil, transport, climate etc) and only then recommend potential solutions. It is also important that the field teams look beyond technical solutions to problems and begin to consider cultural and social factors that may either promote or retard progress of the project.

CRES

The review team observes that the criteria for selection of pilot villages and households in Ke Go appears to focus on relatively wealthy people that have large tracts of farmland. It was unclear to the review team whether the selected farmers were indeed dependent to any significant degree on the protected area for NTFPs. Accordingly, it is difficult to recognise a direct connection between improving the production of NTFPs on the selected farms and the conservation of biodiversity. Moreover, the mechanisms for transferring lessons learned from the selected farmers to other (potentially poorer) farmers and other communes are not obvious. While there is no urgency for this latter issue, the project does, nevertheless, need to keep it in mind.

In the longer term, project should test whether the model is appropriate to all concerned farming households and is having a positive impact on biodiversity and socio-economic conditions of the target communities. The review team notes that the direct and strong role of the village, commune and district in selecting the pilot households is likely to continue to restrict the ability of the project to include the full range of interest groups in the pilot work. Accordingly, the NGO project teams will need to ensure that they continue to build on the good levels of trust that they enjoy in the field areas and use this to slowly convince the local government officials of the need to include the full range of interest groups.

General

The project should note that for the participatory action research approach to succeed there is a need for flexibility and adaptability and to accept that mistakes will be made. The role of the Steering Committee is

very important to make sure that lessons are being learned and communicated and that the project partners are adapting to changing knowledge and conditions. This is not to suggest that constant changes and alterations to plans and agreements should be necessary, but more to suggest that a degree of flexibility is required.

- **Recommendation 10** The project should continue to monitor and evaluate the relevance of the approach and activities at the field sites.

The review team was pleased to note that the project field teams operated by CRES and ECO ECO have made progress towards addressing the concerns highlighted in the technical review and assistance mission report. Among other things, Ingles recommended:

1.1 Immediate strengthening and capacity building of field teams

2.1 Recruitment of additional field team members needs to ensure a gender balance

3.1 Familiarisation of field teams with the project's goal and objectives and training in:

3.1. the use of Rapid Rural Appraisal tools for analysing household livelihoods and NTFP resource-use;

3.2. gender awareness and analysis;

3.3. the use of market analysis and development (MA&D) methods for selecting products and undertaking feasibility studies;

3.4. reporting, monitoring and evaluation.

- **Recommendation 11** To continue the process of strengthening the capacity of the field teams, the project should consider:
  - Providing better access to transportation. At present both sites have one motorcycle each, this is inadequate for efficient use of the field team's time.
  - Improving computer facilities. While new facilities have recently been provided to the Ke Go team, the computing facilities at Ba Be are not working and require a substantial investment of ECO ECO.
  - Providing basic field equipment. The field staff may be more effective and efficient if they were provided with some basic field equipment such as small backpacks and adequate footwear.
  - Reconsider needs for field office space. While the current field office space is adequate in both sites, there is a need to look to the future and the potential for expanding the field teams and using the office space for meetings and workshops. The current offices will be inadequate for such purposes.
  - Improving staff skills. The skills of field staff vary considerably between sites and between individuals. The staff would greatly benefit from training in project management, computer operation, English language, community forestry and rural development issues and an increased awareness about NTFPs.
  - Providing short-term support on specific technical issues – The field teams have benefited greatly from their exposure to the RRA/PRA training and activities. They may also benefit from other technical inputs, for example, technical advice on the suitability of particular species for long term sustainability of ecosystem services (eg water regulation and supply, soil formation, erosion control, nutrient cycling, food production and raw materials) once these needs have been identified.

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The project has yet to implement the main part of its work on gender. The delay in the project's gender work is quite understandable and should be of no great concern to the project. However, it is very important for the project to move ahead on the issue of gender in the near future. Key issues that need to be addresses include the gender balance of the staff, improving the awareness and capacity of Centre and field staff about gender and reviewing field practices.

- **Recommendation 16** Gender work should be given high priority including the recruitment of short term technical support of a gender specialist, the development of a gender action plan and training of staff.

- **Recommendation 17** The project should continue to closely monitor the gender equity issues of the activities in the field. In addition the project should improve the gender balance in the NTFP RC project staff if the opportunity arises.

Management and administration

The review team did not have a great deal of time to review management procedures but a cursory review revealed no major problems. The project has made substantial progress towards developing a good planning, monitoring evaluation and reporting system. The system is still being set up and tested but it appears to have the right elements and is not overly bureaucratic. The project is encouraged to continue to refine the system and ~~to~~ the partners are strongly encouraged to support this process.

The procedures for financial disbursement seem to be effective. There have been some delays with financial reporting by ECO ECO, which should be addressed by the NGO as soon as possible. IUCN should continue to ensure that financial processes run smoothly and are supportive of the project management.

Linkages to other organisations

The duration of the review and the limited time spent in Hanoi did not allow the review team to meet with organisations other than those working directly with the project. Nevertheless, it was apparent that there are a wide range of current and planned activities in Vietnam and surrounding countries that are of direct relevance to the project. The project has made very good links with similar project and government activity in Lao PDR and with the Regional Community Forestry Training Centre in Bangkok Thailand. Other international institutions that may be relevant to the project include the Centre for International Forestry Research, the IUCN specialist groups, the Kunming Institute of Botany Department of Ethnobotany and FAO.

The review notes that national and provincial policies on NTFPs, land use and land tenure have direct relevance to the project. For example, the lack of national policies on NTFPs was cited by several informants as being a key concern. The project will potentially generate a number of lessons that may of great interest to national and provincial level policy makers. The NTFPRC could begin to put in place mechanisms for linking the project field activities with policy and policy formulation. Whilst this is no doubt a delicate area for the project to engage in, it is, nevertheless, crucial that field practice be informed by policy and lessons learned from field work be clearly and concisely informed to key policy makers. At present there appears to be a need to increase awareness about government policies at the local and field levels .

- **Recommendation 18** The project should support the NTFPRC to put in place mechanisms for linking lessons learned from project field activities with policy makers and other agencies interested in the issues that the project is working on.

Budget

Based on the present rate of expenditure, the project will be under-expended at the end of the three years. This issue requires further discussion between the NTFPRC, IUCN and the donor. Options include allocating surplus funds to extra field activities and a short 'no additional cost' extension of the project if this is agreeable to the donor and Vietnamese government.

Monitoring & evaluation systems

The recommendations of the first internal review have been followed up in an appropriate way. While not all issues raised in the technical review and assistance mission have been fully addressed, the review team is satisfied that the project has made substantial progress and indications are that they will continue to work on the key recommendations.

The project is still developing its monitoring and evaluation system. Many of the elements of a good system are in place but there is a need to develop clearer indicators for evaluating the projects assumptions and objectives. Furthermore, if the project does develop a set of 'results' for its work plan, it will need to develop indicators for this level also. It is still too early in the life of the project to assess impact so the project is concentrating on collecting base line data. The review team provided the project with some suggestions on M&E and base line data collection as shown in Appendix Two.

- **Recommendation 19** The review team suggests that the NTFPRC in collaboration with the project more clearly establishes the role and responsibilities of the Centre's Monitoring team. The review team commends the project's focus on learning, it recommends the M&E staff at the NFPRC continue their monitoring role and at the same time be given a wider mandate to a focus on supporting the field teams to more effectively learn and apply the learning to their actions. Conversely the responsibility for monitoring and evaluation among the field teams should be clarified and strengthened.

- **Recommendation 20** The project should continue to develop and adapt M&E and reporting approaches that promote the learning of lessons.

The project has already developed a range of such approaches and it now needs to consolidate some of these while at the same time ensuring that there is a balance between M&E, reporting and field activities. The role of the annual project learning cycle, described in Appendix Two, and the importance of evaluating assumptions and performance indicators are key to successful project implementation.

Conclusions

The project has made very good progress in the first year and a half of operation. While there have been some problems with getting the project up and running, these problems are not unusual for new projects. The project team is working towards resolving the key problems highlighted in the previous internal review and all project partners are encouraged by the current review to continue to support this process. The review team notes that the goal and objectives are quite ambitious for three years and a longer term view may be needed to learn key lessons and translate these into broader policy and practice. Accordingly, the forthcoming external review team may like to consider extension of the project beyond the current phase.

Appendix One List of people met and or interviewed

1. PROJECT SECRETARIAT

Name	Position
• Dr. Le Thanh Chien	• National Project Director, Director NTFPRC
• Mr. Guido Broekhoven	• IUCN Senior Technical Advisor

2. NTFP RC PROJECT OFFICE

Name	Position
• Dr. Dao Viet Phu	• Project Coordinator, Vice Director NTFPRC
• Dr. Le Thi Phi	• Marketing Officer
• Mr. Nguyen Van Duong	• Marketing Officer
• Mr. Vu Dinh Quang	• Monitoring Officer
• Mr. An Van Bay	• Monitoring Officer

3. ECO ECO -

Ba Be National Park	
• Mr. Bui Van Dinh	• Director of NP Management Board

4. CRES - Ke Go

4.a Pilot site supervision and support, Hanoi office

Name	Position
• Prof. Dr. Le Trong Cuc	• Director CRES
• Prof. Dr. Vo Quy	• Project Advisor for CRES
• Mr. Vo Thanh Giang	• Field Project Coordinator

4.b Field project staff Ke Go

Name	Position
• Mr. Tran Van Sinh	• Head of Field staff
• Ms. Tran Thi Kim Lien	• Assistant to Head of Field staff
• Mr. Ha Huy Hue	• Field staff
• Mr. Dang Viet Vi	• Field staff

4.c Local Administration

Name	Position
Cam Xuyen District	
• Mr. Nguyen Ngoc Bao	• Chairman, PC Cam Xuyen District, Chairman, local advisory committee
• Nguyen Van Hai	• District officer
Cam Son Commune	
• Nguyen Thanh Ha	• Chairman of People Council
• Luong Huu Chinh	• Vice chairman of People Council
• Le Ngoc Cu	• Chairman of People Committee
• Nguyen Huu Luan	• Vice chairman of People Committee
• Nguyen Dinh Quang	• Head of village 2
• Tran Dinh Duy	• Commune field staff
• Tran Van Cuong	• Farmer: Project household model at village 1
Cam My Commune	
• Mr. Pham Quang Hoa	• Chairman of People Committee
• Mr. Duong Dinh Son	• Vice chairman of People Committee
• Mr. Nguyen Huu Binh	• Commune officer
• Mr. Dang Viet Vi	• Commune field staff
• Mr. Nguyen Van Hoa	• Head of village 1
• Mr. Nguyen Hung	• Vice head of village 1
• Mr. Pham Van Binh	• Head of village 4
• Mr. Pham The Nhuan	• Farmer: Project household model-village 4

5 IUCN VIETNAM PROGRAMME

Name	Position
• Mr. Nguyen Minh Thong	• Country Representative
• Mrs Nguyen Thi Yen	• Project Support Officer

6 NETHERLANDS EMBASSY

Name	Position
• Mr. Wijnand van IJssel	• First secretary, Forests and Biodiversity
• Mr. Tran Ngoc Huong	• Assistant to the First Secretary

an earlier internal review, which was carried out by an IUCN team in April 1999. The present review will also help the project team to prepare for the external review, which will take place in the year 2000.

2. General terms of reference

2.1 Objectives of the review

The objectives of the review are:

- To assist the project team and the project implementing partners in assessing the achievements, lessons learned and strengths and weaknesses of the project to date;
- To assist the project team in formulating possible adjustments in response to this assessment.

2.2 Approach of the review

It is important that the project team and the implementing partners learn as much as possible from the review, both in terms of process (How does one carry out an assessment?) and in terms of content (What does this particular assessment learn us?). Therefore, the review team will work in close collaboration with the project team. Frequent meetings and a number of workshop-like sessions and mini-seminars, together with informal interactions will form part of the activities of the mission in order to create fruitful interactions between the mission team members and the members of the project team.

3. Specific terms of reference

In principle, the mission members will review the entire project, "from project document to present activities and progress." It will focus on the general direction, approach and priorities of the project. Specific areas of attention will include:

- *Goal and objectives*
    - Are the goal and objectives still relevant, complete and achievable?
- *Approach and strategy*
    - Are the approaches and strategies selected by the project appropriate?
    - Are the approaches and strategies well articulated and understood by all relevant parties?
- *Activities*
    - Do activities reflect the project goal, objectives, approaches and strategies?
    - Are the activities carried out in an appropriate way?
    - Are the priorities right?
- *Organisation and structure*
    - Is the project structure appropriate and effective? (including Steering Committee, Advisory
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      including Steering Committee, Advisory

    - Are the management and administrative procedures appropriate and effective?
    - Are the project planning procedures appropriate and effective?
    - Are the procedures for financial administration, including disbursement procedures, appropriate and effective?
    - Is the management of personnel (including roles and tasks of the different project officers) appropriate and effective?
- *Linkages to other organisations*
    - Are the project's interactions with other organisations, institutions, projects, etc. meaningful and sufficient?
- *Budget*
    - Does the budget reflect the present priorities in activities? Are changes in the budget required?
- *Monitoring & evaluation systems*
    - Have the recommendations of the first internal review been followed up in an appropriate way?
    - Are the monitoring and evaluation systems of the project in place and effective?

In consultation with the Project Secretariat, the review team may wish to address additional issues.

4. Organisation and activities

4. 1 Mission team

The mission will comprise:

- The Head of IUCN's Forest Conservation Programme, who will be the Team Leader
- A Vietnamese consultant with knowledge of the institutional context in the Vietnamese forestry sector.

4.2 Activities

The mission will carry out the following activities:

- To review of relevant documents
- To conduct meetings and discussions with:
- CRES
- ECO ECO
- IUCN:
    - Vietnam Programme
    - Regional Programme
- NTFP RC
- FSIV (Chairman of Steering Committee)

- Netherlands Embassy
- Possible other resource persons or institutions, which may help the team to better the project context.
- To visit the pilot sites in Ke Go and Ba Be
- To facilitate and contribute to mini-seminars, workshops and other meetings
- To write a report with its findings

4.3 Mode of operations

The team will be working under the guidance of the Project Secretariat (National Project Director and Senior Technical Advisor), to which the final report will be submitted. Adjustments to the Terms of Reference of the mission will be discussed and agreed with the Project Secretariat before the changes become effective.

4.4 Programme

Appendix Three Extracts from the technical review and assistance mission for the NTFP Project

Andrew Ingles -- Hanoi and Ba Be, Vietnam 28 April - 5 May 1999

2.3.3 Discussion and suggestions

The inception report by the Senior Technical Adviser includes recommendations that are relevant to the problems and challenges described above. All of these are endorsed and some are re-emphasised or re-worded below. Some additional suggestions are also provided.

Project management

The project should urgently assist the NTFPRC to develop an overall strategic plan for its future development. This could involve undertaking institutional assessment and stakeholder analysis and facilitating a process for jointly analysing and debating a mission statement, objectives and roles for the centre in supporting the NTFP sector in Vietnam.

Within the context of a strategic plan for the NTFPRC, it may be appropriate for the centre to assemble, manage and make accessible a comprehensive information base on NTFPs in Vietnam that includes ecological, technical, social and economic aspects and uses modern information technology.

Field teams at pilot sites will need a lot of support in the social aspects of NTFP development. In a strategic planning exercise, the NTFPRC should consider if and how it might strengthen its own capacity for supporting NTFP development by adding social science and training sections to its organisational structure.

IUCN's Senior Technical Advisor should become more familiar with the field sites and gain/ maintain his own field experience and knowledge of the forests and villages.

The following collaborative mechanisms could be adopted by the project partners to enhance communication and joint planning, monitoring and evaluation:

Jointly develop specific workplans for each NGO in line with project objectives and approaches.

Continue to develop and refine M&E systems for each pilot site based on workplans.

Undertake regular joint training and reflection exercises.

Adopt the need for compulsory field trip reports and their dissemination that focus on findings and objectives of field trips, and based on team debriefing and reflection exercises following field trips.

Undertake regular field visits by project secretariat.

Conduct monthly or bi-monthly meetings of project and field teams.

Establish a management information system involving simple village and forest profiles to establish baseline information at each pilot site.

It is important that the operational mechanisms and effectiveness of collaboration between all project partners are developed, monitored and analysed so that the experience with this model is captured and can be disseminated to

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Disbursement of funds to CRES and ECO ECO depend on the joint approval of both the Project Director and the Senior Technical Advisor. Following approval, the Senior Technical Advisor should be able to sign for withdrawals. At present he cannot. The STA should either become a signatory to the IUCN account in Hanoebor bi

Assumption 1. The rural development approach which has been promoted previously by ECO ECO is completely compatible

Firewood is a main product from forests. There are severe fuel wood shortages and people even collect dry leaves and pine needles. The project should consider a special study and response to the firewood situation in the KeGo area.

The cooperative based on medicinal plants in CamMy commune could be a good starting point for examining user groups of medicinal plants and the opportunities for undertaking participatory market research and domestication trials.

Field reports should be written by field teams immediately after each activity (at least two per month) and sent to all project partners without delay. This would assist the project to become a learning institution and an effective agent of change.

Concluding remarks

The big challenges are to:

define a role for the NTFPRC;

orient the work of the NGOs towards more direct NTFP-based forest conservation strategies; and,

enhance the capacities of partners.

The project needs to address these challenges immediately if it is to make better progress in the next six months.

Another IUCN review mission should be organised within six months time to follow-up on how the project secretariat and partners have responded to these challenges and the specific suggestions made in this report.

Andrew W. Ingles

Head, Regional Forest & Monitoring and Evaluation Programmes

S&SE Asia

Appendix Four Monitoring and evaluation for the Sustainable Utilisation of Non-

Most conservation and development projects are designed with at least some use of the **logical framework**

Action research for projects

In many conservation and development projects it is difficult to determine the correct assumptions, goals, purposes, results and actions during the design phase because the situation that the project is dealing with is surrounded by considerable uncertainty. The logframe approach can often create serious implementation problems for conservation and development projects that hope to learn and adapt as the y proceed because the nature of the problem and the solutions are pre-determined at the beginning of the project. In many cases a more adaptive approach that allows the project to learn and adjust as it develops is a more suitable approach. In such cases it is important to strike a balance between maintaining a focus and being adaptive. The role of the project advisory group or committee is critical in this situation, but the capacity of the committee to make sound decisions on project direction is influenced by the quality of the M&E system.

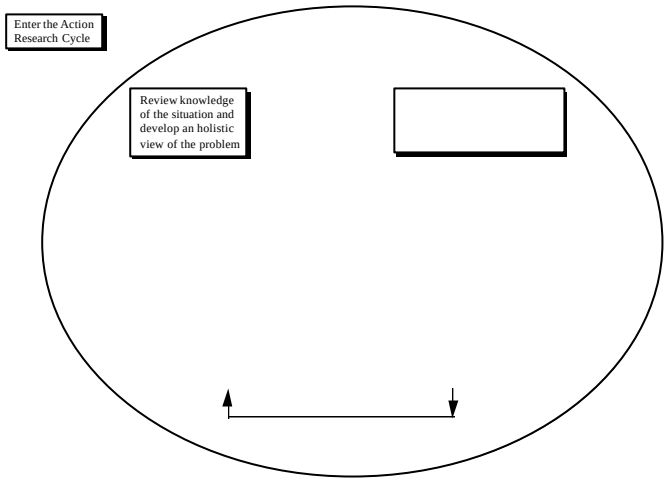
Fisher and Jackson (1998) suggest that **action research** provides a learning based approach to dealing with complex situations where people don't really know where to start or what to do next. Action research[1] is a term that is used to describe an approach that involves the deliberate interlinking of learning (or research) and action in an iterative process or 'cycle'- research informs action, reflection on the outcomes of action directs further research. A cycle that continues until a result is obtained or the cycle is abandoned. For conservation and development projects, such as the Sustainable Utilisation of Non-Timber Forest Products Project, an action research approach would involve research to increase understanding on the part of the researcher or the client, or both and action to bring about change in the target communities and organisations and r organisation or program (see Dick 1993: 2).

As the project moves through the action research cycle, hypotheses and theories can be modified, models and methods tested, adjusted and or abandoned and planned interventions can be altered as new knowledge emerges. Examples of the cyclical process of action research is shown in Figure 4 and 5.

Action research gains its rigour from the cyclical process of observation, reflection, planning and action and by allowing the researcher to constantly challenge assumptions as the process is undertaken. Each loop of the cycle represents a refinement in knowledge and a progression in action. If the process is not rigorous, the lack of appropriate action following intervention should indicate that the process is being incorrectly followed.

Figure 4 The action research cycle (Checkland 1992)

[1] Action research and participatory action research are similar if not identical approaches.


Enter the Action Research Cycle
Review knowledge of the situation and develop an holistic view of the problem

outcomes of a project at the design stage. However, it is usually possible to identify broad areas that will reflect on the extent to which the project or programme has achieved its broad purpose. A case study approach is often most suited to developing a baseline for a collaborative management project.

Case studies

A case study approach involves selecting a set of pilot villages from within the project area, undertaking a baseline study for each pilot village and the surrounding natural resources and using the same sites as the basis for ongoing monitoring. Case studies at the village level are best undertaken in collaboration with local people. This calls for the use of participatory approaches. Such approaches are referred to by a variety of names including Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA), Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) or more simply as Participatory Approaches

The following example of a format for a case study approach was adapted from Fisher at al., (1996). A village profile should be prepared for each pilot (case study) site. Because the approach is meant to be participatory it is essential that the villagers in the selected village agree to the selection. The case study comprises a written document and maps, it is not a computer data base. Information is largely collected through participatory techniques. The indicators can be a mix of local village-level indicators and indicators that the project considers are relevant to their work. The village profile should be completed by the field team.

The village profile format follows a list of topic headings. It is not a questionnaire, but rather a checklist of the minimum information required. Field teams should ask any additional information that they feel is relevant. They should include opinions about issues as well as factual information. The contents of the village profile should be discussed by the field team during preparation. The village profile should be kept in a box file within which field reports on village visits, maps and other information, such as photographs and village plans are also kept.

Relevant information should be added to the profile as appropriate; for example, information from maps, local government records, records held government agencies, national records (for example census data), records and local knowledge of NGOs and reports from surveys and studies.

A sufficient number of case studies is necessary to cover the range of (socio-economic and biophysical) conditions that occur within the area, and to provide opportunities for comparisons between case studies.

An Example of a Village Profile (from Fisher at al., 1996)

Author and date of completion of village profile

Village name and location (administrative address): *Photographs, maps, diagrams.*

General description *Dates and reasons for establishing the village: access, political boundaries, distances to towns and other villages, land forms and elevation, village maps (participatory maps and social maps), land use maps.*

Infrastructure and development projects *Existing infrastructure and services (roads, toilets, irrigation etc), villagers' expressed needs. Other development projects or prior assistance.*

Demography *Population; number of households; names and resident ethnic groups; languages spoken; breakdown of population by gender and age. Any indications of the population trends and significant in or out migration (by gender and age).*

Health: *Hygiene, sanitation practices, status of nutrition, common illnesses (e.g. malaria). Access to health services.*

Education *Access to education, distance to school, grades available, number of students (female/,male), number of teachers. Any informal education activities or adult literacy classes.*

Village Organisation *Village organisation and leadership. The process of decision making for village rules, regulation and activities.*

Economic activities:

Livestock *Types and numbers of livestock, comments on management, marketing and consumption.*

Agriculture *Types of crops, types and areas under cultivation, crop deficit or surpluses for sale.*

Fisheries *Location and type of area fished. Species caught by numbers. Sales and local consumption of fish, fresh water and marine products.*

Forests/Woodlands *Location , type and area of woodlands and forests. Products obtained, type and volume. Management practices. Ranking of usage and management by various stakeholders. Use and sale of products.*

Wage Labour *Inside village and outside village*

Labour *Availability of labour, major labour requirements, division of labour by gender and age, seasonal calendar, labour exchange relationships*

Wealth ranking *Results of wealth ranking exercises, including criteria used.*

Marketing systems, traders and exchange relationships *Who are the traders who obtain products (particularly products from natural resources) from the villagers?*

Land, tree, forest and fisheries tenure *What arrangements exist to regulate access to agricultural lands, fisheries and forest products.*

Reasons for selecting the village *An explicit statement of the reasons for selecting the village*

Target groups *Specify particular target groups*

Threats to socio-economic success *Are there any potential factors identified on the field visits which are likely to lead to undesirable impacts on the villagers or sub-groups of villagers in terms of well-being, equity and exposure to risk?*

Developing a monitoring and evaluation strategy

An effective monitoring and evaluation strategy involves specifying

3. ***Choose indicators and performance criteria***. Indicators are measurable and representative aspects of an issue. Performance criteria are standards of achievement for each indicator.

4. ***Measure and map the indicators***. Indicator results are recorded in their original measurements, given scores on the basis of the performance criteria, and mapped.

5. ***Combine the indicators***. Indicator scores are combined up the hierarchy: indicators into sub-issue indices; sub-issue indices into issue indices; issue indices into dimension indices; and dimension indices into subsystem indices (separate indices for people and the ecosystem).

6. ***Map the indices and review results***. Indices are mapped to give a visual reading of results and to reveal the big picture and patterns of performance. The review links the assessment to action by analyzing the patterns and the data behind them to suggest what actions are needed and where. The review also provides the diagnosis for the design of programs and projects.

The SAM approach can show:

- Condition and trend of people.
- Condition and trend of the ecosystem.
- Overall wellbeing.
- Progress toward sustainable development.
- Condition and trend of major components (health, economy, land, species diversity, etc.).
- Issues where performance is weakest (or strongest).
- Key relationships, such as benefits from resource sectors per unit of ecosystem stress.
- Priority information gaps.

Developing Indicators

Developing suitable indicators is often one of the most difficult tasks for project partners. There is often a tendency to include large numbers of indicators on the assumption that more information is better than less information. Nevertheless, without a good set of indicators, it is impossible to evaluate the project. Generally, a set of indicators is needed for each result (output) and activity of the project. Indicators should be 'SMART':

Specific	An indicator must be capable of picking up changes over the time period that we are interested in
Measurable	An indicator must be able to be measured in either quantitative or qualitative terms
Achievable	An indicator should be achievable in terms of finances, equipment, skills and time available
Realistic	An indicator should reflect what we are trying to measure in an accurate way
Timebound	An indicator should be able to provide information in a timely manner

Prescott-Allen (1997) differentiates between performance indicators and descriptive indicators. Performance indicators measure the achievement of objectives. For example, the % annual change in forest area; life expectancy at birth. Descriptive indicators measure phenomena that may influence objectives but which the objectives are not expected to change. For example, national monthly rainfall index; ethnic composition of population. He provides the following details about indicators:

- Performance indicators measure results and responses.
- Results are more convincing indicators than responses.
- The more direct the indicator the more reliable it will be.
- Conditions or states are the most direct measures of results.
- Pressures are strong substitutes for conditions/states.
- Responses are weak substitutes for conditions/states.
- He continues, a high quality performance indicator:
- Relates to an explicit objective.
- Accurately and unambiguously reflects the degree to which the objective is met.
- Is measurable.
- Depends on data that are either readily available or obtainable at reasonable cost.
- Is analytically sound and uses standardized measurement wherever possible to permit comparison.
- Shows trends over time and is responsive to changes in conditions and sensitive to differences between places and groups of people.

Prescott-Allen R. (1997) The Barometer of Sustainability. IUCN Switzerland.

Annex 1 Gender analysis

Indicators should show who is benefiting from the project and allow for evaluation of the intended and unintended impacts of the project on various social groups and stakeholders. This requires the collection of information separately for men and women, for different ethnic groupings, for different age groupings (children, adults, elderly) and for different economic (rich, poor) and social groupings (agriculturalists, pastoralists, businesses).

One participatory tool that is of particular importance to monitoring and evaluation of collaborative management is gender analysis. Gender refers to a dynamic, historically and culturally determined social construct created by men and women to define their relationships with each other and with their environment. FAO (1995) describe gender analysis as a practical tool for examining community diversity and the implications of this diversity for development. It focuses on the activities and resources of both women and men, clarifying where they differ and where they complement each other. Because women and men can use different natural resources or the same resources in different ways their interests and needs can be quite different.

Gender is only one of many important social characteristics - along with ethnicity, race, caste, class, age and occupation. These characteristics should be included in gender analysis. It is important to remember however, that gender cuts across all the others. Whatever their class or ethnicity, women and men have different roles, responsibilities, resources, constraints and opportunities - because of gender. Therefore, information is not precise enough for development projects unless it is disaggregated by gender. This includes information about women and men's ecosystem management activities.

Gender analysis contributes to positive social impacts of forestry development

Projects which are deemed successful in environmental terms may have components which result in undesired social changes or trends. Everyone recognises that deforestation reduces people's access to forest foods, building materials, fuel wood, medicinal plants and wildlife, or that over-fishing results in depleted fish resources. This creates hardships for everyone, but since women are often responsible for more subsistence-related activities than are men, women's burdens may be substantially increased if their access to natural resources is jeopardised. This means that their ability to contribute to other production activities may be diminished.

Projects which aim to address both environmental and social needs require gender-disaggregated information to determine who does what - women or men or both - and therefore who benefits or loses when development intervenes.

Gender analysis contributes to project success

A second reason for examining gender roles in each specific context is to avoid project failure. Projects which aim to improve the livelihood of local people must take into account gender-based divisions of labour, gender-based access to resources and control over those resources. Otherwise, decisions may be based on mistaken assumptions. Gender-disaggregated information reveals the relationship between people and the environment, how women use and manage natural resources, how men use and manage natural resources, and the importance of these activities for subsistence and income. Without such information, ecosystem management projects may not be appropriately designed and may result in negative impacts or failure to reach objectives.

Gender-

Steps in a Gender Analysis Framework

The gender analysis framework suggested by FAO is a participatory process of analysing the different roles of women and men and how this effects planning and implementation of development pro