Capacity Building for Sustainable Tourism Initiatives Project

Final Report
(For the period October 1999 – March 2000)

Annalisa Koeman

Hanoi 3rd April 2000

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**Acronyms**

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<th>Description</th>
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<td>ACTI</td>
<td>Australian Conservation Training Institute</td>
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<tr>
<td>BfW</td>
<td>Brot fur die Welt (Break for the World)</td>
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<td>CRES</td>
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<td>DFID</td>
<td>Department for International Development (UK)</td>
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<td>Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific</td>
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<td>ICCO</td>
<td>Interchurch Organisation for Development Cooperation</td>
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<td>ITDR</td>
<td>Institute for Tourism Development Research</td>
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<td>MARD</td>
<td>Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development</td>
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<td>NEA</td>
<td>National Environment Agency</td>
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<td>SEMA</td>
<td>Strengthening the Environmental Management Authority Project</td>
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<td>SNV</td>
<td>Netherlands Development Organisation (Vietnam)</td>
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CAPACITY BUILDING FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM INITIATIVES PROJECT

Project Goal

To identify and raise awareness of the negative socio-economic, cultural and ecological impacts of tourism, and contribute to the development of sustainable community-based models of tourism that can generate sustainable income for some of the country’s poorest and least advantaged communities, while at the same time helping to maintain Vietnam’s cultural and biological diversity.

Project Objectives

1. Networking and Information Exchange
2. Research and Analysis
3. Education and Training
4. Support for a Pilot Project
5. Advocacy (and awareness raising)

FOREWORD

This final report covers the period of extension of the Capacity Building for Sustainable Tourism Initiatives Project - from October 1999 to the end of March 2000. Rather than repeating the content of Mid-term (October 1997-October 1998) and Interim Reports (October 1998 - October 1999), it covers specific activities in the final six months.

For those only recently introduced to the Project - commonly called the Sustainable Tourism Project or STP - we recommend you read the Midterm and Interim Reports to gain an understanding of progress made with activities over the two and a half years.

It is with mixed emotions that I write this final report, as I leave with certain tasks incomplete despite the best of intentions and efforts, while other activities are 100% complete and have been acknowledged as a success and a valuable contribution to the advancement of sustainable tourism in Vietnam.

From the beginning STP has been a challenge. We started with an 'open slate' and a number of objectives to guide us, but little specifics about project activities. The project team was charged with identifying priorities and key issues for Vietnam with respect to sustainable tourism, and then designing project activities to address these priorities. As the first project implemented in Vietnam dedicated solely to sustainable tourism, we were charting the first steps and hence such an open and flexible approach was necessary. This flexibility allowed us to be creative.
Given the stage of development and focus of Vietnam's tourism industry; the economic transition underway; the rapid changes in society; the increasing severity of threats to the environment, and the greater accessibility to remote areas of the country (amongst other factors), we were presented with no shortage of ideas and areas requiring concerted action. It is natural then that we attempted a programme of activities that was highly ambitious. With a permanent team of two and a part time assistant, we strove to make an impact and reach a variety of stakeholders.

Unfortunately, but inevitably, we were not able to transform many of our ideas into concrete activities (eg: a retreat for high level decision makers to discuss sustainable tourism in Vietnam; training manual for sustainable tourism for provincial and district level authorities; posters with responsible travel information for national parks; documentary on tourism and environment). Some of our concepts and proposals were relatively well developed, but we were unsuccessful in securing funding. I hope that these will remain 'actively on the shelf' for IUCN Vietnam to follow up with in the future. For example: "Tourism and Environment in Vietnam: a story of the goose and the golden egg", our idea for a documentary film and educational video for domestic and international screening, and the production of responsible travel booklets - "Treading Softly: A Guide to Ecofriendly Travel in Vietnam" (English) and "Travel One Day, Perfection the Next" (Vietnamese).

Overall, we were successful in implementing a broad range of activities, at local, sectoral, national and international levels, and we can be proud of our results. Some of our ideas were a bit too early for Vietnam, but I hope we have planted a few seeds that will germinate in the coming years.

We have two concrete outputs for follow up activities - "Support to Sustainable Tourism In Sa Pa District, Lao Cai Province", which we jointly developed with SNV Vietnam - and "Sustainable Tourism Project II: Technical Support to Sustainable Tourism". These will be followed up by SNV and IUCN Vietnam.

In seeing substantive sustainable tourism initiatives implemented in Vietnam as a result of STP, a specific area of concern is the absence of sustainable tourism on the list of Government of Vietnam priorities for ODA. In hindsight perhaps STP should have spent more time advocating more strongly for a change in the priority accorded sustainable tourism. Certainly we could have benefited from finding a prominent 'champion' or 'patron' for the cause of sustainable tourism.

I hope that our counterparts, colleagues, partners, collaborators, donors and contacts consider our project a worthwhile initiative and will support IUCN Vietnam and our partner, the Vietnam National Administration of Tourism, in a second more focused, larger scale (and again ambitious) sustainable tourism project. After all our dedication it would be tragic to see the seeds we have sown lie dormant.

On behalf of ITDR and IUCN I would like to thank all the STP supporters, both those who have provided additional funding and those who have provided moral support. Finally, thank you to The Ford Foundation, ICCO and the Oxfam family in Hanoi for their vision in funding STP. I am glad to have been involved in this groundbreaking project.

Annalisa Koeman

Project Advisor

April 1st 2000

1. NETWORKING AND INFORMATION EXCHANGE

Activities: achievements, current status and issues

a. Establishment of Sustainable Tourism Resource Centre (STRC)

- **Achievement/Current Status:** Since November 1999 a librarian has been cataloguing all materials in the IUCN Vietnam library, including the materials of the STP (STRC). The complete list of STRC materials will be available at a later date. The STRC will be advertised on the MekongInfo Website.

b. Translation, publication and dissemination
Achievement: Successfully completed translation, publication and first round dissemination of The Ecotourism Society's Ecotourism: A guide for planners and managers Volume II. The SEMA project (Strengthening of the Environmental Management Authority) of the National Environment Agency funded the publication of 800 copies. As follow up to the Ecotourism Training Course for National Park and Nature Reserves (see section 3), STP also forwarded to all 12 National Parks in Vietnam the original English language version of Tourism, Ecotourism and Protected Areas (an IUCN publication) along with a copy of the Vietnamese text-only version. This was a departing gift from the STP.

Current status: SEMA will distribute copies of Ecotourism:....Volume II to the 61 DOSTE and 10 faculties of Environment throughout the country. STP has distributed over 50 to various universities, protected areas and tour operators, and IUCN Vietnam will continue this task. Copies will be provided to visitors to the Sustainable Tourism Resource Centre.

Following the Ecotourism Training Course for National Park and Nature Reserves, STP approached the Netherlands Embassy seeking financial assistance with the publication of Tourism, Ecotourism and Protected Areas, which STP had translated in 1998. The Embassy agreed to allocate any remaining funds from the Training Course to the publication. The IUCN Vietnam Communications Officer and Accountant will be responsible for following this activity up, including obtaining three quotations from publishers, and approaching IUCN Publication Services Unit to obtain the printing plates containing all illustrations from the original book.

Problems: Arrangements for printing took longer than anticipated, and the books were only made available in the second last week of March 2000. There was some confusion about the signing of the agreement with The Ecotourism Society, though this was finally resolved in March 2000.

c. Posting of outputs from STP on Mekong Info Website

Achievement/Current Status: In March the STP discussed with a consultant on the GTZ "Social Forestry Support Programme" (SFSP) the placement of outputs from the STP on the MekongInfo Website which is operated by the SFSP. It was felt that this would be useful in order to more widely disseminate STP activities and outputs and hence improve and maintain its 'reach'. A list of documents produced and/or translated by STP was compiled and forwarded to SFSP for consideration. As the SFSP is focused on natural resource management, only those documents pertinent to this subject will be selected. IUCN Vietnam will follow up with SFSP after the completion of the STP. The list of documents is attached in Annex I.

d. Strategic Linkages

Achievement: STP was instrumental in facilitating linkages between Vietnamese and international organisations, particularly through the successful implementation of the Ecotourism Training Course for National Park and Nature Reserves, Charles Sturt University, the Australian Conservation Training Institute (and Zoological Parks Board) and Cooperative Research Centre for Sustainable Tourism were all involved in the training. It is hoped that links between these institutions and the Forest Protection Department, and also ITDR, will be maintained.

e. Participation in International and National Fora (also considered part of Advocacy and Awareness Raising).

Achievements: Four fora were attended by STP staff between October 1999 and March 2000:

a. The World Ecotourism Conference and Field Seminars: The Right Approach, held in Sabah, Malaysia, October 17-23 (see section 5);

b. Seminar on Environmental Management for Marine and Coastal Tourism Activities with ISO14001, Halong Bay, November 22, 1999;

c. Tenth Meeting for the Working Group on the Greater Mekong Subregion Tourism Sector, and Fourth Mekong Tourism Forum, Vientiane, Lao PDR, 28-30 November 1999, and

d. Second Regional Forum for Southeast Asia of the IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas, Pakse, Lao PDR, December 6-11 1999.

The World Ecotourism Conference and Field Seminars (WEC) was attended by Dr Pham Trung Luong (ITDR) and Mr Pham Trong Hien (Forestry Expert, International Relations, MARD), along with the Project Advisor and Project Director. The Conference included key note presentations from those in the forefront of ecotourism planning and development from around the globe, and particularly from the region. It involved opportunities for questions to the panel of speakers, and informal fora/discussion sessions. The Vietnamese delegation participated in the three-day follow-on Eco-lodge Field Seminars, which saw them visit several locations in Eastern Sabah.
The Project Advisor wrote a paper and made a key-note presentation for the Halong Bay seminar entitled: “Impacts of Tourism on Coastal Zone Environments: International Initiatives tackling the problems”.

The Project Advisor was invited to participate in the Working Group of the GMS Tourism Sector by the Director of the Transport, Communications, Tourism and Infrastructure Development Division of ESCAP. IUCN, along with UNESCO, were the only organisations present who had a specific focus on and concern with ‘sustainable tourism’. The Advisor made several contributions to the Working Group discussions. The Advisor represented STP and the IUCN Regional Aquatic Ecosystem Programme at this meeting and the concurrent Mekong Tourism Forum.

The Advisor and Director prepared a paper in collaboration with Le Van Lanh, General Secretary of the Vietnam Sub Association of National Parks and Protected Areas, on “The Economics of Protected Areas and the Role of Ecotourism in their Management”. The Project Director presented a shortened version of this paper at WCPA in Pakse. The paper will be part of the compilation of proceedings.

- **Problems:** The participant nominated by the International Relations Department of MARD to attend WEC was not considered by STP as an optimal choice. Unfortunately other persons had been invited (PARC project, FPD, Head of International Relations) but none were available due to other commitments.

  - The preparation of a paper for WCPA was time consuming, especially for the STP Advisor. The envisaged collaboration in the writing and presenting of the paper was only partially achieved. Unfortunately the Project Director’s presentation skills (to international fora) were weak and feedback on the presentation was poor.

**f. Publications, Referrals etc**

The Project Advisor’s submission to the Mountain Forum Email Conference on Community-Based Mountain Tourism: Practices for Linking Conservation with Enterprise (April 13-May 18 1998) was included in a synthesis of published proceedings. It is also used as case study material by the Overseas Development Institute in production of a monograph on the impacts of tourism at the local level in a variety of locations throughout Asia. The Project Advisor also collaborated to write a chapter on Sa Pa for a University of British Columbia publication:


**Assessment of Benefits/Outcomes**

The STRC is a valuable resource that needs to be managed and supervised, and advertised more widely. The opportunity to advertise the STRC on Mekong Info, and also post some documents and outputs from the STP on the Web, should not be missed.

The books chosen by STP for translation and publication are valuable resources. Their distribution and benefit/impact can continue (or begin for Tourism, Ecotourism and Protected Areas) beyond the end of the project.

STP has tried to share information collected, reports and other outputs with as many individuals and organisations as possible. In some cases it appears the international recipients and contacts have been more responsive and interested than the Vietnamese, as indicated by their acknowledgement of receipt and follow up communications. In some instances STP has received direct thanks and feedback from recipients in Vietnam, which has been gratifying. This feedback has come from National Parks, tour operators, forestry planning institutions, tourism and environment faculties and environmental projects.

Unfortunately the links with some Ministries have been weak, despite the sharing of information from the STP. It is hoped that this in no way reflects the level of importance placed on the Project and its activities.

Overall STP has had a significant impact in the area of Networking and Information Exchange and has attained a significant profile. Both the content of information shared and the action of sharing itself, has been appreciated by STP’s counterparts, ITDR and VNAT.

It is hoped that IUCN Vietnam will maintain and further develop some of the contacts established by STP, and
that the contacts and links STP has generated for its partners (ITDR, VNAT and FPD in particular) will be followed up and maintained.

The WEC was an excellent event, both for the variety and content of presentations, and the experience and knowledge of presenters and participants (and hence valuable networking opportunities). The field seminars offered Vietnamese participants a chance to see Sabah’s version of ecotourism and helped them to critically assess the pros and cons of each development.

In inviting MARD to participate in the WEC, STP was hoping to advocate/raise awareness within the Ministry of the importance of ecotourism and in ‘doing it right’, and provide an opportunity to meet valuable ecotourism and protected area contacts from the region and further afield. It is unfortunate that MARD’s participation in the WEC may have done little to achieve this goal, largely due to the position and role of the person chosen.

2. RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS

Activities: achievements, current status and issues

a. Sa Pa Research

- **Current status:** In mid 1999 the Human Geography Research Centre had approached STP requesting permission to publish the research and disseminate more widely amongst researchers and academics. In December the HGRC and IUCN Vietnam met to discuss the text of the proposed publication, as well as copyright, acknowledgements and other issues. The authors requested permission to make some editorial changes to the text, in order to facilitate approval for publication. STP and IUCN responded to each proposed edit. In January the HGRC informed IUCN Vietnam that the research would not be published as there were too many formalities required.

b. Research on Vietnam’s Tour Operators

- **Current Status:** In December 1999 the STP organised for some editing of the English version of the research report “Level of Awareness of Sustainable Tourism and the Impacts of Tourism: Vietnamese Tour Operators” written by ITDR. The editing was undertaken by a local international contact who agreed to do the work for a nominal sum only, given the very limited budget remaining for this activity. The edited English report was copied and disseminated to a select few organisations and stakeholders in early 2000.
- **Problems:** The dissemination of the report has been limited (only 25 institutions/individuals). The STP over-expended on this activity and there were no remaining funds for large-scale reproduction and dissemination, both in English and Vietnamese, to different stakeholders. There is a need to share the research to a greater audience to promote the spirit of sustainable tourism. The version is available electronically and will hopefully be placed on the MekongInfo Website in both languages.

c. Advice, Information, Contacts

- **Achievement/Current Status:** STP continued over the extension period to provide assistance/information and advice to international and national students, researchers, academics, protected area staff, tour operators and INGOs.
- The Project Advisor was asked by Dr Trish Nicholson from the UK to provide feedback on a chapter in her forthcoming book looking at tourism at the grassroots. The chapter, ‘Cultural Tourism and Culture Change and Continuity’ included the case of Sa Pa.

Assessment of Benefits/Outcomes

It is unfortunate that the Sa Pa research was not published and more widely disseminated, as the Human Geography Research Centre had proposed. The research document may, however, be chosen for placement on MekongInfo. The research is a good base line study for Sa Pa.

The research on Tour Operators did not meet expectations in terms of the quality of information and analysis, however it does contain some useful information, and, as the first such study in Vietnam, it also provides a good baseline for future research. The research should be more widely disseminated amongst stakeholders. It is not certain the extent to which the conduct of the research interviews and the distribution of material on
sustainable tourism has worked to raise awareness and knowledge and stimulated operators to look at their operations in a different light.

Overall the research topics chosen by STP was relevant and the outcomes useful as baseline research, though the quality of research and analysis and report writing was poor.

3. EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Activities: achievements, current status and issues


- **Achievement:** Successfully organised and convened the one month Training Course in Hanoi (Thu Do Hotel), in partnership with the Forest Protection Department of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. Participants numbered 25 and came primarily from Protected Areas throughout Vietnam. After receiving agreed from the Netherlands Embassy to extend the grant period to March 2000, STP confirmed the participation of the international training institution. The STP was responsible for much of the logistical work for the international side. The Project Director shouldered most responsibility during the Project Advisor’s absence in January and early February, though the Project Advisor was in email and phone contact and did meet with representatives of two of the involved international institutions in Australia in January.

- The training was conducted by two lecturers from Charles Sturt University, representing the Cooperative Research Centre for Sustainable Tourism, and two assistant lecturers/recorders from the Australian Conservation Training Institute (of the NSW Zoological Parks Board). The course comprised of various activities that attempted to present and transfer, in an interactive a format as possible, state of the art knowledge on ecotourism. The course involved three field trips (Tam Dao, Cat Ba/Halong and Ba Be), several guest lectures (including one presentation by the STP Advisor), formal lectures, class exercises and presentations, and use of visual aids such as slides and videos (see Annex II for Course Outline). The STP Project Director acted as training assistant for the entire month of the course.

- The course initiated an informal ecotourism network between participants.

- A certificate presentation ceremony was held on the 17th March, at which the Director of FPD, Dr Nguyen Ba Thu, and the representative from the Netherlands Embassy, Mr Tran Ngoc Huong, presented all with certificates. The certificates were signed by Dr Neil Lipscombe from Charles Sturt University and Dr Jack Giles from the Australian Conservation Training Institute and were printed on a combined letterhead of CSU and ACTI, with CRC, FPD and IUCN logos also present.

- STP followed up the training by sending each participant a copy of *Ecotourism: A Guide for Planners and Managers Volume II*, and, for all twelve National Parks, a copy of *Tourism, Ecotourism and Protected Areas*. STP made a request to the Netherlands Embassy for assistance with publishing the latter in Vietnamese, and was informed that the remaining funds from the course could be put towards this purpose (see section 1).

- **Problems:** A few problems were experienced due to division of responsibilities between FPD and STP and some logistical activities were not sufficiently supervised. Some problems were experienced with the limited capacity of the Project Director in the role of training assistant, which created some unnecessary incidents.

**Assessment of Benefits/Outcomes**

The Ecotourism Training Course was one of STP's major successes, and was considered so by all parties involved. Overall the course was well organised and proceeded smoothly. The STP finished on a very positive note.

All participants were very pleased and stimulated by the training in terms of the knowledge gained, the friends and network established, and the training methods used. All completed the course feeling very enthusiastic.

As with all training, further improvement and follow up is needed to consolidate and further participants’ skills, however the benefits and outcomes of the intensive course will be long lasting. It is very fortunate that the Netherlands Embassy is interested in continuing to provide assistance in the area of ecotourism in Protected Areas.

It is hoped that IUCN Vietnam can take a pro-active role in establishing a formal ecotourism network for
Protected Areas and also/later on, other stakeholders. This could be considered as one activity of a second phase of the project, or a separate but complimentary activity undertaken by IUCN Vietnam in collaboration with a Vietnamese organisation.

4. SUPPORT FOR A PILOT PROJECT

Activities: achievements, current status and issues

a. “Support to Sustainable Tourism in Sa Pa District, Lao Cai Province” Project Proposal

- **Achievements/Current Status**: Sa Pa People's Council, People's Committee and Lao Cai Trade and Tourism Department have all commented on the proposal, and their comments have been incorporated. Some comments from prospective donors were also considered in editing the proposal. The budget has been revised downwards and is in the final stage of review.

- The proposal was submitted to a number of donors in December, along with the draft proposal for Sustainable Tourism Project II (STPII) (see section 6). Most replied that their priorities were elsewhere. The Ford Foundation indicated its interest in providing part funding for either Sa Pa or the continuation of the STP (STPII). In early 2000, the proposal was submitted to Bread for the World (BfW) and the first round of the newly launched "Tourism Challenge Fund" of the Department for International Development (DFID) in the UK. BfW will consider the proposal and reply whether it is interested in committing to the project (co-financing) by the end of April 2000. If so, the proposal will go to the BfW Board in mid 2000. If the proposal is successful in the first round of the Tourism Challenge Fund, a six page concept will have to be prepared for submission.

- STP and SNV agreed to pursue two avenues for the proposal: a) to continue to try to sell Sa Pa as part of, and along with, the larger national STPII proposal, and b) to pursue independent funding for a stand alone project, though attempting to make sure that national-local-national linkages are incorporated.

- SNV committed to providing the CTA for the project (and funding the position). A first round internal recruitment was initiated by SNV for the CTA position, but no applicants were received. A second round recruitment process will be held externally.

**Problems**: The attempts to find interested donors have largely been unsuccessful; it took some time for Sa Pa and Lao Cai to respond with their comments; the progress in finalising a proposal for STPII has also been slow and hence it is uncertain whether Sa Pa will be part of a larger national project.

Assessment of Benefits/Outcomes

The benefits and outcomes of the Support Project are only anticipated or potential. The STP and SNV are convinced, after working in Sa Pa for two years, that they are achievable.

The broad benefits include: assisting local stakeholders in Sa Pa to achieve an environmentally, culturally and socio-economically sustainable form of tourism through participation of all actors or ‘stakeholders’; achieving an equitable distribution of benefits from tourism, and building capacity of various stakeholders to plan, manage and implement sustainable tourism. The District Section of Culture, Information, Sport and Tourism, and its auxiliary body, the Centre for Culture, Information, Sport and Tourism will benefit directly from being project owners and implementers and for being the target of specific capacity building activities.

The Anticipated Outcomes of the Project are:

1. Responsible government agencies (Section, Centre) have the capacity to coordinate, plan and manage tourism activities in Sa Pa district;
2. A mechanism is built within the district through which other actors active in tourism (representatives of ethnic groups, tour operators, hoteliers, mass organizations and relevant NGOs and women) are participating in tourism decision making;
3. The Section and Centre are implementing a clear policy on a charge/fee system to be imposed on tourists visiting the area;
4. The Section and Centre are implementing a clear policy on how the generated revenues from tourists are to be used for, on the one hand, general improvements in tourism information, facilities, environmental management systems, protection of sites/nature reserve etc, and on the other hand contributions to rural (village) development. This policy will provide for the active participation of all stakeholders in the decision making process, including women;
5. A Tourism Information Centre is established, providing general services to tourists, specific information on culture, environment and responsible tourism and undertaking training activities for a variety of
stakeholders;
6. A clear policy is developed and implemented for the promotion and facilitation of rural trekking, including development of trails, staying overnight in villages, etc. Roles and benefits for local guides as well as villagers are clearly defined.

STP is confident that its SNV colleagues are fully committed to seeing the implementation of the project, and will work actively, in collaboration with IUCN Vietnam, to keep the project alive and find funding.

5. ADVOCACY (AND AWARENESS RAISING)

Activities: achievements, current status and issues

a. Proceedings for Workshop on Development of a National Ecotourism Strategy for Vietnam

- **Achievement/Current Status:** Successfully published the proceedings for *National Workshop for Development of a National Ecotourism Strategy for Vietnam*, September 7-9. This was organised by ITDR. Only 300 copies were printed, and STP received 37 for distribution. ITDR distributed to a variety of stakeholders, but no record is available on the recipients. No significant follow up actions to the workshop have been initiated by ITDR or VNAT, or the STP (though the STP continues to maintain contact with the international resource persons and facilitators).

b. Sabah World Ecotourism Conference and Field Seminars

- **Achievement:** STP invited Dr Pham Trung Luong (ITDR) and Mr Pham Trong Hien (Forestry Expert, International Relations, MARD) to attend, along with the Project Advisor and Project Director, the *World Ecotourism Conference and Field Seminars* in Sabah, Malaysia 17-23 October. The conference included key-note presentations from those in the forefront of ecotourism planning and development from around the globe, as well as informal fora/discussion sessions. STP also supported the Vietnamese participants to attend a three-day Ecolodge Field Seminar at the end of the conference.

  - The reports of STP, ITDR and MARD on participation in WEC are found in Annex IV.

c. Responsible Travel Booklets ("Treading Softly: A Guide to Ecofriendly Travel in Vietnam", and "Travel One Day, Perfection the Next")

- **Achievement/Current Status:** Very little progress was made in sourcing funding for the production of the booklets. The Canada Fund, though fully supportive of the idea, declined to become involved, saying the booklets were too expensive per unit.

  - The latest Lonely Planet guidebook for Vietnam includes a substantial amount of text from the booklet, and refers to the STP at IUCN Vietnam. This followed a couple of visits by the author of the guidebook to the STP office in which feedback on the draft version of the section on responsible travel in Vietnam was requested from the Project Advisor. Lonely Planet is providing STP with a copy of the book.

  - Following the *World Ecotourism Conference* in Sabah, the STP commenced communications with the regional representative for Tourism Training Canada (TTC), based in Malaysia. Discussions focused on the possibility of combining forces to produce the booklets as part of a one-day series of workshops entitled "Ecohost", a programme which TTC has been running successfully in Malaysia. The "Ecohost" Programme targets 'frontliners' or tourism operators and their staff and aims to introduce responsible/eco-friendly tourism practices.

  - The representative from TTC will be visiting Hanoi in the first week of April, and the Project Advisor will assist with arranging meetings with IUCN, ITDR, Canadian Embassy and others to discuss the possibility of collaboration.

d. Review of Tourism Development Master Plan for Vietnam

- **Achievement/Current Status:** The revised proposal for an update of the Tourism Development Master Plan for Vietnam, prepared by Scott Cunliffe and renamed "Master Plan for Sustainable Tourism Development", was approved by VNAT, UNDP and WTO. The revised proposal includes many of the concerns and issues raised by IUCN STP in its review of the original proposal. The date of commencement of the WTO mission to produce the Master Plan has yet to be confirmed. It was hoped that the finalisation of the STP II Project Document (see section 6) would occur at the time the WTO team was in Hanoi.
e. Community Based Ecotourism Concept

- **Achievements/Current Status:** There has been no follow up with the Mai Chau Women’s Union. The concept paper was put to another use in February, when the STP Project Director improved the concept paper and presented it as his project presentation during the Ecotourism Training Course. It was appreciated by many of the participants at the Course, particularly those from Protected Areas where local people live within the boundaries. The National Parks of Ba Be, Tram Chim and Tam Dao took the concept to use as the basis for their own concepts, which were subsequently sent to GEF for consideration.

**Assessment of Benefits/Outcomes**

Advocacy and awareness raising has been an active area for STP. Advocacy and awareness raising has in fact been the intention of many activities that fall under different project objectives such as networking and information exchange (e.g.: participation in national and international fora, see section 1).

The NES workshop was a key success of the STP, however its true success is still to be tested - whether it will influence government and instigate the development of a National Ecotourism Strategy for Vietnam. Though this was the intention of the NES Workshop, to date there is no word of progress towards this goal. It is hoped that ITDR and VNAT, who expressed their intention to pursue this with the government, will receive support from and work closely with the participants, who also expressed their commitment to assisting with the process of developing an NES.

IUCN Vietnam and IUCN International could be pro-active in assisting with NES development. Indeed, this activity is already included in the proposed second phase of STP (see section 6).

Unfortunately STP was only able to send out a limited number of copies of the proceedings to potential donors, counterparts and collaborators.

The World Ecotourism Conference and Field Seminars were interesting and valuable for all. STP considered participation a very good investment, particularly for the opportunity it provided the Vietnamese participants to establish contacts in the region and further afield. The Field Seminars involved a lot of travel, but provided a glimpse of some key ecotourism and nature based tourism developments in Sabah. The group discussions led by the seminar leaders encouraged the Vietnamese to critically analyse each development against ecotourism criteria.

STP has not met with much success is trying to publish and launch the Responsible Travel Booklets, though it considers this a very valuable output that will target the largest stakeholder group, the tourist. In fact, the benefits are nation wide, for tourists, tour operators, guides, ethnic minority communities, natural areas and the environment, the industry as a whole. Greater commitment to and assistance from the tourism authorities could help overcome the current donor barrier. Potential success lies in collaboration with Tourism Training Canada. This is an opportunity that IUCN Vietnam should not miss.

STP and IUCN in general gained some profile with UNDP in its consultations and reviews of the original proposal for a revision of the Tourism Master Plan. The links between the Environment Unit of UNDP Hanoi and IUCN Vietnam should be maintained with respect to sustainable tourism issues, as well as the WTO Master Plan Mission, as the latter has considerable implications for the form and components of STP II.

Unfortunately time constraints did not allow the Project Director to follow up his initiative with the Mai Chau Women’s Union for presentation to GEF. It is not known whether the Women’s Union has re-submitted the proposal. The concept did assist some National Parks to prepare their own submission to GEF, and it will be interesting to see if any are successful in their applications for community based ecotourism.

6. PROJECT EXTENSION

Achievements, Current Status and Issues

a. "Sustainable Tourism Project Phase II (Technical Assistance for Sustainable Tourism)"
• **Achievements:** Since October 1999 the proposal has been revised and information added, and a draft budget outline started. The proposal, along with the Support to Sustainable Tourism in Sa Pa, was sent to a number of donors. No firm expressions of interest were received, though the Netherlands Embassy expressed some interest in a national level project that would focus on ecotourism in protected areas, and The Ford Foundation was supportive of the direction the STPII document was taking. The Environment Unit at UNDP was also supportive of the proposed project and its objectives.

• In late 1999 the Project Advisor recommended that an international consultant be contracted to work with the STP team and a representative of VNAT to finalise the project document, and that this should, ideally, take place when the WTO team was in Vietnam. The Ford Foundation expressed its commitment to assisting with such an activity, as did SNV, and suggested that a concept be developed for this activity and submitted by VNAT.

• The STP had to work hard to allay VNAT’s concerns with the apparent overlap between STPII and the WTO mission to produce a Master Plan for Sustainable Tourism Development. The UNDP Environment Unit was supportive of STPII and agreed with IUCN Vietnam that the proposal four year project would be a valuable, complimentary follow up project to the revision of the Master Plan (6 months). UNDP and IUCN Vietnam thus met jointly with VNAT to explain the complimentary nature of the proposals and that every attempt would be made to ensure no duplication. VNAT agreed with the recommendation to submit a request to The Ford Foundation for an international expert.

• On a number of occasions STP met with VNAT and ITDR representatives to confirm their commitment to the proposal and a second phase of STP. In early 2000, the IUCN Vietnam Country Representative communicated with VNAT to try to speed up the process of developing a concept for The Ford Foundation. In the last days of March, the Programme Officer of The Ford Foundation met with the Vice Director to confirm VNAT’s commitment to a STPII, and to encourage VNAT to submit a request to Ford as soon as possible.

• **Current status:** The concept is with the International Relations Department of VNAT to submit to The Ford Foundation.

• **Problems:** Delays in, and lack of, communication between members of VNAT. Very slow and at times lack of response from VNAT, which required constant follow up by STP. It is unclear whether this was related to: inefficiencies and work loads (eg: implementation of the State Action Plan for Tourism); internal management issues; a perception that the STP was coming to an end, or misunderstandings about STPII and its relationship to the proposed revised Tourism Master Plan and the submission to The Ford Foundation.

### Assessment of Benefits/Outcomes

The benefits for Vietnam of a focused, four year follow up project to the STP, working directly with and within the Vietnam National Administration of Tourism, are significant. This is especially so given the current situation of Vietnam tourism and the issues and choices and challenges facing the tourism authorities. Thus, the implementation of a second phase should take place as soon as possible in order to benefit from the momentum generated by STP and to assist authorities to take the correct path to sustainability. Any long delays will make it more difficult to maintain donor interest and link the outputs, contacts, networks, activities, drive of the STP with a second phase. It will also miss an opportune time for IUCN and its colleagues to be involved in making a significant contribution to a sustainable tourism industry in Vietnam.

The STPII aims to establish national-local-national level linkages through the implementation of a project with the central authorities, while initiating three ‘satellite’ pilot projects at the local level which involves working from the grassroots up. The STPII will thus attempt to tackle sustainable tourism from both ends, and foster two way communication flows. It is vital that practical pilots or models be developed to show by example the possibilities for achieving sustainable tourism at the local level.

There is still uncertainty about VNAT’s dedication to STPII, for despite the verbal confirmation of its desire for a second phase, very little effort is being made to facilitate progress towards this goal. After almost two years it is disappointing for STP to feel insecure about its partner. Such insecurity has fostered the feeling within STP that its activities are low on the list of priorities for VNAT, and hence that its impact has been minimal.

The submission to The Ford Foundation is now the responsibility of VNAT and IUCN Vietnam.

### 7. Conclusion

#### a. Progress made in achieving project goals

Over the last six months of the project, the STP continued to work hard, fully dedicated to achieving the project
goals and finalising project activities within each of the objectives. Though some slowdown occurred at the very beginning of the year in generating outputs and tying up loose ends, the number of activities achieved in the extension period was significant.

Many of the activities of STP have fall under several categories, for example participation in international and national fora lies in both networking and information exchange and advocacy and awareness raising. In implementing one activity, STP has achieved more than one project objective.

The successful completion of the Ecotourism Training Course for National Parks and Nature Reserves, and the positive feedback from participants, the Forest Protection Department and donors, was a fitting conclusion to the activities of the STP.

The participation in various international fora at the end of 1999 contributed significantly to the objectives of awareness raising, advocacy and networking and information exchange. Where at all possible, STP has tried to share important contacts with its Vietnamese partners, and foster connections. STP was correct in choosing to assist its partners to attend the WEC, as this forum provided a wonderful opportunity for ITDR and MARD to network.

The STP has achieved an admirable number and quality of outputs. It did not achieve all on its ambitious list, but its successes are notable for the extra hours and dedication of its Project Advisor, and the moral and financial support of colleagues and donors such as The Ford Foundation, the Netherlands Embassy, Sida, SDC, UNDP Environment Unit, SNV, ESCAP and others.

b. Constraints

Some drop off in productivity and slow down in finalisation of specific tasks was experienced during the absence of the Project Advisor in January/February 2000, however despite the best efforts and determination of the STP Advisor, progress remained slow in some areas.

The STP suffered from a lack of high level official support and interest. This became more obvious during the last six months of the project. It is a weakness of STP that it did not do more to approach and lobby high level officials, however it did attempt to garner support for its activities through meetings and sending outputs from its project to key officials at VNAT, MPI, MOSTE and MARD. It was hindered a little by the age and gender status of its Project Advisor.

Though the project was approved by the Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment, MOSTE showed little interest in the project throughout implementation. Further, the head of the project advisory committee was not able to attend either of the two meetings held in 1999, signifying the low priority paid to this project. It is disappointing that sustainable tourism is not yet a major issue within MOSTE.

Similarly, the status of the project within its counterpart organisation, VNAT, was at times unclear. Explicit support for, or acknowledgement of the value of the project was never made by the Chairperson. Nor was the STP able to meet with the Chairperson.

A high profile 'champion' for the cause of sustainable tourism in Vietnam is needed!

c. The Future

There is so much to do for the promotion and achievement of sustainable tourism in Vietnam. STP has simply been the first step, the project to open the door for more concerted action. It is hoped that in the near future the Government of Vietnam will recognise the need to achieve sustainability in this industry and the repercussions of not striving for such a goal, and that donors will be ready and waiting to assist.

The STP has produced one complete proposal for Sa Pa, and one draft proposal for STPII. These are its major outputs with the most promise for continued action for sustainable tourism.

STP has begun a number of other activities or developed a number of other concepts which it believes have considerable potential for future implementation, preferably by IUCN Vietnam in collaboration with other organisations. For example, the concept for a documentary on tourism and environment in Vietnam and the responsible travel booklets and associated workshops for tour operators and guides.

STP has successfully completed key activities that were intended to stimulate and initiate a process or follow
up actions. Specifically, the NES Workshop was intended to initiate the development of a National Ecotourism Strategy for Vietnam, while the Ecotourism Training Course for National Park and Protected Area Staff was hoped to be followed by development of an ecotourism training manual for Protected Areas and others.

It is recommended that IUCN Vietnam re-iterate its interest in contributing and supporting the process of development of a NES that incorporates broad stakeholder participation, and to commit to assisting and being involved with follow up activities to the Ecotourism Training Course. The international institutions and individuals involved in both activities are supportive and ready to be involved in follow up activities. In terms of the Ecotourism Training Course, the international training institutions are keen to be involved in the production of an ecotourism training manual and have already begun to develop a proposal for this activity, to submit to the Australian Government for funding.

1. MekongInfo is an interactive Web-based system for sharing information and knowledge related to participatory natural resource management in Cambodia, Laos, Thailand and Vietnam. It aims to serve as a portal or electronic gateway to participatory natural resource management in the Lower Mekong Basin. In addition to providing a virtual library that includes more than 2,600 documents, case studies and other resource materials related to NRM in the region, MekongInfo offers a range of information services for sector organizations. These include a hosting service for Web pages, a notice board to announce events and news, a gallery to “surface” new resource materials, a means to hold electronic discussions and forums, and enable events to be documented online.