

FINAL REPORT

**UNDP MID-TERM EVALUATION
CON DAO COASTAL AND MARINE CONSERVATION
AND SUSTAINABLE USE PROJECT**

NOVEMBER 2008

PREPARED FOR UNDP VIETNAM

By

JO BREESE

**SENIOR ASSOCIATE – TOURISM RESOURCE CONSULTANTS
INTERNATIONAL CONSULTANT**

ASSISTED ON MISSION BY

DO PHU HAI

NATIONAL CONSULTANT



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Con Dao Coastal and Marine Conservation and Sustainable Use Project is a medium-sized Global Environment Facility (GEF) project designed to contribute to the conservation of globally significant coastal and marine biodiversity of Con Dao National Park (CDNP) through:

- strengthening local capacity for marine and coastal conservation
- improving the integration of conservation and environmental management into development planning
- establishing a sustainable financing mechanism for biodiversity conservation
- linking local efforts to national strategies and policy development¹.

This project is an ambitious and pioneering project integrating marine conservation and development. It is being implemented by the Government of Vietnam (GOV) in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

This report is the outcome of the mid-term evaluation of this project. It is structured to meet the requirements of UNDP and is intended to provide a forward looking perspective on the project at this point in its implementation. The evaluation team tried to achieve a balance in their findings and recommending constructive actions to support the project to reach its goals, and provide pointers for the final evaluation.

The evaluation is independent and reflects the findings of the team. The findings were presented to the key stakeholders at the conclusion of the mission. There were no substantive alterations made to the findings at the meeting and there was general agreement with the independent recommendations.

This mid-term evaluation concludes that this marine conservation biodiversity project although challenging, complex and some activities delayed, is showing promising signs of delivering its goals. Some immediate actions are required to ensure effective protection of the marine resources and ensure the investment to date is embedded into the CDNP and its community. In turn this may enable the success of this project to be institutionalised into the legal framework of Vietnam.

Marine conservation in Vietnam is in its infancy. This project is nested in the international context of marine conservation being typically less developed, and often of lower political priority than terrestrial conservation. Global demand for fish protein is placing fisheries under extreme pressure, as evident in Vietnam. Marine biodiversity conservation and sustainable fisheries management are critical tools to manage these pressures for the immediate and future benefit of people and nature.

If this project delivers its overall goals it will be of significant interest internationally as it seeks to integrate marine biodiversity conservation with sustainable development with local community based management and potentially demonstrating a range of best practises and innovations.

At this point in time the project is mid cycle, with some delays and challenges evident including the lack of direct national legislation to provide a secure foundation for marine

¹ Inception Report Final Version June 2007

conservation. These challenges can be overcome if the partners focus on achieving the vision of the project and communicate and share information more readily internally and externally. The benefits created by the partnerships within the project are yet to be maximised. The project's best chance of success is through maximising the potential of the partners to deliver the shared goals. This will help ensure the learning is institutionalised into the legal framework of Vietnam.

Effective management of this significant marine environment is possible with the opportunity provided by the project. Strong site based conservation management through the demarcation of protected areas and robust enforcement is the critical protection foundation needing to be operationalised. This requires CDNP staff to be functionally equipped and empowered as a rapid response team. Local fishers are willing to be enlisted to assist with enforcement.

The progress made with community participation needs to be capitalised upon. Concurrently the difficulties identified with the fishers in the evaluation need to be rapidly resolved. Key actions required are to ensure the fishers's voice is heard within the project and engaging those willing in enforcement.

The ongoing sustainability of the project is vitally important. Urgent attention to these elements is required to ensure the investment is realised in the long term.

This project is ambitious and complex. The evaluation team was excited about its potential to deliver results for CDNP and for marine biodiversity conservation in Vietnam, with the potential to contribute valuable learning within Vietnam and internationally.

Recommendations

The recommendations are the synthesis of the evaluation. In the opinion of the evaluation team, these are the highest priority actions required to drive the project to completion.

These recommendations were presented to the key stakeholders for input at the completion of the in-country mission. There was no substantive alteration made to the findings at the meeting and general agreement was expressed with the independent recommendations resulting from the mid-term evaluation process.

1. Project vision and alignment for improved coordination

To improve co-ordination a workshop should be convened by the Government/ BR-VT PPC/ PMU, with participation of all possible parties including donors and key partner stakeholders to:

- a. Restatement of a clear, overarching and shared vision for the project based on decision 264/GoVn 25/10/05 and the project objectives
- b. Review the timeframes of key activities
- c. Consider the recommendations from this mid-term evaluation
- d. Review and confirm work plans for remainder of project
- e. Undertake a budget review, and determine whether some resources can be reallocated to demarcation of no take and buffer (core and rehabilitation) zones by buoys. If not possible then other sources of funds are urgently secured for purchasing more buoys.

- f. Review and clarify roles and procedures to achieve improved co-ordination and timely implementation.

2. Financial Sustainability

To give high priority to the establishment of sustainable financing for biodiversity conservation of Con Dao.

- a. To urgently undertake a feasibility study on the development of a practical and realistically achievable conservation trust fund and accompanying operation regulations developed. It must include identification of the ongoing costs of sustainable biodiversity conservation for CDNP.
 - i. (Note: the initial investment of US\$22,000 is considered a small seed for this fund). The study should identify the funds purpose, funding sources including government and tourism sector contributions and other donors, and rate the likelihood of provision of funds. The proposed ecotourism centre, and associated ecotourism services should be considered as, only one of a number of possible revenue earning opportunities for the Conservation Trust Fund. Other considerations may include securing grants to help grow the seed funds, government provincial financial assistance (offered during meeting if project achieves its goals), revenue from concessions, admission fees to the island (ecotourism centre entry included in this fee), to key tourist sites within the CDNP boundary and hotels providing an optional additional eco tourism levy at checkout, to name some possibilities.
- b. The feasibility study of the Conservation Trust Fund should explore the possibility of the provision of support to the fishing community in the form of a small credit fund that is administered locally and sustainably, to support alternative income generation (AIG) for fishers.

3. Fishing community engagement and benefits

To take action to maximise the fishing community engagement in the project and ensure associated benefits.

- a. Community Consultation Group (CCG) should include direct representation of fishers, at least three to five fishers. Consideration should be given to retaining the existing maximum number on the CCG, and substitute some existing members with fishers because some members do not truly represent the fishers. To add further members without substitution will make this group too large to be effective. (CCG membership is already 16)
- b. The fishing community should be a direct beneficiary from marine protection and eco tourism development. This must be realistic and practical for their participation

- c. AIG should be based on the actual expressed needs of the fishers, and ensure a diversity of options to minimise risk and enhance the possibility of success.

4. Capacity building

Enhance the impact of capacity building utilising technical assistance/experts

- a. In contracting technical consultants the ToR should include a requirement to engage in local capacity building when on mission with CNDP and PMU.
- b. Improve the planning for training programmes
- c. In planning for training courses there should be early consultation on design, content, target trainee, training evaluation and post evaluation follow-up and duration. Ideally training should include some practical experiential learning opportunities.

5. MPA management effectiveness – enforcement and governance

Urgent support and focus be given to demarcation and enforcement of the MPAs

- a. Urgently undertake the demarcation of the MPA no take zones to help ensure infringement is easily detected.
- b. Ensure the demarcation of the zones minimises environmental impact e.g. placement of sea floor anchor point for buoy
- c. The enforcement of these zones is critical to the success of the MPAs, particularly the core and rehabilitation zones.
- d. CNDP staff need to be functionally equipped and empowered as a rapid response team.
- e. Fisherman should be enlisted to assist with enforcement of the CNDP MPAs.

Establishment of a national park advisory board, including representatives of the community, transitioning over time to a park governance mechanism that has oversight responsibility for the management of the park within a national legal framework for protected areas. This board would be the responsible authority for management oversight of both the terrestrial and marine elements of the park.

6. Transparency and sharing of project information

- a. The project website should upload all the project technical reports and other relevant material for disseminating project outputs, and thereby improving access to key information and reducing the chance of overlap in technical information.

7. Institutionalising project best practise

- a. The Project should ensure institutionalisation of best practise of MPA design and management for the legal framework in Vietnam at the completion of the project. This should occur in the policy formulation in the administrative system at National Provincial and District levels.

8. Ecotourism services functionally separated from conservation management

- a. This project supports the proposed ecotourism centre of Con Dao National Park as it intends to separate the provision of ecotourism services and the environmental education function from the conservation management of the park. This should help improve the separation between conservation management and enforcement, and the provision of ecotourism services to generate some income for CDNP. This income would be used for conservation.
- b. Investigate the ecotourism feasibility of Bay Canh as a commercial turtle-watching experience, a demonstration of best practise in ecotourism development.

9. Support planning integration

The project continues to support the planning processes of:

1. Socio-economic development
2. Planning for CDNP
3. Planning for tourism development
4. Planning for construction – master plan

through ensuring the integration of biodiversity conservation and environmental values of Con Dao into all plans. This will reduce the risks externally and internally to this project and to the wider planning processes.

The planning process should take into account the complete information provided by the baseline surveys, in particular AIG integration with tourism.

10. Exit strategy:

Timing

In considering the exit strategy, the need for a short extension of the life of the project may be required. This is to achieve the critically important component of sustainability in advance of project completion.

Priority sustainability activities for the remainder of the project

1. Financial sustainability linked to the development of the Conservation Trust Fund and any other funding sources

2. Organisational sustainability linked to the centre of eco tourism, and CDNP and the separation of services and environmental education from conservation management
3. Biodiversity conservation through robust implementation of this project linked to the effective management (including enforcement) of the MPA system for CDNP and biodiversity monitoring.

Key project activities for the remainder of the project (not excluding planned activities)

1. AIG implementation that meet the needs of fishers - credit fund
2. CCG membership be adjusted and include direct representation of fishers.

Support beyond the completion of this project

In considering the impact on CDNP of the conclusion of this project there maybe a need to provide some further support for a transition phase to ensure:

1. Technical support is available in key areas requiring further development and capacity building – eg development of a framework for management of tourism activities including concessions policy, and park governance mechanism development
2. Reduced financial support is available and withdrawn gradually over say two years
3. Systematic capture of lessons learned undertaken within 6 months of the project completion and published in the form of a case study
4. This case study be compiled into a combined MPA lessons learned document, including recommendations from the 3 MPA pilots and made widely available to decision makers in Vietnam.