

Making the Link

The Connection and Sustainable Management of Kon Ka Kinh National Park and Kon Chu Rang Nature Reserve

Terminal Evaluation



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Prepared for



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Kon Ka Kinh-Kon Chu Rang Landscape (KKK-KCR Landscape) contains Kon Ka Kinh National Park (KKK NP) and Kon Chu Rang Nature Reserve (KCR NR) in north-eastern Gia Lai Province, central Vietnam. KKK NP and KCR NR are global priorities for biodiversity conservation because they support most of the unique biological attributes of the Central Annamites Priority Landscape.

This area was identified as a Priority 1 area in the Truong Son conservation landscape by the Truong Son initiative (Tordoff *et al.* 2003). The KKK-KCR Landscape supports over 100,000 ha of natural forest at 500-1,748 m altitude, including a large proportion of the forested catchments of the Ba and Con rivers.

Kon Ka Kinh (KKK) and Kon Chu Rang (KCR) were decreed as nature reserves by the Government of Vietnam in 1986¹, and rated as priority B in the Biodiversity Action Plan for Vietnam in 1994 (Government of Vietnam 1994). In 2002, KKK was upgraded to national park status². Currently, the intervening forest area between KKK and KCR remains under the management of Dakrong and Tram Lap State Forest Companies (SFCs), despite ongoing aspirations for them to be included in the protected areas. However, individually these two protected areas are too small to maintain viable populations of all species, particularly wide-ranging species that occur at naturally low densities, such as Tiger *Panthera tigris* and Gaur *Bos frontalis* (Tordoff *et al.* 2003).³

The GEF UNDP project has supported making the link between the two protected areas through the SFC lands for connectivity conservation. This has the purpose of maintaining the biological integrity of this unique priority landscape of the Central Annamites. The project has set out to develop the foundation of support and management for the SFCs and the protected areas strengthening their sustainability and mainstreaming biodiversity in the production landscapes.

The project is expecting to deliver results in three areas:

1. Strengthened institutional capacity of Gia Lai Forest Protection Department (FPD) in areas of forest management and protection, with specific emphasis on areas within and around the KKK NP and KCR NR.
2. Increased awareness among local communities, key decision-makers, scientific community and donors to the unique

¹ Following Decision No. 194/CT of the Chairman of the Council of Ministers, dated 9 August 1986.

² Following Decision No. 167/TTg of the Prime Minister, dated 25 November 2002.

³ Towards the sustainable management of the Kon Ka Kinh – Kon Chu Rang Landscape: Forest Analysis, Development of an Ecological Monitoring Framework, and Hands-on Training of Protected Area staff for Ecological Monitoring at the Kon Ka Kinh – Kon Chu Rang Landscape

conservation values of the project area, building long-term support for forest management and protection throughout the project area.

3. Established conditions for sustainable forest management and forest management certification in Dakrong and Tram Lap SFEs, leading to the continued integrity of a forest corridor between KKK NP and KCR NR.

This project is implemented by the Government of Vietnam (GOV) in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) through the UNDP National Execution (NEX) modality. This modality aims to ensure that projects are executed in close partnership with the government's relevant ministries and local government departments. The Forest Protection Department (FPD) managed the project on behalf of the Gia Lai PPC through a Project Management Unit based at FPD project office. Technical support was provided by UNDP through a Senior Technical Adviser (STA). Another key element of execution is the collaboration with local communities and community based organisations. The government has provided in-kind support. This project has parallel funding from the Tropical Forest Trust (TFT).

The project designed in 2000 was approved in 2004 by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and subsequently approved by GOV and UNDP, and implementation was underway in 2006. This followed some reallocation of budget and adjustment to activities due to the delay between design and implementation. No additional funding was available despite inflationary pressure on the budget resulting in some constraining of activities. However in 2009 some additional funding of USD50,000 was provided to the project from UNDP TRAK to cover some priority activities in Objective 3, further to the originally planned activities of TFT.

This report is the outcome of the terminal evaluation of this project. It is structured to meet the requirements of UNDP/GEF and is intended to provide findings of relevance both to the Vietnamese stakeholders and internationally. Learning and knowledge from UNDP /GEF final evaluations is shared within the GEF and with the partners as a basis for decision-making on policies and strategies, programme management and projects, to improve knowledge and performance. GEF results are monitored and evaluated for their contribution to global environmental benefits.

The project was well aligned with international, national and provincial strategic frameworks and established ownership foundations for the project goal from the diverse stakeholders. The FPD is the main agency responsible for the key project outcomes (through the Project Management Unit (PMU)) and is also the main agency responsible for biodiversity conservation in Gia Lai. The positive project results flow directly from the intention of the NEX modality through to the implementation of the project by the PMU. The results show alignment with the goals of the GEF.

The goal of the biodiversity focal area of GEF is the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and the maintenance of ecosystem goods and services. To achieve this goal, the strategy encompasses five objectives:

- a. Improve the sustainability of protected area systems
- b. Mainstream biodiversity conservation and sustainable use into production landscapes/seascapes and sectors
- c. Build capacity to implement the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety
- d. Build capacity on access to genetic resources and benefit-sharing, and
- e. Integrate CBD obligations into national planning processes through enabling activities.

The GEF has some key approaches that it applies to help achieve these global objectives and these have been applied to this project specifically

- Building capacity.
- Increasing mainstreaming, i.e. the participation of non-environmental government agencies in biodiversity projects.
- Enhancing and sustaining participation of local and indigenous communities and the private sector in GEF projects.
- Improving the linkages with other focal areas of the GEF to maximise synergies that generate local and global environmental benefits.

The evaluation team focused their independent findings and recommendations on the achievement of the project objectives, including their assessment of relevance, effectiveness and efficiency, and attainment of results. The method of evaluation is explained in Section 1.2.

The findings and recommendations (included in this summary) were presented to the key stakeholders at the conclusion of the mission. This terminal evaluation concludes that this innovative biodiversity connectivity conservation project is achieving some moderately satisfactory progress. This is through increased participation of the local communities (Ba Na) in biodiversity conservation, by strengthening the institutional capacity of the provincial Forest Protection Department and the progress made so far towards the green corridor establishment.

Criteria	Relevance	Effectiveness	Efficiency
Objective 1 Rating Increase capacity of FPD	Highly satisfactory	Moderately Satisfactory	Satisfactory

Criteria	Relevance	Effectiveness	Efficiency
Objective 2 Rating Increase conservation awareness	Highly satisfactory	Moderately Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Objective 3 Rating, following MTE Sustainable forest management – integrity of corridor	Highly satisfactory	Moderately Satisfactory	Moderately Satisfactory

There are some internal and external challenges to this project that impact on its effectiveness. Internal challenges include the limitation of the project design and budget constraints and their flow on impacts. External challenges include the context of the lack of enabling legislation and associated principles and policies for implementing green corridors, sustainable financing for biodiversity conservation, protected area management, difficulties of Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certification of natural forests and the environmental impacts from the new East Truong Son Road.

The project design does not adequately recognise the dependence of the Ba Na communities on the forest resources for food, income and shelter. These communities have a fundamental dependence on these benefits from the forest. The project does not directly address their need for sustainable use of the forest. The Inception Report does note this weakness and the associated challenges of resolving this⁴. The Feasibility Study for the Green Corridor in preparation at the time of the evaluation recognises this and identifies alternative income generation for the Ba Na people as an important follow-on activity.

The parallel funding arrangements with the Tropical Timber Trust (TFT) have created some challenges. There was a lack of clarity about the relationship with PMU at the outset, associated implementation challenges of FSC certification in SFCs, the lack of necessary GOV regulations, and a TFT funding shortfall caused some challenges under Objective 3. Despite this, TFT contributed to achievable elements of the project. TFT undertook project activities that were feasible at the time. Weak ownership of this component by the PMU and the associated communication problems between parties was evident. The lack of regulations and management mechanisms for the State Forest Companies (SFC) means that the goal of FSC certification is unable to be achieved within the project timeframe.

Following the midterm evaluation Objective 3.4 was adapted to include activities designed to push forward the critical enablers for the foundation of the Green Corridor, in particular the feasibility and investment plan. This is required by the Peoples Provincial Committee (PPC) for consideration and possible approval. Although this element under objective 3 was considered important as it reflected the intention of the project and picked up the

⁴ Inception report P4

recommendations from the midterm evaluation, this terminal evaluation also considered carefully all the objectives and the many project activities.

The budget constraints have limited some of the project activities. The logistical challenges of a remote project area make for difficulties in recruitment and internal project communication. Nevertheless these obstacles were overcome.

A key external challenge to the project is the new road, East Truong Son Road, bisecting the corridor and the associated impacts of interruption of the free movement of mammals and impacts from construction including construction workers illegally logging, harvesting non timber forest products and illegally hunting. These activities may be easier as a result of the road and it may also encourage agriculture and industrial rubber, coffee and encroachments associated with settlement. The ongoing management of the transportation infrastructure should aim to minimise impact on natural ecosystems, including watersheds. The provision of additional forest protection staff at entry and exit points to the road for enforcement purposes is planned.

Although the project itself does not seek to achieve a stronger legal framework it is an important enabling context for corridor establishment. The draft decree for implementation of biodiversity corridors under the biodiversity law remains in unapproved form. It provides the principles and policies required for implementation. Alongside these challenges is the opportunity to achieve the Green Corridor through the PPC and for it to be approved provincially. This in turn should encourage the GOV to implement the draft decree. The positive attitude of the PPC to the Green Corridor is important as they can approve the Green Corridor at the provincial level and in doing so promote the concept to GOV. With these variables it is unclear whether the sustainability of the project is assured. On balance the evaluation considered that there were significant risks to the financial sustainability of the project. The indication from Gia Lai PPC for likely approval of the Feasibility Study and Investment Plans, including follow-on activities is positive.⁵ The project highlights the need for sustainable financing for this protected area complex. Sustainable financing would ensure the investment to date is maximised in building the foundation for connectivity conservation of this unique landscape.

As connectivity conservation is in its infancy in Vietnam, this report includes some detail on lessons learned from the project and from connectivity conservation. These may be of interest to other Green Corridor projects in Vietnam and elsewhere. To illustrate the points made examples from the project are used in the body of the report.⁶ They include lessons from the project specifically and from connectivity conservation in general.

Recommendations associated with these lessons are included in the report⁷ for UNDP/ GEF in their support of protected area and connectivity conservation internationally as well as Vietnam. The lessons learned and

⁵ See Appendix - Section 9.7

⁶ See Section 7

⁷ See Section 8

recommendations will be of interest to the GOV, Gia Lai PPC and the key stakeholders.

This ambitious Green Corridor project is a working model that shows that creating the foundation for sustainable management of natural forest in the context of connectivity conservation in Vietnam is possible. This is through the strengthening of the institutional capacity in GOV forest management and protection, building community awareness of biodiversity connectivity conservation, and establishing co-management. It also demonstrates domestically and internationally that building the foundations for connectivity conservation can produce results in a relatively short time frame. To sustain the investment in the Green Corridor and taking into account the lessons learned will require an ongoing commitment to implementing follow-on activities including enforcement of protection. Working closely with the Ba Na people to ensure they share in the direct benefits of connectivity conservation and the sustainable management of the Green Corridor will be vital for its long-term success.

A number of recommendations are summarised for GEF/UNDP, GOV and the PPC below:

Project design and budget

1. **GEF/UNDP:** As the project design (2000) was outdated at the time the project budget was approved (2004 and implemented in 2006) there were impacts on the project achievements, as the costs had escalated, and threats and attitudes had changed. Although the inception report made some changes a full review of the project design should have been undertaken at this time and budget adjusted accordingly, including the provision of sufficient budget for relevant agencies to implement their activities – transportation, travel costs for workshops, living costs - to ensure the success of the project.
2. **GEF/UNDP** FSC component was overly ambitious as the wider policy frameworks and institutional capacity for implementation are not in place – currently in Vietnam for a SFC with natural forest the FSC criteria cannot be met. The appropriate policy frameworks for SFC ensuring the FSC principles and criteria can be applied are essential preconditions for effective implementation of FSC. This has contributed to the weak relationship with TFT, as well as the lack of clarity in the relationship between the PMU and TFT in the project documentation. Accordingly the project design should have clarified the relationships, been more strongly based on the existing policies and the realistic likelihood of any new policies that could be implemented during the life of the project.
3. **GEF/UNDP** Benefit sharing with the local people compared to other elements of the project is considered out of balance – a disproportionate amount of spending on fixed costs compared to the expenditure of the project on activities with local people and them sharing in direct benefits. Direct benefits to the local people

impacted by the project should be specifically addressed in the design phase. Identification of this as a challenge is insufficient.

4. **GEF/UNDP** The project logistics should be considered carefully in project design – e.g. the remoteness for project activities and the challenges created in staffing, transportation and fieldwork.

Project objectives and activities

Objective 1: Capacity Building

1. Training courses

GOV and Gia Lai PPC Ba Na language training (course 3 month full time) should be longer and focussed on the staff who work locally with the Ba Na people. All key individuals involved in the management of the Green Corridor should have some knowledge of Ba Na language, as Ba Na people are key to the corridor's success. Ba Na villagers should be involved in the language training providing assistance to ensure the learning is relevant. Students should be able to practise their language training with the Ba Na people in their villages to embed learning through direct experience.

2. Ecological monitoring

GEF/UNDP and GOV (FPD) The ecological monitoring component was intended to yield useful data for management. In reality it was an introduction to the concept for learning only. Ideally where information is gathered and the data analysed, the results should be sufficiently robust for building models for management decision making.

3. Study tours

GEF/UNDP Although useful for capacity building skills the following requirements should apply:

1. Only relevant people who can impart learning are selected to go.
2. Location of study tour should be a directly applicable model for good learning outcomes - first priority should be within Vietnam and learning from the more established protected areas. This is likely to be more relevant and cost effective.
3. Upon return there is a requirement for learning to be applied to implementation of activities and future plans: a report should be written on the application of the study tour to the home situation.

Objective 2: Community Awareness

1. **PPC and GEF/UNDP** The community awareness programme should be an ongoing annual activity, the responsibility of the relevant agencies of the Green Corridor (SFCs, PA's, Districts, Communes and PPC, FPD, DOF, DARD and DONRE) and should include consistent shared messages to all target groups.
2. **PPC** The CCG should continue to link community awareness activities into the local communities. PPC should fund this responsibility and allocate funding to the relevant communes for this activity.
3. **PPC and GEF/UNDP** For the community awareness raising programme to be sustainable it must include a direct benefit for the local community. For example the forest convention element of the awareness programme requires people to protect the forest and in doing so benefits the environment. There is no direct benefit to the Ba Na people as they continue to depend on the forest for livelihoods – ie convention says forest protection is required but there is no direct improvement to their incomes.
4. **PPC, FPD and GEF/UNDP** The staff of CCG, SFC, and staff of protected areas should all further develop their understanding of Ba Na language and culture to enable them to deliver more effective support through relevant training e.g. technical agricultural and silvi-culture extension and models.
5. **PPC and FPD** The community awareness programme should be further developed, reviewed and adapted every three years to ensure its ongoing relevance to the communities as they continue to develop and change.
6. **PPC** In parallel with awareness raising, the improvement of the livelihoods of the Ba Na people in the corridor and other minorities in the buffer zone should be a priority for PPC – not just for the mind but also the stomach!
7. **PPC** To ensure the effectiveness of the community awareness and schools education programme it should be given in the language that is most appropriate to the target group – e.g. for the remote villages in the corridor the programme should be delivered in Ba Na language.

Objective 3: Sustainable forestry

1. **GOV and PPC** To establish the Green Corridor the underlying principles and policies for biodiversity corridors must be approved by the PPC and the GOV. Without these arrangements in place the Green Corridor concept cannot be implemented.

2. **PPC** The PPC should establish a Green Corridor Management committee comprised of the relevant stakeholders. The committee's purpose is to ensure the coordinated management of the protected areas and the SFCs.
3. **PPC and GOV** should develop the regulations for the state forestry companies' sustainable management of natural forests.
4. **GOV** should put in place a national framework for SFC including the regulations and mechanisms to facilitate FSC in natural forests. This would enable companies such as Tram Lap and Dakrong to more clearly understand their roles and responsibilities for biodiversity conservation and sustainable development and enable them to achieve FSC certification.

Enabling of biodiversity corridor implementation

1. **GEF/UNDP and PPC** should promote and approve the Investment plan and feasibility study for the Green Corridor and provide budget for implementing the activities in the investment plan.
2. **GOV and PPC** should give priority to approving the principles and policies for the implementation of the green corridor biodiversity projects connecting protected areas within Vietnam.
3. **GOV and PPC GEF/UNDP** GOV and PPC and aid agencies are encouraged to invest in the development of a sustainable financing strategy for the project area and beyond through financing mechanisms (PES, REDD+, concessions and ecotourism etc), for the GOV protected area network at the national, provincial and local level and develop a range of possible models and tools that could be applied to specific protected areas and their financing.
4. **PPC and GOV** The PPC should urgently reduce the current environmental impact of the construction of the new East Truong Son Road on the Green Corridor. The new road's impact will include increased illegal logging, illegal hunting, illegal settlement etc and should be mitigated by PPC through enforcement and working in collaboration with the Ministry of Defence to ensure the Green Corridor is protected in perpetuity for the benefit of the environment and people. Consideration should be given to whether any bridging of the road for use by mammals would be beneficial.

Project management

1. **GEF/UNDP** Selection of consultants by the PMU should be done in conjunction with the STA to help ensure the highest possible quality of the contractors.

2. **GEF/UNDP** Ideally the STA should be located in country and accessible to the project and project sites to maximise both effective technical advice and also cost effectiveness.
3. **GEF/UNDP, PPC and PMU** should take responsibility for the implementation of the parallel funding activities and the project design should be clear about these expectations.

Future possibilities

1. **PPC** in the short term, undertake the 6 activities proposed in the feasibility study: forest protection, ecological monitoring, research studies, increase community awareness, build capacity of staff within the corridor and alternative livelihoods for socio-economic improvement. These activities should be undertaken in parallel with the establishment of the Green Corridor.
2. **GOV and Gia Lai and Binh Dinh PPCs** Longer term the feasibility of a larger protected areas complex including KKK NP, KCR NR, Green Corridor and An Toan NR should be investigated - combined for management coherence and biological integrity and to enable the possibility of a declaration of a larger Man and the Biosphere Reserve.



With Kong Bong 2 villagers

7. LESSONS LEARNED

This section identifies key lessons learned from this project for consideration by the GEF and UNDP for learning purposes.

The lessons are in two parts: project specific and in the general context of connectivity conservation with examples used from the project.

7.1. Project lessons

Project design

- To ensure the best chance of success for a project, if there are delays between project design, approval and implementation, at the inception of the project a thorough review and update of all project elements including: analysis of enabling frameworks, budget, fixed costs and activities is required
- Project design and its preplanning should include a careful consideration and analysis of all the factors that are likely to impact on the achievements of the project. In the case of this project, achievement of the objectives was constrained by:
 - Project location logistics
 - The lack of the necessary policy frameworks and institutional capacity for FSC implementation making this element overly ambitious
 - The lack of direct benefit sharing with the local Ba Na people. Ba Na people depend on the forest resources for food, shelter and income. Their current need for natural resource exploitation is not accommodated adequately in the project design
- The project design should positively address the provision of direct benefits (livelihoods, needs for shelter and food) to local communities when these are altered or removed by the project.

Capacity building

- Capacity building programmes have an increased impact when undertaken over time and include experiential learning as a component of the programme
- The use of the local language can quickly enhance relationships and understanding between the communities and those responsible for the protected areas

- Connectivity conservation areas are not possible without building the capacity of connectivity conservation staff and local communities.

Community Awareness

- Community awareness programmes for biodiversity conservation require a long-term investment, review and adaption over time. They require an ongoing commitment to review content and delivery, with both aspects being regularly adjusted to suit the conservation and community needs at that particular time
- Qualitative measures should be developed to ascertain the effectiveness and impact of capacity building, awareness raising and environmental education
- For community awareness raising programmes to have a sustainable impact they must be supported by direct benefits for the local community.

Sustainable forestry

- For successful project outcomes applying new concepts in conservation and sustainable development (connectivity conservation) enabling legislation and frameworks are required alongside capacity building, community awareness raising and operational implementation
 - Project timeframe is too short for FSC to be established
 - No enabling framework for SFC to meet FSC requirements
 - Co-management is a new concept.

7.2. Context of Connectivity Conservation

Enabling of Biodiversity Corridor Implementation

- Conservation efforts must go hand in hand with economic opportunities and avoid adding to fragmentation of key biodiversity areas. The economic benefits of connectivity conservation to local communities and other key stakeholders should be recognised
 - The Ba Na people living in and adjoining this proposed corridor are some of poorest of the poor in Vietnam struggling with agricultural and resource exploitation activities. If such communities can see protection and