

## **Biological Conservation Corridor Initiative – Vietnam Pilot Site Progress Report**

### **Abstract**

The Ngoc Linh – Xe Sap BCI pilot site comprises both Laos and Vietnam components in adjacent provinces in the Central Annamites landscape. This report presents the progress for the Vietnam component. The project landscape encompasses forests of outstanding biodiversity value supporting high endemism across diverse biogeographical zones, and possesses high socio-economic value, for both forest dependent communities who depend on these resources for livelihood, and in protecting environmental services vital for Vietnam's sustainable development.

Project activities commenced in Vietnam in late 2006 in two provinces, namely Quang Tri and Quang Nam. Implementation progress at the outset of the project was slower than expected due to the need to build institutional capacity and effective provincial working mechanisms, however, over the last 12 months project progress has been improved greatly.

Outlined in progress reports are some of the projects major achievements in the BCI five component areas. Key achievements so far have included:

- Ongoing development of ten commune development funds, establishing two community forestry sites and plantation of over 160 hectares of commercial tree species for livelihood improvement.
- The projects land use planning component has developed capacity in land allocation and land use planning, and is currently in undertaking a process to determine the location and designation of biodiversity corridors. Draft corridor areas have been designated, but require field mapping, local community consultation and supporting the national and provincial legislation for such areas.
- The entire landscape contains ten core protected areas which are being supported through capacity building and implementation grants. Additional support has included enforcement training and patrols, snare removal, mapping and defining better boundaries of Protected Areas, and biodiversity surveys in Quang Tri province.
- A forest landscape restoration plan has been prepared which was based on identification of forest fragments and connectivity through GIS analysis. A total of 200 ha has been planted to date with a further 350 ha and 800 ha of planting and enrichment / assisted regeneration respectively in coming years, with emphasis on livelihood models comprising a mixture of Acacia and native species.
- Capacity building has been undertaken through a process of local visits, study tours, training courses and on-the-job training; training courses are followed upon with grants for participants to put lessons into practice. Various training courses have so far been conducted for government officers and local community members.

- Sustainable financing issues have been investigated through a scoping study on PES has been undertaken, and in particular the project is working with ADB on a transfer payment mechanisms related to an ADB funded hydropower dam which may have long-term significant impacts for local livelihoods. Studies are also planned to look at potential for stakeholders from carbon financing, in particular Reduced Emissions from Deforestation (RED) payments.

There are a number of challenges facing the project including working in remote areas with a diverse range of stakeholders; high rates of poverty and limited market access for ethnic minorities, limited legislation regards corridor establishment and perplexing legislation regards land allocation and community forestry which is hindering progress in these areas. However, problems encountered during implementation are now being resolved in a constructive manner with the provincial working groups. Some of the issues require a national or regional coordination and increased effort to make significant achievements, for example the illegal wildlife and timber trade. Other concerns are that many proposed activities are quite ambitious, with some of the original milestones agreed in the project agreement not clear, too ambitious or missing. A work plan revision process should be undertaken for the next annual plan; in order to consolidate and produce significant achievements rather than spread resources too thinly. However, there are also many opportunities with high potential for long-term sustainable management of the rich natural forests in the pilot site, through improved management, income generation for communities, payments for environmental services and a benefit sharing mechanism for an ADB dam that may provide long-term revenues for upstream communities.