

Conservation and Development of the Kien Giang Biosphere Reserve Project

Management of Natural Resources

Executing Agency: Provincial People's Committee (PPC) of Kien Giang Province

Other Partners: Department of Science and Technology

Overall Duration: 07.2008 - 12.2010

Current Phase: 1st Phase: 07.2008 - 12.2010

Programme Area: Kien Giang Biosphere Reserve:
U Minh Thuong National Park,
Phu Quoc National Park,
Kien Luong Hon Chong Coastal Area



Context

Vietnam was identified by the International Panel on Climate Change as one of the countries to be most affected by climate change. The Mekong and Red River deltas with their high population density (1180 and 408 persons per km², respectively) in low-lying lands are threatened by the rising sea level and the increase in frequency and intensity of natural disasters such as typhoons, storms and floods.

Kien Giang is a coastal province in the western portion of the Mekong delta. In 2006, the Kien Giang Man and Biosphere (MAB) Reserve was recognized by UNESCO. The project will focus on the three key areas of the Biosphere Reserve, i.e. U Minh Thuong National Park, Phu Quoc National Park and the Kien Luong Hon Chong Coastal Area.

U Minh Thuong National Park supports one of the last significant areas of peat swamp forest remaining in Vietnam and is recognized as one of the three highest priority sites for wetland conservation in the Mekong delta. The *Melaleuca* forest in the core zone of the park plays an important role in maintaining soil and water quality in the buffer zone.



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The trees prevent acidification of the topsoil and surface water, filter ground water and store fresh water during the dry season. *Phu Quoc National Park* stretches from mountain forests to coral reefs. The park encompasses one of the last remaining dipterocarp forests in Vietnam, *Melaleuca* and mangrove forest, important sea grass bed and coral reefs. *Kien Luong Hon Chong Area* encompasses 200 km of coastline and in places has rich mangrove forests. This mangrove belt is essential for mitigation of the effect of climate change.

Overall Objective

The overall objective is to utilize the natural resources of Kien Giang Province in a sustainable way with effective management of the protected areas.

Main activities and expected impacts

1. *Assessment of flora and fauna biodiversity hot spots* will provide a better basis for protecting and monitoring endangered species and those with key functions in the system.
2. *Improved management* of the protected areas and coastal forests, and the conservation of endangered species are expected to have far-reaching positive ecological effects – such as the protection of forest ecosystems and the water regime as well as coastal protection against the effects of the climate change.
3. *Improved capacity* and technical knowledge of income-generating opportunities and improved marketing will lead to increased production of fish, forestry and agricultural products and increased income.
4. The *awareness programme* will produce material on the importance and relevance of biodiversity and natural ecosystems and allow the implementing agencies to disseminate this information widely.
5. The *training programme* aims to increase the resilience of the ecosystems by promoting the management capacity of district and provincial administrations. National park staff will have improved skills with regard to fire and water management. The training programme will also improve the capacities in project preparation and management.

First Results - What has been achieved so far

The project has been operating for six months and has already achieved a high level of involvement in and commitment to the project by a wide range of local organisations. The project has been setting the basis for all further implementation activities by collecting baseline data on biodiversity and socio-economics and map-based information. Furthermore it has assisted the partner institutions with the development of an environmental awareness campaign for schools; an advertising campaign to promote environmental awareness through the mass media with the Provincial Radio & TV Station; and development of a door-to-door information campaign with the Youth Union to raise environmental awareness.

Efforts are made to introduce new ways to improve livelihoods which will improve the environment at the same time. Plans are under preparation to promote coconut production along the coastline and to introduce integrated pest management for coconut pests.

The cutting of *Melaleuca* forest in the acid sulphate soils of the Mekong delta causes dramatic increases in the acidity of the soils and waterways. The project is investigating ways to improve the production and value of melaleuca timber in order to safeguard the existing stands.

The project is working with the respective authorities to design a coastal protection model in Hon Dat district. The model will consider new technologies for planting mangroves and design a dyke able to withstand the strong currents in the area. (Previously, dykes have been breached each year and the salt water destroyed agricultural crops and fish production). Trees will be planted in a 20m wide strip along the coastline.

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- German Technical Cooperation -

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