



**PROVISION FOR POST PROJECT EVALUATIONS FOR THE UNITED
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EVALUATION REPORT



**UDF-VIE-09-331 – Promoting Active Participation of Civil Society in
Environmental Governance in Vietnam**

Date: 14 August 2013

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Disclaimer

The views expressed in this report are those of the evaluators. They do not represent those of UNDEF or of any of the institutions referred to in the report.

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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

(i) Background

The project ran from 1 October 2010 – 31 December 2012, with a total grant of USD 250,000. It was designed by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), Vietnam, and implemented in partnership with the Vietnam Institute of Human Rights (VIHR) of the Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics and Public Administration (HCMPA); the Center of Environmental Training and Communications (CETAC) of the Vietnam Environmental Administration (VEA) / Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MoNRE); and the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR). The target population consisted of high-level political leaders, professional journalists, local environmental NGOs and IUCN members. As defined in the Project Document, the overall objective was to improve environmental conditions in Vietnam through increased participation of civil society in environmental monitoring and reporting. Accordingly, IUCN's strategic approach aimed for three key outcomes:

- Increased high-level government support for NGO participation in environmental monitoring and reporting;
- Improved environmental media coverage;
- Formation and support of a network of local environmental NGOs through networking, information sharing, and IUCN membership.

(ii) Assessment of the project

Project design and objectives were **relevant**. Measures adequately addressed issues pertaining to the minimal presence of environmental material and the absence of information for government officials about the role of civil society in environmental governance, and to the need to promote investigative journalism, as confirmed by the grantee's baseline. The project involved VIHR staff teaching high-level government officials, which follow a career path requiring completion of studies at HCMPA, and environmental journalists of CETAC's network. Outputs aimed to ensure that HCMPA graduates dispose of a better understanding of the benefits of civil society participation, and to inspire journalists in the use of independent research methods and sources of investigation. In addition, IUCN supported the capacity building of local NGOs in the areas of strategic planning, financial management, and communications, in order to help them address key donor expectations.

The implementing partnership completed all scheduled activities, and in some cases outputs have exceeded expectations. IUCN produced an environment and human rights manual for VIHR, enhanced through the addition of 7 case studies explaining the benefits of civil society participation, which - once in use – are likely to generate increased demand for local NGO involvement in environmental governance. News coverage produced following different journalist workshops provides first evidence that the importance of independent research and locally conducted interviews was clearly understood. This and the results of the capacity development of local NGOs lead us to the conclusion that the project made an **effective contribution** towards the achievement of improved environmental conditions in Vietnam.

As the project's ultimate impact (i.e. the introduction of a human-rights based training course

on environmental protection into HCMPA's curriculum) remains unachieved, indirect beneficiary quantities at this point cannot be taken into consideration to assess the project's efficiency. The resulting high unit cost of the training manual of USD 398 per direct beneficiary puts the **potential benefit of efficient project conduct at risk**.

The grantee's monitoring and reporting efforts and the testimonials of beneficiaries gathered by evaluators revealed that the effects IUCN originally aimed for were mostly achieved. Changes in the perception of civil society participation among VIHR graduates and senior students, journalists urging their colleagues to investigate environmental topics prompted by their own curiosity, and NGOs collaborating with IUCN and the government to protect endangered species document the project's **potential impact**.

However, the **sustainability of the project's outcomes appears to be at risk**, as five months after the project closing date VIHR/HCMPA has not yet officially decided about the definitive timing of the launch of a human-rights based environmental protection course. At the time of the evaluation visit there was no clear perspective as to when VIHR students can make use of the 2,500 copies of the training manual, of which most were idle on stock. In addition, a good part of environmental coverage still comprises of news items "cleared" by the government, as chief editors reportedly continue to prevent independent, investigative journalism. Finally, we have noted that the membership fee represents too much of a burden for all but one of the participating NGOs IUCN has chosen to invite to join its network.

(iii) Conclusions

- We found that exposure of (a) senior government officials to the experience of local NGOs with the promotion of participatory environmental governance; (b) environmental journalists to independent research methods in areas such as forest management and coastal/maritime ecosystems; and (c) local NGOs to capacity building and networking; represents an appropriate concept to provide a direct solution to the need for increased participation of civil society in environmental monitoring and reporting. We therefore conclude that the project's design was relevant to ***generate favorable conditions for a more sustainable development of Vietnam's environment***.

- However, and despite the existence of an integration plan, no official decision has been taken concerning the definitive timing of the launch of a human-rights based environmental protection course. Based on our observations related to sustainability we conclude that ***the grantee did not foresee and maintain ongoing coordination with VIHR/HCMPA, in order to secure the Communist Party Central Committee's or the Board of HCMPA's official support required for changes to the academic curriculum***.

(iv) Recommendations

- It remains unclear why it is only after the project's completion, that VIHR makes the launch of the new course subject to additional conditions, which are essentially rooted in a lack of resources within HCMPA. The fact that VIHR requires external support to train those who will be in charge of the training of provincial and district-level

officials and civil servants (ToT scheme for future trainers at HCMPA's regional-level sub-academies) must have been predictable. **Based on our comments on impact and efficiency, we recommend to the grantee** to remind HCMPA/VIHR that it already issued a detailed integration plan, which recommended the introduction of lectures based on the project's manual for the 2012-2013 school year (see also Annex 24 of the grantee's final narrative report).

- Both IUCN and HCMPA/VIHR's officials were unable to present to evaluators evidence that the achievements made by the UNDEF project to date are politically supported, either by the Party's Central Committee or the Board of HCMPA. This experience highlights that applying an all-inclusive partnership approach, to the extent possible, is vital for the achievement of democracy development project objectives. **Based on our observations on sustainability, we therefore recommend to the grantee and to UNDEF** to ensure that future project applications include specific measures promoting cooperation and ownership, in case acceptance of project deliverables is of concern to multiple layers of central government.

- **Based on our comment that the sustainability of the project's outputs may be at risk, we therefore recommend to the grantee and implementation partners the following:**

- Potential plans to apply for donor-funded Training of Trainers (ToT) should (1) provide concrete indications that the introduction of compulsory exams based on lectures of the manual's content is consistent with the priority-setting of the country's political hierarchy; (2) foresee to complement each of the training manual's chapter with a section providing lecturers with methodological guidance.
- Plans for continued media training could include a more substantial training effort for chief editors, e.g. through (1) workshops facilitating exchanges with foreign chief editor colleagues, and (2) best practice visits to countries displaying a similar context, in order to demonstrate that the inclusion of civil society debate about environmental issues reflects positive on the media (i.e. resulting in an increase of readership and feedback).
- To consider waiving membership fees for financially weak NGOs, which IUCN chose to support with UNDEF funded capacity building, if all other criteria of IUCN's application process are fulfilled.

II. INTRODUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT

i. The project and evaluation objectives

This report contains the evaluation of the project entitled “Promoting Active Participation of Civil Society in Environmental Governance”. The project ran from 1 October 2010 – 31 December 2012 (including a 3-month no-cost extension), with a total grant of USD 250,000 (out of which UNDEF retained USD 25,000 for monitoring and evaluation).

The project was designed by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), Vietnam. It was implemented in partnership with the Vietnam Institute of Human Rights (VIHR) of the Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics and Public Administration (HCMPA); the Center of Environmental Training and Communications (CETAC) of the Vietnam Environmental Administration (VEA) / Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MoNRE); and the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR). As defined in the Project Document, the overall objective was to improve environmental conditions in Vietnam through increased participation of civil society in environmental monitoring and reporting. The target population consisted of high-level political leaders, professional journalists, local environmental NGOs and IUCN members.

UNDEF and Transtec have agreed on a framework governing the evaluation process, set out in the Operational Manual. According to the manual, the objective of the evaluation is to “undertake in-depth analysis of UNDEF-funded projects to gain a better understanding of what constitutes a successful project which will in turn help UNDEF devise future project strategies. Evaluations also assist stakeholders to determine whether projects have been implemented in accordance with the project document and whether anticipated project outputs have been achieved”.

(ii) Evaluation methodology

The evaluation was conducted by an international expert, working with a national expert, under the terms of the framework agreement between UNDEF and Transtec. In accordance with the agreed process, the evaluation aimed to answer questions across the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) criteria of *relevance*, *effectiveness*, *efficiency*, *impact*, and *sustainability*, as well as the additional criterion of *UNDEF value added* (see Annex 1).

The evaluation took place from March – May 2013 with the fieldwork in Vietnam conducted from 1 to 5 April. The evaluators reviewed available project documentation and contextual / background materials on environmental governance and civil society participation in Vietnam (Annex 2). Initial and final interviews were held at IUCN's Hanoi office, involving IUCN's Programme Coordinator and its Communications and Outreach Officer. Field work focused on meetings and exchanges with representatives of the implementing partners and staff members of the participating beneficiary organizations, to confirm the project beneficiaries' experiences and to obtain updates of their most recent activities. These interviews and group meetings were carried out in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, involving 4 implementing partner representatives and 14 project beneficiaries (Annex 3).

(iii) Development context

In 1986 Vietnam launched “Đổi Mới”, a homegrown, political and economic renewal campaign, which marked the beginning of its transition from a centrally planned economy to a socialist-oriented market economy. Between 1993 and 2011 Vietnam’s economy has grown at an annual average rate of 7.3%¹. During the same period (1990 – 2011), the per capita income grew more than six fold (from USD 220² in 1990, via USD 480 in 2003, to USD 1,400 in 2011³), catapulting an originally extremely poor country up to lower middle-income level.

Since attaining the middle-income country status, Vietnam has continued to sustain comparatively high growth rates, even during macro-economic instability in 2011 and against a backdrop of global economic uncertainty. The annual GDP growth rates were 5.9% in 2011 and 5.3% in 2012, hence lower than in 2010 (6.8%), but still robust⁴. According to newly established poverty lines for 2011-2015, the household poverty rate was still 20.7% in 2010⁵. While efforts to reduce poverty and economic achievements of Vietnam are impressive, new challenges threaten the country’s sustainable growth. Economic development and an increasing population (estimated at 88.78 million in 2012)⁶ have generated a variety of environmental issues. Among these are most importantly deforestation and forest resource depletion, rapid deterioration of soil quality and arable land per capita, reduction of marine resources, water and air pollution, loss of biodiversity, but also the harmful effects of war (especially toxic chemicals)⁷. All of these and the impact of global climate change have serious consequences for the natural environment, thus negatively affecting both the development of Vietnam’s society and economy.

Recent assessments made by the World Bank (WB) estimate that environmental pollution costs Vietnam 5.5% of its national GDP annually⁸. Vietnam’s government therefore has promoted “green growth”, claiming it focuses on the quality of their citizen’s environment, when leading the country’s transition towards an industrialized and modern economy. Accordingly, the Sustainable Development Strategy for 2011-2020 identifies the country’s three key priority targets as (1) the stabilization of the economy through sustainable development; (2) the promotion of the citizens’ role for the development of a democratic, disciplined, harmonious, equal and civilized society; and (3) the mitigation of negative impacts of economic activities on the environment⁹.

In recognition of environmental issues the government of Vietnam in 1991 has begun to adjust the direction of its development policy. The National Assembly adopted a revision of

¹ Source: <http://data.worldbank.org>

² Statistical Year Book of Vietnam

³ Source: <http://data.worldbank.org>

⁴ Implementation of socio-economic development in 2012, Government Annual Report

⁵ The General Statistical Office and the World Bank jointly assessed the poverty line to better reflect the living conditions of the poor. The resulting rate is 6.5% higher, compared to the previous official poverty rate of 14.2 percent, which was based on the Vietnam Household Living Standards Survey (VHLSS)

⁶ Implementation of socio-economic development in 2012, Government Annual Report

⁷ Vietnam Environment – current issues, Index Mundi; State of environment, Vietnam, Regional Resource Centre for Asia and the Pacific

⁸ Environmental pollution costs Vietnam 5.5% of GDP, Nhan Dan Online (April 2013)

⁹ Vietnam Sustainable Development Strategy for 2011-2020 (April 2012)

the 1993 Law on Environmental Protection in November 2005. More specific laws and regulations were put in place, targeting e.g. land use, water utilization and management. The Prime Minister approved Vietnam's new National Strategy for Environmental Protection in 2012¹⁰. Sustaining environment and natural resources while implementing legal and institutional reforms, enhancing the role of civil society in the protection of the environment: this highly commendable ambition of the Vietnamese government, however, so far has produced statements of programmatic character rather than practical solutions.

The 2005 amendment of the Law on Environmental Protection increased the obligations of investors and authorities vis-à-vis the protection of the environment. Prior to approval, government agencies have to compare impacts and benefits by undertaking an integral strategic environmental assessment of all individual projects foreseen under an economic development strategy or plan. Individual investment projects have to undergo an impact assessment before obtaining a license. At the same time, the law remains unclear about the specific roles NGOs and civil society can play in environmental protection. In quite general terms the law establishes that all people should be educated and mobilized to participate in environmental protection¹¹. However, at administrative and operational levels, government authorities still resist to engage with NGOs and civil society in dialogue about concrete environmental problems; how to access information, and justice; how to cooperate in specific projects and initiatives, and how to participate in decision-making processes. In the absence of a clear framework for the implementation and enforcement of above legal provisions, mutual understanding and close cooperation between NGOs, civil society and local authorities do not exist. The rules currently in place are often confusing and sometimes too complex for NGOs and those members of the civil society, who are trying to advocate or claim their right to a clean environment.

The **environmental protection laws of 1993 and 2005** established the requirement of public participation during the process of an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). **Guidelines issued in 2008** (Circular Nr 05/MoNRE) determined the rights and tasks of local communities' People Committees in the EIA process. According to these guidelines investment project proposals are considered agreed to, should People Committees not respond within 15 working days from the date the project holder provided the required EIA information. This has been criticized as unrealistic, given the time and financial constraints the People Committees face to establish the necessary environmental knowledge. The same guidance still excludes the participation of organizations concerned with protection of environment and natural resources, e.g. local levels of administration, environmental management offices, initiatives of the local population and NGOs.

The above example is also in stark contrast to the announcement made by the country's 2011 Socialist Party Congress to "expand and promote democracy" and to its commitment of having the "[...] responsibility to enhance the participation of people in policymaking, including environmental protection"¹². Although people are being urged to participate, it

¹⁰ National Strategy for Environmental Protection until 2020, and Vision towards 2030 (September 2012)

¹¹ Law on Environmental Protection 2005, Article 6, Paragraph 1

¹² Resolution of Vietnam's Party Congress 2011 (January 2011)

doesn't seem as if they are currently given the power to do so.

At the time of this report, MoNRE is about to complete a draft that will once more amend the existing Law on Environmental Protection. This involves a consultation process to allow stakeholders to provide their comments. The submission of the amendment's final draft to government and National Assembly is expected for July and October 2013 respectively¹³. While the details of the final draft are not known yet stakeholders are reportedly advocating for the inclusion of significantly improved rules to facilitate the participation of the public in the protection of the environment.

¹³ Source: [http://vea.gov.vn/en/news/news/Pages/Mobalizing-resources-to-complete-the-draft-Law-on-Environmental-Protection-\(Amended\).aspx](http://vea.gov.vn/en/news/news/Pages/Mobalizing-resources-to-complete-the-draft-Law-on-Environmental-Protection-(Amended).aspx)

III. PROJECT STRATEGY

(i) Project strategy and approach

The overall objective of the “Promoting Active Participation of Civil Society in Environmental Governance” project, as defined in the Project Document (UDF-VIE-09-331) in September 2010, was to improve environmental conditions in Vietnam through increased participation of civil society in environmental monitoring and reporting.

Accordingly, IUCN’s strategic approach aimed for three key outcomes:

- Increased high-level government support for NGO participation in environmental monitoring and reporting;
- Improved environmental media coverage;
- Formation and support of a network of local environmental NGOs through networking, information sharing, and IUCN membership.

At the project’s outset, local NGOs had reportedly started to influence government policy through targeted advocacy, but these private, voluntary and non-profit organizations remained few in number and displayed limited levels of institutional capacity. While these NGOs aspired to achieve independent oversight and appropriate levels of government accountability, the extent of their actual contribution was limited, given the lack of knowledge, skills and resources they were facing. According to the grantee’s initial analysis, these were the main reasons why forests continued to degrade, the illegal wildlife trade thrived, dams were built without adequate consultation, and environmental safeguards were widely ignored.

Striving to enhance environmental conditions in Vietnam, IUCN had particular expectations from its close cooperation with VIHR, CETAC and CIFOR:

- the introduction of a revised environment and human rights curriculum by the Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics and Public Administration (HCMIPA), which trains Vietnam’s political leaders;
- an expanded news coverage and analysis/reporting of better quality by environmental journalists.

The project’s strategy is fully consistent with IUCN’s mission statement for Vietnam, which is “[...] to influence, encourage, and assist Vietnam’s biodiversity conservation and equitable sustainable use of natural resources for improving its people’s quality of life.”¹⁴ The organization was among the first NGOs to open a local office in Hanoi in 1993. However, engagement in the country started as early as 1984, by providing support to the development of biodiversity conservation and environmental protection laws and policies. Contributions were made, among others, to the Forest Law (2004), the Environment Law (2005) and the Biodiversity Law (2008). The present UNDEF-funded project illustrates IUCN’s recent shift of strategic focus from policy formulation to policy implementation, by exposing the Vietnamese government to pressure, but also by supporting it, to increase transparency and accountability vis-à-vis environmental concerns.

¹⁴ Source: http://www.iucn.org/about/union/secretariat/offices/asia/asia_where_work/vietnam/about/

(ii) Logical framework

The Project Document translates IUCN's programmatic approach into a structured plan of project activities and intended outcomes, including the achievement of the project's overall and specific objectives. The framework below aims to capture the project logic systematically, also attempting to eliminate confusion between activities, intended outcomes and impacts, which evaluators at times observed in the Project Document's result framework.

Project Activities & Interventions	Intended outcomes	Medium Term Impacts	Long Term Development Objectives
<p><u><i>1. High-level Political Awareness Raising</i></u></p> <p>Preparation of a revised environment and human rights curriculum, in collaboration with local NGOs and the Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics and Public Administration (HCMPA), which trains Vietnam's political leaders</p> <p>Local NGOs present their work to government officials at workshops organized by Vietnam Institute of Human Rights (VIHR)</p>	<p>The new curriculum was piloted with a selected audience, revised and delivered to 500-700 trainees, and has become part of HCMPA's core course, including a module on the participation of civil society organizations (CSOs) in environmental monitoring and reporting</p> <p>Practical benefits of public participation demonstrated and CSOs invited to participate in two major national target programs</p>	<p>New environment and human rights curriculum institutionalized</p> <p>Enabling environment generated, i.e. increased support and demand for civil society participation among senior government officials</p>	
<p><u><i>2. Media Engagement</i></u></p> <p>Based on needs assessment, training journalists in environmental research and reporting</p> <p>Documentation and synthesis of media reporting to monitor the supply of environmental news and the government's response</p>	<p>A critical mass of 20 environmental journalists trained twice, and supported through on-going liaison and information sharing</p> <p>An environmental issues media coverage of 100 articles per year, with an average quality of 8/10</p>	<p>Enhanced quality and increased quantity of environmental reporting and analysis</p>	<p>Improved environmental conditions in Vietnam through increased participation of civil society in environmental monitoring and reporting</p>
<p><u><i>3. Local Environmental NGO Capacity Building</i></u></p> <p>Based on survey among NGOs, technical capacity development (financial audit and annual reporting); advice on fund raising and strategy development</p>	<p>Local NGOs meet the membership (and donor) standard criteria and four of them applied to join IUCN.</p>	<p>A network established among NGOs and of NGOs with commissions, specialist groups, and as members with IUCN, which is lasting and mutually beneficial</p>	

IV. EVALUATION FINDINGS

(i) Relevance

Baseline Situation

IUCN relied on three sources to underpin its initial assessment: (i) a review (April 2010) of HCMPA's course material and of the content of VIHR's draft environment and human rights training module; (ii) an environmental news survey (at the project's outset), i.e. an analysis of press articles by CETAC and interviews with journalists and editors, to inform the training needs assessment for journalists and to establish a baseline for monitoring the project's impact; and (iii) initial meetings with local environmental NGOs to determine their interests and existing capacities.

The baseline findings led the grantee to the conclusion that (1) case studies developed by local NGOs will enhance VIHR's environment and human rights draft training module, as they can demonstrate to government officials the benefits of civil society participation; (2) training courses exposing journalists to new ideas, methods, data and information sources are needed to encourage research and investigation of environmental issues, thus overcoming prolonged dependency on government sources; (3) targeted capacity-building measures will facilitate the application of local NGOs interested in IUCN membership.

The project response

Evaluators found various examples of relevant project design, addressing the above three baseline aspects:

1. High-level Political Awareness Raising

IUCN's strategic approach was to closely collaborate with VIHR of HCMPA in the revision of an environment and human rights curriculum, the institution training Vietnam's political leaders, in order to improve the likelihood of acceptance and continued use of the project's planned deliverable. Most notably, the curriculum was to include a new module on the participation of civil society organizations in environmental monitoring and reporting, thus ensuring the transfer of international and national experience with the practical benefits of public participation. By involving both local NGO stakeholders and state-level key actors in

Selected baseline findings

- HCMPA's training courses include minimal environmental material and nothing on the role of civil society.
- VIHR's draft module on civil society participation in environmental monitoring and governance requires content improvements (e.g. through inclusion of case studies).
- Journalists generally focus on existing issues; little effort is made to anticipate problems or highlight the links between broader socio- economic trends and environmental conditions. There is no evidence of independent investigation or the use of non-government sources (e.g. NGOs). Instead, journalists report the information provided by the government.
- Support needs of four local NGOs (ACCD, CECR, SCC and SIE), which expressed interest to join IUCN, included: website and database improvements; participation in and/or organization of accountancy, financial management and environmental leadership training.

the delivery of the curriculum (through co-authorship), the project grantee aspired to increase support and demand for civil society participation among senior government officials and thus to improve the enabling environment for local environmental NGOs.



Training manual on the human-rights based approach to environmental protection

HCMPA's training courses previously included minimal environmental material and little was mentioned about the role of civil society. Accordingly, with the topics covered by the new training manual "Human Rights-Based Approach to Environmental Protection", co-authors aimed at a combination of academic expertise and relevant practical field experience: module (1) introduces the current situation and the challenges environment and sustainable development face in Vietnam; module (2) provides students with an understanding of the relationship between environment and human rights; module (3) explains the links between international/national environmental protection and human right laws; module (4) aims to raise awareness of the role of CSOs in environmental monitoring and reporting; and module (5) highlights the necessity to ensure citizens have access to environmental information, can monitor the implementation of environmental protection laws and are given the possibility to participate in the environmental law and policy making processes.

2. Media Engagement

Capitalizing on previous project experience, IUCN prepared different training programmes on themes of particular relevance to the Vietnamese context, i.e. on sustainable forest management (in cooperation with implementing partner CIFOR, a leading center on climate change, sustainable forestry management and poverty alleviation), marine and coastal ecosystems, and water resources management. These were designed to ensure lasting improvements to the quality of the analysis and reporting of environmental issues.

The intention of e.g. the "Investing in Coastal Ecosystems Journalist Training Workshop" was to make use of the experience of the Mangroves for the Future (MFF) Initiative coordinated by IUCN¹⁵ (a) to introduce journalists to the role and importance of coastal ecosystems and (b) to provide them with related practical examples of journalism drawing public attention to emerging environmental problems. More specifically, the workshop's methodological approach aimed to build technical capacity in investigative journalism, i.e. how to identify stories, how to follow up on and support certain story angles, including research and field investigation by conducting interviews with stakeholders (e.g. local government, associations, politicians) and the local population (e.g. people who's livelihood or quality of life has been affected by environmental issues).

¹⁵ Mangroves are the "flagship ecosystem" of the MFF initiative, which addresses all coastal ecosystems, including coral reefs, estuaries, lagoons, wetlands, beaches and sea grass beds. Source: [http:// www.mangrovesforthefuture.or](http://www.mangrovesforthefuture.or)

3. Local Environmental NGO Capacity Building

Despite IUCN's long-standing involvement in environmental protection in Vietnam, its membership base remained small over the past years. It is understood that the organization's effort during its earlier period of involvement in Vietnam, which aimed to influence the government's environmental policy, was probably perceived by local NGO's as a "too close" collaboration. IUCN addressed this by seeking to share information, by forging joint initiatives and by offering advice and financial support to non-member NGOs.

Accordingly, the grantee's specific objective under this component of the UNDEF-funded project was to offer non-member NGOs more opportunities of operational support in those areas in which they most often lack capacity. IUCN's offer was designed to support local NGOs e.g. in strategic planning, financial management, and communications, thus helping them to meet key donor standard criteria. It was also hoped that the activities would convince some beneficiaries that IUCN membership would be advantageous for the achievement of their organizational objectives in the long-term.

(ii) Effectiveness

The project's final narrative report describes a generally successful project. As a matter of fact, the project completed all of its scheduled activities within the extended project implementation period. However, at the time of the evaluation visit, the integration of the training manual on the "Human Rights-Based Approach to Environmental Protection" into VIHR's curriculum for its 500-700 Bachelor's and Master's degree students, who are high-level government officials at the central and provincial level, was still to take place. Five months after the project closing date, the project's ultimate ambition to contribute to increased support and demand for civil society participation among senior government officials therefore remains partly unachieved.

Further changes occurred, though without affecting the project's implementation progress:

- instead of WWF and TRAFFIC, The Center of Environment Training and Communications (CETAC) of the Vietnam Environmental Administration (VEA) became an implementing partner (a government organization mandated to train environmental journalist);
- following the departure of the IUCN's legal and policy coordinator, project management duties were transferred to the grantee's programme coordinator.

1. High-level Political Awareness Raising

Under the coordination of IUCN the planned contributions to the revision of VIHR's training manual were completed: as foreseen in the project document, the grantee delivered (a) assessments of foreign experience with civil society participation in environmental monitoring and reporting, including conclusions on implications for the Vietnamese context; (b) a series of working meetings with local NGOs, which led to the elaboration of seven case studies, describing relevant Vietnamese NGO experience, for inclusion into module 4 on the role of civil society organizations in environmental monitoring and protection. Feedback on the manual's five draft modules obtained in 2 workshops involving 62 participants from VIHR, other HCMPA institutes, the Department of Natural Resources and Environment, the Ministry of Public Security, departments of local and environmental police and

representatives of farmers' and women's unions, was integrated in the final version of the training manual, of which 2500 copies were produced by IUCN.

With these manuals IUCN has ensured that relevant information will be readily available, once the "Human Rights-Based Approach to Environmental Protection" has been integrated into VIHR's compulsory curriculum. Given the range of case studies supporting the below listed topics, evaluators assume that the new material, as soon as fully in use, will effectively generate increased support for NGO participation in environmental monitoring and reporting among high-level government officials at the central and provincial level:

- CSO objectives - detecting and denouncing the pollution of the environment: case study by the Centre for Education of Nature of Vietnam (ENV);
- Social criticism as a form of debate supporting environmental protection: case studies by the Association for Conservation of Nature and Environment in Vietnam (ACNEV) and its Institute for Environment and Sustainable Development;
- Policy advocacy and consultancy services promoting environmental protection: case studies by the Institute for Consultancy and Development (CODE) and the Center for People and Nature (PanNature);
- The role of CSOs: Enhancing community participation in the monitoring and protection of the environment: case study by the Institute of Ecological Economics (ECO-ECO).

Interviews conducted at the time of the evaluation visit with HCMPA and VIHR officials revealed that despite the existence of an integration plan, new courses based on the revised environment and human rights curricula were still not offered by HCMPA. No official decision has been taken about the definitive timing of the launch of the human-rights based environmental protection course for Bachelor's degree students (25 hours, obligatory, 150-200 trainees annually), Master's degree students (30 hours, independent subject, 50 trainees annually), and for high/middle ranking (5-15 hours, supplementary subject, 450-500 trainees annually) officials of the Communist Party, government and mass organizations. The grantee's final narrative report, however, indicated a launch at least for the Bachelor's degree and high/middle-ranking officials for the 2012-2013 school year (with remaining target groups to follow a year later). The rationale behind this timing was that institutionalization of the new course would improve the enabling environment for civil society participation, and IUCN accordingly expected that with senior government officials passing the course demand for greater civil society participation would increase. Interview partners presented evaluators with two main reasons for the delay. These included (i) a lack of resources within HCMPA and the need of support for VIHR to implement a training of trainers scheme for future trainers (ToT) at HCMPA's regional-level sub-academies who will be in charge of the training of provincial and district-level officials and civil servants; and (ii) the necessity to prepare training material more adequate to meet the basic knowledge of grass-roots level officials.

Given the above, only a limited number of the new manuals are currently in use. VIHR withheld the majority of textbooks pending the launch of the new human rights and environment courses. For the time being, only some of VIHR's and HCMPA's academic staff

from across a variety of disciplines has started to make use of the manual, as and when appropriate. However, evaluators have noted that the grantee (upon UNDEF recommendation) during the project's extension period organized two additional workshops to provide local NGOs with the opportunity to demonstrate the practical benefits of their environmental protection work to 88 officials (representing different levels of governance similar to the groups of participants above) and to directly discuss with them the barriers they face when trying to support civil society participation.



Participants of the Media Training on Sustainable Forest Management, which was supported by implementing partner CIFOR

2. Media Engagement

Under this component IUCN planned, among other outputs, to provide training and a refresher workshop for 20 journalists. This being a key output, the grantee clearly exceeded this target figure. Three different workshops on sustainable forest management, marine and coastal ecosystems, and water resources management (including field trips to Hanoi, Son La, Hue, Quang Nam, and Dong Thap Province) were followed by 45 journalists and involved also the participation of 13 experts/resource persons and 9 local authority representatives. Instead of the planned refresher activity, an awareness-raising trip to Co To Island in Quang Ninh Province was

jointly organized with Green Viet Nam Journey, a government initiative that takes journalists around the country to see environmental problems at first hand. Promoting the use of biologically degradable bags instead of plastic bags the trip demonstrated how to make paper bags and included a joint beach cleanup initiative with coast guards and students from the universities of Hanoi and Hai Phong.

Among prominent examples of effectively increased media coverage produced by local journalists after these journalist trainings are:

- Articles on biodiversity in “Voice of Vietnam” published on 19 April 2012 and 18 Jan 2013, based on interviews with IUCN, WWF, MARD, VEA/MONRE and other local institutions;
- Two documentary films on mangroves restoration and conservation in Quang Nam Province, broadcasted on Da Nang VTV in February 2013.

The fact that workshop participants in post-training surveys rated field trips as most useful highlights the understanding they have effectively achieved of the importance of local research and interviews. Disappointment about the short duration of some fieldtrips confirms their desire for more opportunities to engage in investigative environmental journalism. Given this feedback evaluators consider the project has effectively generated new potential for environmental media coverage of improved quality.

3. Local Environmental NGO Capacity Building



CECR's Youth Leadership Project with IUCN assistance helped young people to analyze pollution levels in various lakes of Hanoi

Following IUCN's interest and capacity survey, the Center for Environment and Community Research (CECR) was given the opportunity to develop its internal technical capacity by obtaining training in financial management, control and reporting for NGOs. In addition, UNDEF-funded support helped CECR to (i) implement a "Youth leadership training project", which monitored pollution levels in selected of Hanoi's many lakes (i.e. purchase of water analysis tools, equipment and survey resources); (ii) launch a lake protection website and support its communication officer administrating the website. CECR's director vis-à-vis the evaluators described the assistance as

vital to both (a) prepare for the audit to be performed as part of its IUCN membership application; (b) to meet international donor fund application criteria; and emphasized: "Working with IUCN does not feel like a project any more, since compared to the past we feel we have become more of a professional environmental organization. As future IUCN members, we expect to gain access to and to develop internationally relevant expertise in order to apply it at the local level."

Institutional capacity and communications support was also granted to the Climate Change Resilience Center (SCC) in the form of financial management and website development assistance, and by sponsoring travel expenses linked to the participation in a training under the Climate Reality Project of former US Vice President Al Gore. The biodiversity database of the Southern Institute of Ecology (SIE) required a more effective operating system, thus UNDEF project funding was allocated by IUCN to support the development of a new, more efficient, software.

At the time of their visit, evaluators found the membership applications of CECR and SIE under final review by IUCN (SCC's was still to be prepared), which indicates that the grantee's capacity building efforts effectively contributed towards the establishment of a local environmental NGO network under the umbrella of IUCN.

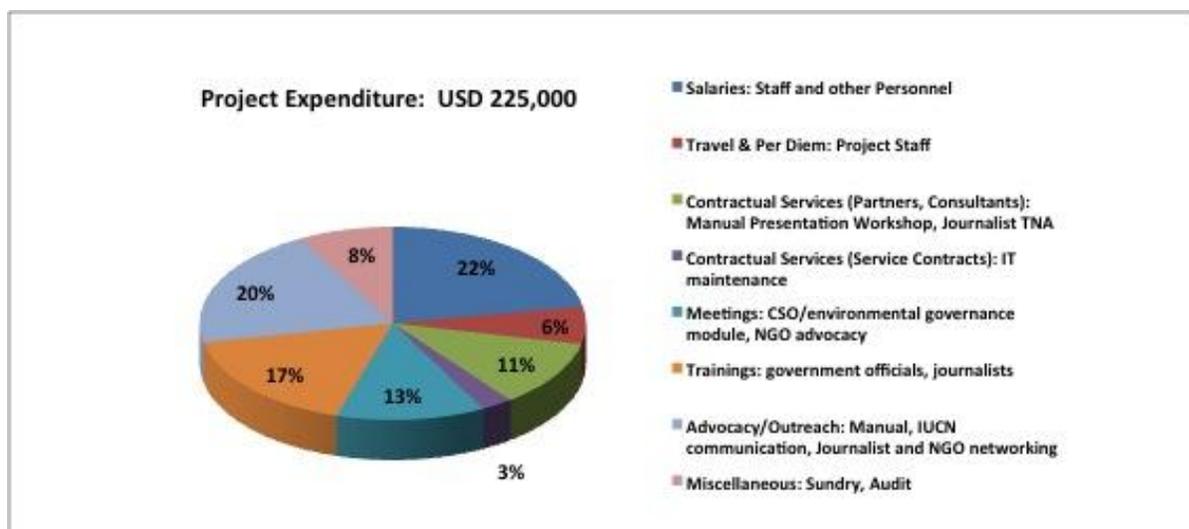
(iii) Efficiency¹⁶

Activities pursuing the projects first and second objectives to (1) generate awareness of the practical benefits of civil society participation in environmental monitoring and reporting among senior government officials and (2) to improve related journalistic coverage (i.e. workshops, field trips) and the development and publication of appropriate information and training materials (involving national expertise and production) represented the project's principal focus. Accordingly, 43.8% of the budget was reserved for expenditure related to the review of the environment and human rights curriculum (15.6%, including costs associated with content preparation and the production of the manual) and beneficiary training (28.2%,

¹⁶ Quantitative assessments made in this section are based on the total amount of project expenditure, which excludes the budget amount reserved for evaluation by UNDEF.

including costs for workshop organization and for contractual services for piloting the manual with selected government officials and for conducting a journalist training needs assessment). In consistency with the project’s third objective, which supported the networking with and among local environmental NGOs, a further 18.3% of the budget was committed to NGO capacity building and IUCN membership development (including environmental advocacy meetings, IT and communications support, and preparatory assistance for IUCN membership application).

In terms of training expenditure, breaking the amount spent (USD 63,500) over the total number of 155 direct beneficiaries¹⁷ provides an acceptable average cost of approximately USD 248 per training beneficiary¹⁸. Breaking the amount spent for the preparation and production of the environment and human rights training manual (USD 35,000)¹⁹ over the total number of 88 direct beneficiaries²⁰ provides a high average cost of approximately USD 398 per beneficiary. Including 700 Bachelor’s and Master’s degree candidates (i.e. the number of high-level government officials at the central and provincial level expected to be trained by VIHR every year) as indirect beneficiaries would, however, lower the average cost per beneficiary to USD 50. In other words, implementation partners must stick to their commitment to introduce the environment and human rights training into the curriculum of VIHR, as otherwise the potential benefit of efficient project conduct could be lost.



The nominal unit cost of the training manual, which amounts to USD 14 (2,500 copies printed), is significantly lower, but cannot be considered as long as these haven’t been made accessible for actual use (cf. section of effectiveness above; new courses based on the new, revised, manual have not started yet).

¹⁷ This figure includes 88 government officials participating in 2 workshops on the benefits of NGO work and 67 beneficiaries of journalist training workshops/field trips, as provided to evaluators by the grantee.

¹⁸ Given the journalist trainings were 3-day events and included field trips, the cost is considered acceptable.

¹⁹ Expenditure budgeted for project management (i.e. salaries) is not included in this percentages/amounts.

²⁰ This figure relates to the participants of the two workshops for government officials on the benefits of NGO work, which at the time of the evaluation visit were the sole individual recipients of the revised manual. According to IUCN, 2,300 copies have been transferred to VIHR for later distribution to both its lecturers and trainees. In addition, VIHR intends to retain a currently unknown quantity of copies for future training of trainers at the provincial level.

IUCN and the partnership incurred no expenses for equipment. Given the extent of logistics required to arrange (1) trainings for government officials and journalists and a number of meetings with local NGOs across various locations in Vietnam, the expenses allocated for travel (6.3%) and miscellaneous purposes (8% covering sundry and audit) appear reasonable.

(iv) Impact

Compared to the project's initial outcome indicators and baseline findings, the grantee's monitoring and reporting efforts revealed that the effects IUCN originally aimed for were almost achieved.

- *Raising high-level political awareness* (expected: CSOs invited to participate in 2 major national target programmes): IUCN reports that CECR in 2012 was invited by the Vietnam Union of Science and Technology Associations to provide feedback on a draft version of the Law on Natural Disaster Risk Protection.
- *Media engagement* (target: increase from 50 medium quality to 100 enhanced quality environmental articles per year): the project generated 50 news articles, films, and radio programmes, which demonstrated that participating journalists had gained an understanding of complex issues, such as forest management. CETAC's second media monitoring report (January – June 2012) shows that “[...] the way to exploit information and cover issues has [...] improved in terms of quality and depth”, highlighting that journalists now tend more to combine various information sources to investigate and report environmental issues. However, it also found that compared to 2010 “[...] the proportion of environmental articles does not change much”. CETAC's screening of three major Vietnamese newspapers in 2012 identified 510 reports during 6 months, while in 2010 the same media produced a total of 988 environmental reports over 12 months.
- *Local Environmental NGO Capacity Building* (expected: 3 local NGOs join IUCN): At the time of the evaluation visit ACCD had formally joined, applications of CECR and SIE were under review.

In addition, on the basis of interviews held with 4 implementing partner representatives and 14 project beneficiaries, evaluators have independently formed the view that the project generated first positive effects. Selected anecdotes are provided below²¹. They are grouped along some of the key issues identified in the grantee's initial contextual analysis (= baseline, cf. section on relevance) to demonstrate how the project changed the perception of civil society participation in environmental monitoring and reporting and to indicate potential impact on environmental journalism and NGO capacity. These examples demonstrate that the grantee was successful in providing a response to the baseline situation.

²¹ In line with current development practice, an effort was made to identify recent anecdotes or to obtain, where possible, details of relevance complementing the grantee's available report documentation, to conduct an independent assessment of impact.

Training courses previously included minimal environmental material and nothing on the role of civil society

“So far we exposed only a few of our students to the new material”, admits the **Director of VIHR**, Dr. Dang Dung Chi. “As the principal human rights research and training institution for high level government staff, we will be best placed to ensure impact of the project’s output. We therefore hope to transfer the new knowledge to our regular training participants soon and we expect them to function as multipliers at the provincial level.”

Among those, who have already had access to the new training manual and who claim they have partially integrated contents into their lecturing at VIHR, are **Senior Lecturer** Ms. Do Thi Hong Thom and **Senior Researcher** Ms. Tran Thi Hoe. Both found the manual useful and comprehensive, saying it combined concept, definitions and national / international human rights standards with laws / regulations on environmental protection, and with information on the role of NGOs / CSOs in protecting the environment. They confirmed that the training material’s content has changed their perception of community involvement, and that it has inspired them and other fellow students to focus in their thesis research on civil society participation as a human right to ensure environmental monitoring and reporting.

The draft module on civil society participation in environmental monitoring and governance required content improvements (e.g. through inclusion of case studies)

Mr. Do Trong Hung, **Chairman of the Commission of Popularization and Education of Thanh Hoa Province**, a VIHR trainee who studied the manual in preparation for his exam. He found the manual relevant and making particular reference to a case of water contamination, he said the extent of pollution of Vietnam’s environment had become unbearable: “The case studies are [practical examples of] lessons learned than can show many provinces how NGOs mobilize community participation to protect the environment.” Being inspired by the new manual, it is his intention to write a thesis on civil society participation ensuring environmental protection at the local level. Accordingly, he highlighted the need for a similar manual addressing district and commune levels, in order to raise the awareness of local-level authorities about the benefits of public participation.

However, implementation partners still have to live up to realizing their commitment of full integration of the human rights and environment manual into the curriculum of HCMPA, to enable the project to realize ultimate impact, i.e. increased support and demand for civil society participation among Vietnam’s senior government officials. While the above demonstrates a good potential that Vietnam’s future political elite will become open to civil society participation in environmental governance, at the time of the evaluation visit VIHR did not appear set to fully launch an integrated human rights and environment course as part of its Bachelor’s or Master’s degree program. No official decision has been taken about the definitive timing of the launch of the human-rights based environmental protection courses; and upon request neither IUCN nor HCMPA/VIHR officials were able to present evaluators with evidence of expressed support by the Communist Party’s Central Committee or the Board of HCMPA for such a move.

The following stories evaluators gathered to demonstrate the project’s potential impact on environmental journalism and NGO capacity:

**Journalists previously focused on existing issues
and were not used to undertake independent investigation**

IUCN's journalist trainees interviewed by evaluators expressed their appreciation for the training courses and field trips the grantee and its implementing partners organized, saying that these remarkably improved their awareness and understanding of the variety of environmental issues the local population faces across Vietnam. Some journalists described how the series of newspaper, radio and TV reports on e.g. protection of wildlife and biodiversity, which they produced in the context of the UNDEF-funded project, motivated them to investigate and report about other environmentally relevant topics: Mr. Nguyen Hung Cuong of ***Voice of Vietnam*** currently investigates the impact of dike construction on the quality of rice production. Ms. Nguyen Hong Nga of ***Hanoi Television*** follows an activity promoting "environmentally responsible living" encouraging the use of second-hand clothing. Mr. Pham Hoang Nam of ***Vietnam News*** told evaluators that he invests himself in making junior-level journalists aware of the importance to base their reporting on sound research and fact checking. Therefore, he made available all scientific contacts he obtained from the UNDEF project and he continuously encourages his younger colleagues to undertake field trips to conduct interviews with the people, whose livelihoods are affected by environmental issues.

Improved capacity and outreach of local NGOs

SCC's Green Action Campaign during seven days promoted a greener life style (i.e. and environmentally responsible use of water, transportation etc.). Spearheaded by Miss Vietnam 2010 as "ambassador" and supported by calls for environmental action by IUCN's programme coordinator, the campaign attracted Hanoi's youth in large numbers. Over 7,000 SCC website-visitors clicked the "like-button" and 38 articles in newspapers, radio and TV reported about the SCC campaign. According to Mr. Vu Trung Kien, Director of SCC, the project's support to this campaign has (1) enhanced environmental awareness; (2) created an environmental campaign model for CSOs; and (3) raised the public profile of SCC. "Having organized the event, we have also learned to better plan ahead", he says. "IUCN supported the campaign, although we gave only 3 months of notice, but we do now know that an action proposal needs to be better planned and completed much earlier, if we want to satisfy donor expectations in the future."

SIE's Deputy Director Dr. Luu Hong Truong told evaluators that access to IUCN's network following project completion supported efforts to preserve the unique biodiversity of the **Ba Tai hill area in Kien Giang Province** from extraction by cement producing companies. The lime stone area is the habitat of high-level endemic species, i.e. the Indochinese Silvered Langur and a newly identified plant species, for which SIE just submitted a specification as "Amorphophallus Kienluongensis" to the Nordic Journal of Botany. Having involved local newspapers, TV, provincial- and state-level authorities, and mobilizing donor funding for the production of a documentary film, SIE is optimistic that the area will be declared a nature reserve. Prevention of expansion of extracting activities to Ba Tai will enable the relocation of the Langurs, of which in Vietnam only 78 exist (2009), from nearby lime stone hills, which are subject to ongoing extraction.

(v) Sustainability

Five months after project completion, evaluators came across a number of issues that risk undermining the sustainability of the project's results. While the project's achievements are not to be disputed, there is a potential risk that the efforts and fruits of some of implementing partner's work may be lost:

1. The training manual has not been integrated into VIHR's course curriculum

The project's design expected the integration of the human rights-based approach to environmental protection into HCMPA's core course (lectured by VIHR) to take effect upon completion of the manual, which turned out to be a risky assumption in an environment where changes to the academic curriculum require the official support of (1) the Central Committee of Vietnam's Communist Party and Government and (2) the Board of the President and the Party Executive Committee of HCMPA.

VIHR's Director and Deputy Director as well as HCMPA's Director for International Cooperation expressed their conviction that, given the high educational value of the manual and their appreciation for the work completed in cooperation with IUCN, additional donor support may be mobilized to meet additional the needs described above in the section on effectiveness. Upon request of evaluators, they were however unable to present evidence that the achievements made by the UNDEF project to date are politically supported by either the Party's Central Committee or the Board of HCMPA.

2. Only a fraction of the produced training manuals were distributed

For the time being, a limited number of copies have been disseminated among IUCN training participants and several of HCMPA's 12 research and training institutes. A VIHR lecturer, researcher and student each confirmed that the manual inspires their current teaching and/or research methods and that they make use of its content as and when appropriate. They also reported that their fellow colleagues are eager to access and absorb the contents of the new textbooks. However, in the absence of a fully implemented course scheme, a vast majority of the 2,500 copies remain to be disseminated, hence the level of awareness raising about the benefits of civil society participation has not reached its projected extent.

3. Anticipation of environmental issues, based on independent research, remains exception

During the majority of interviews with journalists, evaluators noted that almost one year after the second round of CETAC's media monitoring certain key findings are still valid. Often

environmental journalism continues to rely principally on government-controlled information sources. Accordingly, the main story focus lies on existing environmental issues, which have been “cleared” by the government to become the subject of reflection in the public. Evaluators in many cases also found the reporters’ motivation to engage in western-style investigative journalism undermined by strict controls they are exposed to by the chief editor officials of Vietnam’s public media.

4. Local NGOs eligible for membership are facing difficulties to join IUCN

Strikingly, none of the three organizations currently considering IUCN membership are actually in the position to “afford” IUCN membership. Despite its interest, SCC struggles with scarce human and financial resources, hence does not have neither an external auditor at hand (an IUCN requirement) nor funds to spare for the actual IUCN membership. CECR successfully applied for small-grant funding by the US Embassy to be in a position to finance its first year membership. SIE as a semi-government organization (25% of its annual 100,000 USD budget is supported by the government) expressed its difficulty to pay the membership fee, which is higher than for NGOs.

(vi) UNDEF Value Added

A number of local NGOs highlighted to evaluators that UNDEF’s support was vital to further progress the mainstreaming of democratic principles into environmental governance. Despite the existing working relationships with Vietnam’s government, the grantee assessed the likelihood that such a project could go forward with funding by a donor organization other than UNDEF as very low. It appears the United Nations is a donor the government (not only as a beneficiary) feels “comfortable” with, which may also explain why VIHR/HCMPA directors had no difficulty to express their hope to obtain further UNDEF support in preparation for the training of grass-roots level officials. In line with this “trend” it has also been noted that local NGOs have recently applied for UNDEF funding.

V. CONCLUSIONS

i. We found that the combination of activities aiming to (a) raise high-level political awareness, (b) improve media engagement, and (c) support the capacity development of local NGOs, were appropriate to facilitate the generation of favorable conditions for a more sustainable development of Vietnam's environment. Our findings related to the human rights and environmental training manuals show that these were designed to ensure that VIHR's graduates dispose of a better understanding of the benefits of civil society participation. Exposure to practical examples of journalism drawing public attention to emerging environmental problems in our view was suitable to inspire journalists in the use of independent research methods and sources of investigation. In addition, IUCN's capacity building addressed donor key-expectations in (i.e. strategic planning, financial management, and communications), which non-member NGOs lacked capacity. We therefore conclude that **the project's design was relevant** to help key actors to directly address disregard of environmental safeguards, such as forests degradation and the threatening of maritime and coastal ecosystems.

ii. Given VIHR's manual has been enhanced by a range of case studies, evaluators assume that the new material, as soon as fully in use, will effectively generate increased support for local NGO participation in environmental monitoring and reporting among high-level government officials at the central and provincial level. News coverage produced following participation in different workshops on sustainable forest management, marine and coastal ecosystems, and water resources management provides first evidence that the importance of researching independent sources of information and conducting interviews with the local population have been clearly understood by the project's journalist trainees. These accomplishments, together with the progress made by local NGOs in becoming more professionally managed environmental organizations, lead us to the conclusion that the project's implementation partnership made an **effective contribution towards the achievement of improved environmental conditions in Vietnam.**

iii. We have already found (a) VIHR graduates and senior students indicating to us that the project has changed their perception of civil society participation in environmental monitoring and reporting; (b) journalist investigating topics prompted by their own curiosity, and (c) local NGOs benefitting from raised internal technical capacities and better network access. Notable examples include VIHR academics whose research and lecturing has been inspired by the manual's case studies, journalists encouraging their colleagues to invest themselves field investigation, and NGOs collaborating with IUCN and the government to protect endangered species. These first signs of improvement and change, which are drawn from testimonials we have gathered among beneficiaries, demonstrate the **potential impact** of the project. However, implementation partners still have to achieve full integration of the human rights and environment manual into the curriculum of HCMPA, to realize the project's ultimate impact, i.e. increased support and demand for civil society participation among Vietnam's senior government officials.

iv. In terms of the project's efficiency, the cumulative expenditure for the preparation and production of the environment and human rights training manual results in a high average unit cost of USD 398 for each of the 88 direct beneficiary of the project's high-level political awareness raising component. As we found the project struggling to achieve its ultimate impact, which is the provision of human-rights based environmental protection courses, the project's 500-700 indirect beneficiaries at this point cannot be taken into consideration. Therefore the **potential benefit of efficient project conduct is at risk**. If the project's outputs came to use in the very near future, the average cost per beneficiary would decrease to USD 50.

v. Five months after the project closing date, VIHR has not yet officially decided about the definitive timing of the launch of the human-rights based environmental protection course, based on the project's manual. As a result, there is no clear perspective as to when VIHR students can make use of the 2,500 copies of the training manual produced by IUCN. We conclude that the grantee must have missed to foresee and maintain ongoing coordination with VIHR/HCMPA, in order to secure the necessary support of the Communist Party's Central Committee or the Board of HCMPA. As far as environmental journalism is concerned, CETAC's research shows that a good part of coverage still comprises of news items "cleared" by the government. We believe that a stronger (or at least equal) focus on chief editors could have achieved already in the medium-term conditions more conducive to the investigation of environmental topics, which were not covered by previous state-authorized reporting. Finally, we have noted that the IUCN membership fee requirement represents too much of a burden to all but one of the local NGOs supported by the project. **These issues put the sustainability of the project's outcomes at risk**. Here it appears, that the grantee may have overlooked to assess and review its membership requirements vis-à-vis the organizational development stage (which often determines the financial strength) of those NGOs it chose to support and prepare for IUCN membership.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

To strengthen the outcome and similar projects in the future, evaluators recommend to UNDEF and project grantees:

i. The pertinence of the project's design and effectiveness is among others owed to the project's (a) workshops in which local NGOs were able to directly discuss with officials representing different levels of governance the advantages and barriers of civil society participation; and (b) field trips which provided many journalists with a first-time-ever opportunity to speak to citizens whose livelihoods were affected by environmental pollution and to subsequently discuss with local government representatives the question how these issues have been addressed. ***In accordance with our findings on relevance and effectiveness, we therefore recommend to UNDEF*** to encourage applicants promoting civil society participation in environmental governance to foresee both CSO and media exposure in order to maximize awareness among future political leaders, decision makers, journalists and the local population about the benefits of the jointly identification of and development of solutions for environmental issues.

ii. As long as VIHR fails to ensure timely and unrestricted use of the present project's training manual, the transfer of the newly acquired knowledge is at stake, rendering the project's intention to institutionalize the new environment and human rights curriculum useless. ***Based on our observations on impact and efficiency, we therefore recommend to the grantee*** to remind HCMPA/ VIHR that it has already issued a detailed integration plan, which recommended the introduction of lectures based on the project's manual (at least for the Bachelor's degree students and high/middle-ranking officials) for the 2012-2013 school year (see also Annex 24 of the grantee's final narrative report).

iii. In relation to our conclusion that that the grantee and its implementing partners did not foresee and maintain ongoing communication and coordination with VIHR/HCMPA to secure the necessary support of the Communist Party's Central Committee or the Board of HCMPA, we believe that it is of utmost importance for democracy development projects to include and continuously involve all stakeholders concerned by the introduction of previously unavailable knowledge and skills. This applies in particular to CSO projects requiring cooperation with multiple layers of central government, as it ensures continuous consultation and thus a process more likely to identify practical or administrative challenges. ***Based on our observations on sustainability, we therefore recommend to the grantee and to UNDEF*** to ensure that future project applications include specific measures promoting cooperation and ownership in case the acceptance of project deliverables is of concern to multiple layers of central government, notably through a project design applying an inclusive partnership approach, to the extent possible, that continuously involves all stakeholders concerned in the project's implementation. Concretely, (a) the grantee's project application could have included a letter of commitment by or a memorandum of understanding with the Communist Party's Central Committee / the Board of HCMPA (i.e. VIHR's superior authorities) that establishes the launch of new courses as

agreed final objective; and (b) UNDEF could have required the grantee to include their representatives in a Project Steering Committee supervising the project's implementation.

iv. We have noted considerations by the grantee and implementation partners (not necessarily connected to each other) to apply for further donor funding to support the future implementation of (a) a ToT programme covering the academic staff of HCMPA's regional-level sub-academies who will be in charge of the training of provincial and district-level officials and civil servants; and (b) additional media training programmes for environmental journalism. **Based on our comment that the sustainability of the project's outputs may be at risk, we therefore believe that it is essential and recommend to the grantee and implementation partners the following:**

- With regards to potential plans for ToT: (1) to provide more concrete indications that the introduction of compulsory exams for high-level government officials based on lectures of the manual's is consistent with the priority-setting of the country's political hierarchy. Evidence of expressed support by the Communist Party's Central Committee or the Board of HCMPA will help to satisfy potential donors that future trainers will be given possibility to systematically disseminate the contents of the new manual in the long-term; (2) to complement each manual chapter with a methodological section to provide lecturers with guidance for promoting an enabling environment for civil society participation, e.g. proposals for interactive teaching methods that prepare future local leaders and decision makers how to identify and develop solutions to environmental issues jointly with the local population.
- Concerning the plans for continued media training: to include a more substantial training effort for chief editors in future training measures, e.g. through (1) workshops facilitating exchange with foreign chief editor colleagues, and (2) best practice visits abroad, in order to demonstrate that the inclusion of civil society debate about environmental issues reflects positive on the media, often resulting in an increase of readership and feedback, thus ultimately generating increased support and demand among chief editors for journalistic field work and networking.

v. In relation to our conclusion that the grantee may have overlooked to review its membership requirements vis-à-vis the financial strength of those NGOs it chose to support and prepare for IUCN membership we believe it is of utmost importance to prioritize confidence and trust building. **Based on our observations on sustainability, we therefore recommend to the grantee** to consider waiving membership fees for financially weak NGOs it chose to support, if all other IUCN application process criteria are fulfilled. Membership fees could be reinstated subject to review once their institutional and financial strengthening has progressed further.

IX. ANNEXES

ANNEX 1: EVALUATION QUESTIONS

DAC criterion	Evaluation Question	Related sub-questions
Relevance	To what extent was the project, as designed and implemented, suited to context and needs at the beneficiary, local, and national levels?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Were the objectives of the project in line with the needs and priorities for democratic development, given the context? ▪ Should another project strategy have been preferred rather than the one implemented to better reflect those needs, priorities, and context? Why? ▪ Were risks appropriately identified by the projects? How appropriate are/were the strategies developed to deal with identified risks? Was the project overly risk-averse?
Effectiveness	To what extent was the project, as implemented, able to achieve objectives and goals?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To what extent have the project's objectives been reached? ▪ To what extent was the project implemented as envisaged by the project document? If not, why not? ▪ Were the project activities adequate to make progress towards the project objectives? ▪ What has the project achieved? Where it failed to meet the outputs identified in the project document, why was this?
Efficiency	To what extent was there a reasonable relationship between resources expended and project impacts?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Was there a reasonable relationship between project inputs and project outputs? ▪ Did institutional arrangements promote cost-effectiveness and accountability? ▪ Was the budget designed, and then implemented, in a way that enabled the project to meet its objectives?
Impact	To what extent has the project put in place processes and procedures supporting the role of civil society in contributing to democratization, or to direct promotion of democracy?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To what extent has/have the realization of the project objective(s) and project outcomes had an impact on the specific problem the project aimed to address? ▪ Have the targeted beneficiaries experienced tangible impacts? Which were positive; which were negative? ▪ To what extent has the project caused changes and effects, positive and negative, foreseen and unforeseen, on democratization? ▪ Is the project likely to have a catalytic effect? How? Why? Examples?
Sustainability	To what extent has the project, as designed and implemented, created what is likely to be a continuing impetus towards democratic development?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To what extent has the project established processes and systems that are likely to support continued impact? ▪ Are the involved parties willing and able to continue the project activities on their own (where applicable)?
UNDEF value-added	To what extent was UNDEF able to take advantage of its unique position and comparative advantage to achieve results that could not have been achieved had support come from other donors?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What was UNDEF able to accomplish, through the project, that could not as well have been achieved by alternative projects, other donors, or other stakeholders (Government, NGOs, etc). ▪ Did project design and implementing modalities exploit UNDEF's comparative advantage in the form of an explicit mandate to focus on democratization issues?

ANNEX 2: DOCUMENTS REVIEWED

UNDEF

- Final Narrative Report
- Mid-Term/Annual Progress Report
- Project Document
- Extension Request Form
- Milestone Verification Report

IUCN

- Agendas: workshops on draft manual; media trainings on forest management and coastal/maritime ecosystems

Other sources

- Vietnam annual GDP growth in percent, World Bank, <http://databanksearch.worldbank.org/DataSearch/LoadReport.aspx?db=2&cntrycode=VNM&sercode=NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG&yrcode=>
- Statistical Year Book of Vietnam, General Statistics Office of Vietnam, Hanoi (1995)
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ANNEX 3: SCHEDULE OF INTERVIEWS

Hanoi, April 1st, 2013

- IUCN Vietnam office (am): Jake Brunner, Programme Manager; Nguyen Thuy Anh, Communications and Outreach Officer, IUCN Vietnam
- Offices of Vietnam Judicial Support Association for the Poor (pm): Ta Thi Minh Ly, Chairperson of VIJUSAP
- VIHR offices (pm): Dr. Dang Dung Chi, Director; Dr. Nguyen Hoang Nghia, Deputy Director

Hanoi, April 2nd, 2013

- IUCN Vietnam office (am): Vu Trung Kien, Director of SCC
- IUCN Vietnam office (am): Nguyen Hung Cuong, journalist at Voice of Vietnam; Le Quynh Anh, journalist at Vietnam News; Le Thanh Tùng; journalist at the Government Inspection Newspaper; Nguyen Hong Nga, journalist at Hanoi Radio and Television Broadcasting
- CECR office (pm): Dr. Nguyen Ngoc Ly, Director of CECR; Nguyen Tram Anh, Deputy Director of CECR
- VIHR offices (pm): Do Trong Hung, VIHR trainee, Chairman of the Commission of Popularization and Education of Thanh Hoa Province

Hanoi, April 3rd, 2013

- Offices of Consultancy on Development Institute (am): Pham Quang Tu, Deputy Director of CODE
- Offices of People and Nature Reconciliation (am): Trinh Le Nguyen, Executive Director of Pan Nature
- HCMPA offices (pm): Assoc. Prof. Dr. Tuong Duy Kien, Director of International Cooperation of HCMPA

Ho Chi Minh City, April 4th, 2013

- Offices of Southern Institute of Ecology (am): Dr. Luu Hong Truong, Vice Director of SIE
- Nam Ky Khoi Nghia hotel (am): Pham Hoang Nam, Journalist at Vietnam News
- Nam Ky Khoi Nghia hotel (pm): Luong Nguyen An Dien, Deputy Managing Editor at Vietweek

Hanoi, April 5th, 2013

- IUCN Vietnam office (am): Tran Phong, Director of CETAC
- IUCN Vietnam office (am): Jake Brunner, Programme Manager; Nguyen Thuy Anh, Communications and Outreach Officer, IUCN Vietnam

ANNEX 4: ACRONYMS

ACCD	Action for the City
CETAC/VEA/ MONRE	Center of Environmental Training and Communications of the Vietnam Environmental Administration, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment
CECR	Center for Environment and Community Research
CIFOR	Center for International Forestry Research
CODE	Consultancy for Development Institute
GDP	Gross domestic product
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MFF	Mangroves for the Future Initiative
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PanNature	People and Nature Reconciliation
SCC	Climate Change Resilience Center
SIE	Southern Institute of Ecology
ToT	Training of Trainers
UN	United Nations
UNDEF	United Nations Democracy Fund
VHLSS	Vietnam Household Living Standards Survey
VIHR/HCMPA	Vietnam Institute of Human Rights of the Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics and Public Administration
VIJUSAP	Vietnam Judicial Support Association for the Poor
WB	World Bank