

## Evaluation Abstract

**Title, author and date of the evaluation report:**

Sustainable Utilisation of Non-Timber Forest Products Project Vietnam, Report of the Internal Review, prepared by William J. Jackson, Nguyen Van San and Harry van der Linde, December 1999

**Name of project, programme or organizational unit:**

Sustainable Utilisation of Non-Timber Forest Products Project

**Objectives of the project, programme or mandate of the organizational unit:**

The goal of the project is to promote biodiversity conservation through the sustainable use of non-timber forest products (NTFPs). Specific objectives include:

1. Strengthen the Forest Products Research Center and make it the preeminent national center for NTFP development and management;
2. Organize in each pilot site appropriate collaborative management systems which will promote and maintain sustainable NTFPs;
3. Develop and implement an effective awareness raising campaign, specifically directed at NTFP users within the pilot sites.

**IUCN area of specialisation:** Forests

**Geographical area:** Vietnam

**Project or programme duration, length of existence of organisational unit:** mid-1998 – mid 1999

**Overall budget of the project, programme or organizational unit:** Not specified

**Donor(s):** The Government of the Netherlands

**Objectives of the evaluation:**

1. To assist the project team and the project implementing partners in assessing the achievements, lessons learned, strengths and weaknesses of the project to date; and
2. To assist the project team in formulating possible adjustments in response to the assessment.

**Type of evaluation:** Mid-Term Project Evaluation

**Period covered by the evaluation:** mid-1998 -1999

**Commissioned by:** Not clear

**Audience:** Project team, implementing partners

**Evaluation team:** Internal

**Methodology used:**

The evaluation was undertaken as a collaborative effort between the review team, the project team, and the implementing partners. The approach involved document review, field visits to pilot sites, meetings and discussions with relevant stakeholders, and a short workshop on monitoring and evaluation. Gender issues and unintended project consequences were also considered.

**Questions of the evaluation:**

The review mission sought to assess project implementation and anticipated impact, with a particular focus on the relevance, effectiveness, and efficiency of project goal, objectives, approach and strategy.

**Findings:**

The project has made remarkably good progress in the short time it has been operational, with the team having continuously worked towards resolving key issues highlighted in the previous internal review.

Other specific findings include:

- The project's goal and objectives are relevant and appropriate, although ambitious for its time frame. A longer term may be needed to learn key lessons and translate these into broader policy and practice.
- Objective Three "Develop and implement an effective awareness raising campaign, specifically directed at NTFP users within pilot sites" does not seem to fit well within the logic of project design.
- While there is improved understanding about the project's goal, there are considerably divergent expectations about the outputs of the project's field work among stakeholders.
- The participatory action research approach adopted – learn – reflect – design – test and learn, seems appropriate for the pilot studies. The review team has also observed that the criteria for selection of pilot villages focused on relatively wealthy people that had large tracts of farmland. It was unclear whether the selected farmers were indeed dependent on the protected area for NTFPs.
- Project has yet to implement the major part of its work on gender. In the pilot sites, it was acknowledged that women and men have different knowledge of NTFPs and collect different types of products.
- No major problems have been identified in terms of management and administration. Substantial progress towards developing a good planning, monitoring and reporting system has been made. The procedures for financial disbursement are also considered effective.

**Recommendations:**

The following are among the review team's key recommendations:

- Identify and test the project's key assumptions, and adjust work plans, as needed.
- Develop a set of results that clearly identify what can be achieved.
- Review Objective 3 to ensure its link to the other objectives, and seek to involve a wider range of stakeholders.
- Give high priority to the development of a strategic plan for the NTFP Products Research Center.
- Continue to focus on the links between biodiversity conservation and rural development by considering not only the farming system but also links with protected areas, buffer zones and other non-agricultural lands.
- Assess the current use patterns of the Ke Go shrublands and consider developing a demonstration trial on improved management.
- Undertake further analysis on the use of fuel wood in the pilot sites and design future interventions.

A comprehensive series of recommendations on project management and administration are also contained in the report.

**Lessons Learned:**

Not specified

**Language of the evaluation:** English

**Available from:** IUCN Global Monitoring and Evaluation Initiative, Gland, Switzerland; IUCN/Asia Regional Office (ARO)