



IUCN VIETNAM PROGRAM FACT SHEET

May 2010

1. History and evolution

IUCN has a long history in Vietnam since it first supported the government in the preparation of the National Conservation Strategy in 1984. Since then, IUCN has made important contributions to biodiversity conservation and environmental protection, particularly through the development of laws and policies. Key documents that IUCN has contributed to include the National Biodiversity Action Plan in 1995, the National Environment and Sustainable Development Plan for 1991-2000, the Forest Law in 2004, the Environment Law in 2005, and the Biodiversity Law in 2009.

In 2008, IUCN completed its Strategic Framework for 2007-2010 that defined its mission as: "To influence, encourage, and assist Vietnam's biodiversity conservation and equitable sustainable use of natural resources for improving its people's quality of life." The framework defined its vision as: "To become the leading knowledge-based conservation and environmental organization, working in partnership with the government of Vietnam, civil society, and the private sector in order to promote best practices for sustainable development; maintain environmental integrity; and support sustainable livelihoods for its people."

Between 2004 and 2008, IUCN received core funding through a country support agreement (CSA) with Sida. Together with other large grants, the CSA allowed the program to expand. By the end of 2008, total staff numbered 30. The end of the CSA and winding down of several large projects resulted in a retrenchment and as of May 2010, IUCN Vietnam has a total staff of 10. In November 2009, IUCN renewed its MOU with the government for another five years. The government recognizes IUCN as an international organization with similar rights and privileges as UN agencies.

2. Programmatic priorities

Broadly speaking, the focus of IUCN's work is on helping the government adjust to the consequences of over a decade of rapid economic growth in the context of an environment that was already highly degraded following decades of war and with a large population heavily dependent on natural resources. Under these conditions, climate change, which IUCN considers a cross-cutting theme, has the potential to add significant new stresses.

Historically, IUCN has focused on policy formulation, helping the government to develop environmental laws and regulations. IUCN is now expanding its work to look increasingly at policy implementation. Generally speaking, Vietnam has an adequate set of environmental laws and regulations; the challenge is weak policy implementation.

To address this gap, IUCN is engaging a broader set of partners that can bring pressure to bear on the ministries and departments responsible for implementing policies. These include the National Assembly, Ho Chi Minh Political Academy, international businesses and state-owned enterprises, and a new generation of genuine local NGOs (genuine is the sense that they are private voluntary organizations that have been formed to address specific issues of public concern). These actors are in a position to increase the transparency of government operations and increase their accountability.

IUCN is also improving its analysis of the governance challenges that limit government action. Traditionally, the major constraint on government performance has been limited resources and inadequate training. What is increasingly clear is that while these are indeed important, there are other barriers that are not amenable to supply side solutions. These include the conflicts of interest that provincial authorities face as both beneficiaries and regulators of local industries. Another is the fact that provincial government officials are evaluated and promoted based on a narrow set of economic and political criteria. Since these exclude environmental variables, environmental concerns are effectively invisible to decision makers. Until we change the incentive system, government officials will not be motivated to act.

3. Projects

IUCN is currently implementing the following projects:

Project name	Donor	Objective	Selected partners	Start/end date
Livelihood and Landscapes Strategies (LLS)	DGIS	Promote FLEGT reforms and FLEGT/REDD links; support EU VPA negotiations; assess policy barriers to scaling up community forestry	Forest Trends, GTZ, TRAFFIC, WWF, European Forest Institute	2007-2010
Coastal and marine conservation	USFWS, UNESCO	Protect turtle nesting beaches; support management of Ha Long Bay WHS; develop GEF proposal for North Tonkin Archipelago	NOAA, UNESCO, University of Queensland	2003-ongoing
Mekong Water Dialogues (MWD)	Finland	Promote IWRM and civil society participation in water resources management; expand areas of wetlands in Mekong Delta; address potential impacts of Mekong dams	WARECOD, USGS, MRC, WWF, Can Tho University	2008-2014
Establishing a new environmental curriculum	IDLO	Design an environment and human rights curriculum for the Vietnam Institute of Human Rights	IDLO, RWI	2009-2010
Regional planning in Northern Highlands Limestone	CEPF	Improve environmental management in northern Vietnam through data integration and analysis and policy recommendations	FFI, PRCF, WARECOD, Pan Nature	2009-2010
Karst management and species protection in Kien Giang	Holcim	Establish a new protected area to offset the impacts of limestone quarrying; silvered langur management	ITB	2008-2012
Mangroves for the Future (MFF)	Sida	Promote co-management arrangements to improve mangrove restoration; assess feasibility of mangrove REDD projects	CARE, WWF, GTZ	2009-2013
Promoting active participation of civil society in environmental governance	UNDEF	Raise high-level government awareness of the need to engage NGOs in environmental monitoring, improve the quality and quantity of environment journalism, and build capacity of local NGOs	VIHR, TRAFFIC, WWF	2010-2012

4. Working with members, commissions, and partners

Relative to its long history in Vietnam and the country's biological importance, IUCN has a very small local membership with only five local members that include one government (MONRE, the state member) and four NGOs or research centers. For several years, including at the latest members meeting in July 2009, IUCN has committed itself to expanding its local membership but has been unable to dedicate the resources to make this happen. Nor has IUCN set up a National Committee. The program is therefore something of an anomaly relative to other IUCN country programs in Asia with much large local membership and active national committees.

To capitalize on its membership identity and the fact that Vietnam's pressing environmental problems require cooperation, IUCN increasingly designs projects in collaboration with other organizations. Since January 2010, IUCN and TRAFFIC have shared an office in Hanoi.

Contact

Nguyen Thuy Anh
 Communications and Outreach Officer, IUCN Vietnam
 44/4 Van Bao
 Hanoi, Vietnam
thuyanh.nguyen@iucn.org