

## **Field assessment report on collaborative management at Bi Doup-Nui Ba National Park: current situation, opportunities and recommendations for collaborative management mechanisms in the area**

Report to WWF Greater Mekong – Vietnam Country Programme. Prepared by Steve Swan, 2 April 2008

### **SITUATION**

Using the conceptual framework of four levels of increasing participation of non-forest owner stakeholders in park ‘management’, we can see that Bi Doup-Nui Ba (BD-NB) National Park has already gained experiences in participatory special-use forest functioning and nominally in the area of community institutions to support decision making. (Participation in land-use planning was cited during the workshop as an area of park planning where local communities had been engaged previously; however, analysis of this planning process indicated a one-way informative approach, where communities received information but were not actively engaged in planning decisions).

#### **1) Participatory park planning**

#### **2) Participatory park functioning**

- Village-level charters and regulations on forest protection
- Joint government-community ranger forces
- Forest protection contracts

#### **3) Participatory park management agreements**

#### **4) Participatory park decision-making**

- Commune Forest Protection Committee

Each of these activities, as they have been implemented to date, are discussed briefly in turn, with comments on potential for the further development assessed.

#### **Village-level charters and regulations on forest protection ('Huong Uoc' and 'Quy Uoc')**

Interviews with Lat commune’s People’s Committee Chairman, Vice Chairman and Party Secretary focused on this topic: Lat commune has piloted village-level charters on forest protection and development in three out of the six villages in the commune, and report effective forest protection in and around these pilot villages. The charters indicate permissible and prohibited activities within the forests of the park’s core zone.

Charters were drafted by local villagers with support of the district Legal Department and submitted to district People’s Committee for approval. The process taken by villagers is one essentially echoing prescribed international best practice of an iterative series of meetings and subsequent revisions of the draft charter. A single village charter takes about two months to develop, and the agreements reached are reviewed and revised as necessary on an annual basis. Impacts of these charters were perceived to be positive but resultant reductions in deforestation and agricultural encroachment were reported to be achieved at a slow pace of change.

This activity is linked to the joint government-community ranger patrol teams, with revolving representatives from village households joining the park’s Forest Protection Bureau (FPB) on patrols. Incentives for participation in these patrols were provided through the forest protection

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contract (see below) mechanism; thus all three activities (charters/regulations, ranger teams and protection contracts) are interlinked.

The strengths and weaknesses of the charters/regulations, as identified by local stakeholders during the introductory workshop, supplemented with lessons learnt from other project-supported special-use forests (SUF), are summarised in Table 1, which also summaries the opportunities and constraints for the project to develop these agreements further as mechanisms of collaborative SUF management.

**Table 1 Strengths/weaknesses, opportunities/constraints of village-level charters and regulations on forest protection and development**

Strengths	Weakness
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- demonstrates potential of community's role in SUF functioning</li> <li>- mutually raises awareness of communities and local government (park management board and FPB)</li> <li>- roles of stakeholders in support to forest protection clarified</li> <li>- relationship between communities and government improved</li> <li>- communities more confident in investing in legal livelihood alternatives apropos forest management</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- incentives for community participation based on compensatory cash payments (via protection contracts), of questionable financial sustainability</li> <li>- incentives for government participation weak as the cost (mostly in terms of effort) to undergo a participatory process is significantly greater than the demonstrated benefit in terms of improved management, coupled with the absence of any addition benefits for individual government officers</li> <li>- joint ranger teams provide ineffectual impact monitoring: any improvements in forest management and local livelihoods cannot be demonstrated to be a direct outcome of the charters/regulations</li> <li>- no mechanism in place to address inter-village infractions</li> </ul>
Opportunities	Constraints
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- village-level charters/regulations are an accepted (by government) mechanism for engaging local communities</li> <li>- local government (although not the park management per se) already have some experiences and lessons in developing these agreements</li> <li>- village-level regulations are a standard component of community forestry methodology in Vietnam and could support sustainable natural resource use agreements</li> <li>- village-level charters and regulations are primarily employed by government and non-government organisations primarily as an awareness-raising tool and, therefore, need not necessarily direct tangible forest protection and livelihood benefits</li> <li>- VCF grants provide a license to pilot sustainable extractive use agreements that could be regulated by village-level charters and monitored by joint patrol team as an effective collaborative management package</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- national-level regulations on forest management still preclude sustainable extractive resource use as a possible benefit sharing mechanism</li> <li>- national funding streams covering the cost of forest protection contracts (present incentive to adhere to village-level regulations) will discontinue at the end of 2008; potential provincial government funding is indicated to be less than current national levels</li> <li>- sustainable and genuine incentive mechanisms still need to be identified and harnessed to achieve effective forest protection</li> <li>- disincentives (i.e. regulation enforcement) dissuading local people from perpetrating village-level regulation infractions are required to complement the incentives of compliance</li> <li>- incentive/disincentive mechanisms for engaging government/park staff in relatively costly (genuine) participatory processes also need to be elucidated</li> </ul>

### Joint government-community ranger forces

These patrol teams are linked to the forest contracts (below) as a means of monitoring contract performance and compliance, in addition to the village-level charters and regulations on forest protection and development (which can be considered a form of honorary 'contract', used primarily to raise community awareness of park/forest management issues).

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Pilot joint patrol teams have been supported by an initial Vietnam Conservation Fund (VCF) grant ('VCF Phase I') to the park's management board: three FPB rangers are joined by a member of the commune police and the commune forestry officer, together with two local villagers with forest protection contracts – thus totalling a team of seven people. The three government rangers are permanent, serving as a mobile emergency response unit working with different commune officers and local farmers depending on the location. On average, this collaborative emergency response unit visits one of the six communes in the national park every month. With development of a VCF 'Phase II' grant (to be submitted in April 2008), the park's management board intends to replicate this model during 2008-2011.

Existing strengths and weaknesses of the joint ranger team model, and potential opportunities and constraints for future development under this project are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2 Strengths/weaknesses, opportunities/constraints of joint government and community patrol teams**

Strengths	Weakness
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- demonstrates potential of community's role in SUF functioning</li> <li>- mutually raises awareness of communities and local government (park management board and FPB)</li> <li>- relationship between communities and government improved</li> <li>- joining government with community rangers supports the function of the government rangers and provides the enforcement authority absent with community only ranger teams</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ranger forces still require external financial &amp; technical inputs as incentives to operate</li> <li>- incentives for community participation based on compensatory cash payments (via protection contracts), of questionable financial sustainability</li> <li>- incentives for government participation weak as the cost (mostly in terms of effort) to undergo a participatory process is significantly greater than the demonstrated benefit in terms of improved management, coupled with the absence of any addition benefits for individual government officers</li> <li>- ineffectual impact monitoring: any improvements in forest management and local livelihoods cannot be demonstrated to be a direct outcome of the joint ranger teams</li> </ul>
Opportunities	Constraints
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- joint patrol teams currently focus on monitoring forest status and resource use, but could be utilised to provide wider community outreach and or law enforcement support role</li> <li>- park management already have some experiences and lessons in developing pilot joint patrol teams</li> <li>- joint or community patrol teams could provide the essential feedback mechanism of monitoring to achieve adaptive management between park and communities</li> <li>- nationally, numerous experiences of attempting to develop community or joint ranger team could inform technical aspects of improving BD-NB's efforts in this area</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- sustainable incentive mechanisms for both community and government ranger motivation still need to be identified and harnessed</li> <li>- nearly all existing attempts to develop community or joint patrol teams in Vietnam have proven to be unsustainable financially and technically without continued external inputs</li> <li>- institutional sustainability potentially weak - disincentives for Forest Protection Departments (FPD) to adopt community rangers that either require additional state funding or reallocation of existing FPD budget</li> </ul>

### Forest protection contracts

Lam Dong province has made use of Decision 304<sup>1</sup>, which presented an opportunity to pilot contractual assignment of park forestland management responsibilities to local ethnic communities.

<sup>1</sup> Prime Ministerial Decision No. 304/2005/QD-TTg, dated 23.11.05, on the Pilot Allotment of Forests and Contractual Assignment of Forests for Protection to Ethnic Minority Households, Communities in Hamlets and Villages in the Central Highlands Provinces.

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These contracts are, in effect, an extension into SUFs of the national Five Million Hectare Reforestation Programme's<sup>2</sup> 'green book' certification system, which has been implemented nationwide in protection forests over the past 10 years. Household contractees are rewarded VND 100,000/ha/y for protection of forest assigned to them. Funding for these payments is currently drawn from national programmes such as 661, 134 and 135, in addition to provincial funding streams. The provincial Forestry Department indicated that national funding streams are expected to be discontinued by the end of this year and the province (seeking investment from external sources, e.g. FLITCH<sup>3</sup> project) will continue the payments, but probably at a lower level than at present. Thus, both sustainability and strength of incentive of these contracts can be expected to weaken under current projected scenarios.

Interviews with a limited number of commune officials and villagers in Da Chais and Lat communes indicated that the forest protection contracts were welcome contributions to household economy since they required relative low levels of commitment (1-2 day's labour per month) and yielded reliable income (compared to main cash crop – coffee, which was the mainstay of household economies, but suffered from volatile market prices).

Based on crude calculations of Mr. A Dat Ha San, Vice Chairman of Da Chais commune People's Committee, who owns a little over 1 ha of coffee plantation<sup>4</sup> and is contracted to protect 12 ha of forest in the national park, monthly income from each source is about VND 100,000; yet only 1-2 man-days per month were required to fulfil forest contractual obligations, but working the coffee plantation required 35 man-days a month. In terms of effort, forest protection contracts are, therefore, a relatively lucrative source of income for local farmers in and around the park's core zone, and respondents were unanimous in agreeing to sign contracts for larger areas of forest if the park was to offer more forestland under this scheme.

It appears, therefore, that forest protection contracts could serve as a significant incentive to engage local people in day-to-day park functioning. However, further investigation revealed that this contract system is fundamentally flawed by weak, or even non-existent, monitoring and enforcement of contract performance. Although communities can report strong co-operation with park management and rangers - and park management and local government can claim significant budget expenditure on collaborative forest protection measures – in the absence of monitoring and enforcement, there is no unequivocal evidence to demonstrate improved forest management as a consequence of these contracts. Full payments are almost guaranteed in return for negligible active 'management' responsibility (a one day joint patrol with commune officers and park rangers each month on average) on the part of local villagers.

Effectively 'handouts' to appease ethnic minority Central Highlanders, prone to civil unrest, the forest protection contracts actually serve to *undermine* genuine attempts of collaborative management, i.e. transfer of real and meaningful management responsibilities delivering real and significant improvements in forest protection. The contracts have served to strengthen the 'welfare attitude' of ethnic minority highlanders who have come to expect and rely on government aid over the years to an extent were seeking to engage their participation and commitment has become seriously undermined. Any attempts to strengthen the commitments and increase the level of responsibility under these contracts will be met with expectations of increased benefit (cash payments), at a time when the province is indicating a potential decrease in level of payments as discontinued national funding streams are replaced by provincial- or local project-level investments.

<sup>2</sup> Prime Ministerial Decision No. 661/QD-TTg, dated 29.07.98, on Objectives, Tasks, Policies & Organization for the Establishment of Five Million Hectares of New Forest.

<sup>3</sup> Asian Development Bank's *Forests for Livelihood Improvement in the Central Highlands Project*.

<sup>4</sup> Most villagers without positions in local government were reported to have < 1 ha of agricultural land per household on average, most of which was devoted to coffee plantation.

Strength, weaknesses, opportunities and constraints of the forest protection contract system are summarised in Table 3.

**Table 3 Strengths/weaknesses, opportunities/constraints of forest protection contracts**

Strengths	Weakness
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- demonstrates potential of community's role in SUF functioning</li> <li>- provide a significant source of (easily obtainable) income for local people</li> <li>- presents an opportunity to strengthen the ranger patrol teams of the park</li> <li>- could mutually raise awareness of communities and local government (park management board and FPB) if contracts developed through participatory, iterative process</li> <li>- roles of stakeholders in support to forest protection clarified</li> <li>- relationship between communities and government improved</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- contracts are a product of weak (or non-existent) process, thus levels of awareness and commitment of contractees remains low</li> <li>- payments are unsustainable</li> <li>- lack of monitoring and enforcement of contract performance removes disincentives for contractees to adhere to contractual commitments</li> <li>- forest protection contracts provide the sole incentive for community commitment to other collaborative interventions (village-level charters/regulations and joint patrol teams); weakness in the contract mechanism will undermine other interventions</li> <li>- incentives for government participation weak as the cost (mostly in terms of effort) to undergo a participatory process is significantly greater than the demonstrated benefit in terms of improved management, coupled with the absence of any addition benefits for individual government officers to monitor contract performance (join patrols)</li> <li>- ineffectual impact monitoring: any improvements in forest management cannot be demonstrated to be a direct outcome of the contracts</li> </ul>
Opportunities	Constraints
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- local government and park management already have some experiences and lessons in implementing a programme of forest protection contracts</li> <li>- nationally, Vietnam has relatively extensive experience of contract forest land management responsibilities and the mechanism enjoys political support</li> <li>- local people genuinely and significantly benefit from the contracts and would be keen to take on more responsibility in terms of scale of contracting (more ha)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- provincial government and park management express concerns of local community capacity to take on day-to-day forestland management responsibilities</li> <li>- sustainable and genuine incentive mechanisms still need to be identified and harnessed to achieve effective forest protection</li> <li>- disincentives (i.e. regulation enforcement) dissuading local people from breaking or not fulfilling contractual obligations are required to complement the incentives of compliance</li> <li>- incentive/disincentive mechanisms for engaging government/park staff in relatively costly (genuine) participatory processes also need to be elucidated</li> </ul>

### Commune Forest Protection Committee

Identified during the workshop, the Forest Protection Committee at the commune level was cited to be a potential platform for enhanced collaboration between commune authority and the forest owner (park management board). However, workshop participants claimed the council was presently inactive; no local (commune or village) respondents mentioned these councils. No details of these councils could be obtained, as they appear only to exist in name only, which no manifestation of presence or activity on the ground.

Table 4 outlines the potential strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and constraints of such councils if they were to become active fora for collaborative park management.

**Table 4 Strengths/weaknesses, opportunities/constraints of commune forest protection councils**

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weakness</b>
- conceptually the councils exist, requiring only to activated through a participatory process	- development of a functioning collaborative institutional will require extensive commitments of time and energy from all concerned stakeholders
<b>Opportunities</b>	<b>Constraints</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- could demonstrate potential of communities' role in SUF decision-making</li> <li>- in providing a forum to discuss park-buffer zone issues, incentives of participation to avoid negative impacts on livelihoods from park decision-making processes could be sufficient benefit for sustained participation</li> <li>- could mutually raise awareness of communities and local government (park management board and FPB) through providing a forum for two-way dialogue on park management and local livelihood issues</li> <li>- roles of stakeholders in support to forest protection could be clarified</li> <li>- relationship between communities and government should be significantly improved</li> <li>- multi-stakeholder membership of the councils, including local Forest Protection Bureau (but not park management board) could, through consensus debate, could fulfil a powerful and empowering advisory body to the executive management board of the park (without having to transfer authority or official decision-making responsibilities)</li> <li>- councils could form a focal body to co-ordinate all other collaborative management interventions with local communities</li> <li>- BD-NB could learn and share technical and operational experiences in developing forest protection councils with a pilot site of collaborative management in the northern highlands (Mu Cang Chai Species/Habitat Conservation Area)</li> <li>- in the absence of financial capital incentives, participation in a forest protection council could still yield significant benefits in terms of social and human capital, and possibly natural capital if land/resource use agreements can be negotiated through the council</li> <li>- formation of a collective voice among local community stakeholders, and the strengthening the relationship with park management, the council could provide a significant opposing force to external threats of market forces (commercial farming, tourism enterprises, etc.) to the benefit of both biodiversity conservation and local livelihoods</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- sole attempts to pilot functioning forest protection council for a SUF has yet to demonstrate effectiveness despite significant investment in resources</li> <li>- forest protection contracts have already set a precedent of cash payments for nominal management responsibility, which could undermine any other attempt at more concerted collaborative management</li> <li>- provincial government and park management express concerns of local community capacity to take on day-to-day forestland management responsibilities</li> <li>- incentive/disincentive mechanisms for engaging government/park staff in relatively costly (genuine) participatory processes also need to be elucidated</li> </ul>

## OPPORTUNITIES

Two-and-a-half days of interviewing key stakeholders from provincial level government to local villagers, plus a one-day workshop, has led the author and project co-ordinator to identify the following four options for collaborative at BD-NB National Park. These suggested directions for the *Co-management of Forests & Wildlife, Bi Doup-Nui Ba National Park Project* respond to the conservation needs of the park, in addition to the enabling and operating environments in which the project is operating. They do not consider wider strategic goals or agendas of the project's proponents and investors, nor the limitations of (financial, human and time) resources potentially available to the project. Further internal analysis is required to assess which of the following option(s) is most desirable and feasible for WWF, IIED and Darwin. It should also be noted that **the following options are not mutually exclusive**: any number or all of the focal directions for the project could be adopted; restrictions in project resources will determine the scope of the project's ambitions.

### i) **Engaging the participation of local public and private sectors in park management**

In contradiction to the project's proposal<sup>5</sup> to the Darwin Initiative, this rapid assessment identified commodity (e.g. coffee) and service (e.g. tourism) market forces as the main drivers of biodiversity and ecological degradation in BD-NB at present and for the foreseeable future. Local people may still be, in many cases, the direct mechanism of threats to the park (e.g. encroaching with coffee plantations or hunting to meet a commercial wildlife trade), but these behaviours are responses to opportunities presented by a rapidly expanding market economy. This assessment is corroborated by findings in a recent regional synthesis of lessons learnt on collaborative management initiatives: 'The primary agents of protected area degradation are not local communities, but external commercial interests illegally extracting natural resources to maximize short-term profits often through distant markets.' (Corbett, 2008<sup>6</sup>).

In response to this assessment, **it is recommended that the project adopt a focus on participatory processes engaging local government and private sector, and not to focus on participatory community-based processes** of collaborative management. If market forces are the principal drivers of protected area degradation across the Indochinese region, then collaborative management with relatively powerless (politically and economically) weak local communities will not deliver effective conservation in BD-NB, nor will it demonstrate an effective approach to be replicated in other special-use forests. Corbett (2008) also cites weak governance as an essential prerequisite for protected area integrity and that 'no amount of project support (whether for co-management or other natural resource management systems) can prevent unsustainable extraction by well organized commercial interests.' These statements are substantiate by the collective experience of collaborative management interventions in Vietnam to date (see Annex I – Swan, 2008<sup>7</sup>), where no intervention has proven to be institutionally and financially sustainable in the absence of external investments, and no intervention has demonstrated unequivocal gains for biodiversity conservation or rural livelihoods. A participatory process that engaged local government and private stakeholders would respond to the two primary issues of economic drivers of threats to the park, and weak governance in place to respond to these threats.

<sup>5</sup> In addition to other similar projects operating in the vicinity of Bi Doup-Nui Ba National Park, such as the Asian Development Bank-funded FLITCH Project; the Japan International Co-operation Agency-funded *Strengthening Community-based Management Capacity of Bi Doup-Nui Ba National Park Project*; and the Trust Fund for Forest-fund *Piloting an Approach to Multiple-use Forest Management in Lam Dong Province Project*.

<sup>6</sup> Corbett, J. (2008). *Paper Parks and Paper Partnerships: Lessons for protected areas and biodiversity corridors in the Greater Mekong Subregion*. IUCN.

<sup>7</sup> Swan, S.R. (2008). *A Rapid Review of the Enabling Environment and Existing Examples of Collaborative Special-Use Forest Management in Vietnam*. Unpublished report to WWF Vietnam Programme, Hanoi.

**ii) Participatory process(es) to strengthen tourism management in and around the park**

The two main threats to BD-NB National Park at present and in the foreseeable future appear to be conflicts in (agricultural versus forestry) land use and a nascent tourism industry of significant proportions. As the project has already learnt (and this study confirmed) land use plans for Lam Dong province are relatively fixed and do not present an opportunity for the project to influence change. Agricultural markets, such as coffee and other produce such as fruit and flowers, are well-established, national or international markets that an NGO-implemented project is unlikely to be able to affect. Tourism on the other hand, has been identified<sup>8</sup> as a new threat and opportunity for BD-NB, has now gained attention and investment from external investors. Nature- and culture-based tourism (both foreign and, probably more significantly, domestic markets) in and around the park is now just beginning, and a participatory process that aimed to deliver **a sustainable, pro-poor tourism strategy for the park might make a suitable technical focus for a public-private collaborative management model.**

**iii) Pioneer sustainable natural resource use agreements with local communities**

As identified in the rapid assessment of the enabling environment for collaborative management in Vietnam (Swan, 2008), a potentially new opportunity presents itself to push collaborative management experiences in Vietnam beyond the limits of the current national-level regulatory framework. In signing a grant agreement with the World Bank for the establishment and initial development of the Vietnam Conservation Fund (VCF), the Government of Vietnam (GoV) has agreed to pilot sustainable natural resource use agreements with local communities whose access to (special-use) forest resources are integral to their cultural practices or are essential for their subsistence. Thus, a SUF with a VCF grant, theoretically, has a license to pilot models of sustainable natural resource use inside SUF core zones, which goes beyond the strict no-use management regime prescribed in national regulations<sup>9</sup>.

To date, various SUFs in Vietnam, including BD-NB, have vague resource use agreements with local communities, based on weak processes of negotiation. Such agreements largely legitimize existing de facto practices of non-commercial, no-timber forest product (NTFP) extraction by local communities, e.g. collection of firewood, mushrooms, medicinal plants, bamboo, fishing, etc. These cannot be considered as negotiated sustainable resource use agreements, which would take the form of established community forestry protocols in protection and production forests of Vietnam: comprising stock inventories; negotiated sustainable harvest quotas; village-level regulations of both forest use and protection; and monitoring and enforcement of these agreements.

Pioneering of this transferal of community forestry-type approaches of protection through sustainable use is an opportunity for the *Co-management of Forests & Wildlife, Bi Doup-Nui Ba National Park Project* to support the park's implementation of a second VCF grant. It should be stressed that the WWF-IIED project should not attempt to pilot this approach in the absence of a 'Phase II' VCF grant for BD-NB.

Providing technical support to the park's second VCF grant, which could primarily cover costs of implementation, would make a strategic partnership and focus for the two projects and present an opportunity to be one of the first attempts to pilot, what can be considered to

<sup>8</sup> FFI (2005). *Supporting livelihoods through community-based nature tourism on the Da Lat Plateau, Lam Dong Province*. Internal Project Concept Note. Fauna & Flora International Vietnam Programme, Hanoi

<sup>9</sup> Prime Ministerial Decision No. 186/2006/QD-TTg, dated 14.08.06, Promulgating the Regulation on Forest Management.

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be a form genuine ‘co-management’ (see discussion in Swan, 2008) in Vietnam. Linking with existing plans to negotiate such kind of sustainable natural resource use agreements in Song Thanh Nature Reserve, Quang Nam province, is another opportunity for WWF to mutually strengthen technical support to this model.

### iv) **Participatory processes to strengthen community relations with the park**

All other suggestions presented here mark a significant departure from the original project purpose of ‘conserving threatened biodiversity in BD-NB National Park in Vietnam through the introduction of collaborative forest and wildlife stewardship models based on negotiated tenure and access rights’; and as such might be deemed undesirable or unfeasible for project proponents, partners and investors. An alternative to these radical changes in project direction and focus is to maintain the community-orientated approach of the project as it was originally envisaged, but adopt a less ambitious, low key approach of strengthening relations between the park’s management (board and forest ranger bureau) and local communities.

In adopting such an approach, challenging and potentially threatening (to local government) terms of ‘collaborative’ and co-management’ should be avoided, and replaced with a practical focus on responding to the question: ‘How can local communities, be engaged more in park planning, functioning and ‘management’ (in its widest sense)? The object of such an approach would not be to transfer tenure, rights, responsibilities, authority or power from state to local communities, but simple to achieve a more effective partnership between the potentially conflict agendas of forest protection and poverty alleviation.

Such a project approach would draw on (and contribute to) the existing experiences of community-based conservation in Vietnam (see Appendix I in Swan, 2008). A menu of potential activities the project might pursue might comprise the following:

#### **Participatory park PLANNING**

- Zonation and demarcation of internal functional sub zones
- Operational Management Planning

#### **Participatory park FUNCTIONING**

- Village-level charters and regulations on forest protection (already implemented in a few pilot villages in/around BD-NB)
- Community ranger forces aiding monitoring, outreach and enforcement support functions (already supported by VCF grants to BD-NB)
- Forest protection contracts (already implemented in some parts of BD-NB)

#### **Participatory park MANAGEMENT**

- New institutional structures and mechanisms to facilitate decision-making

Taking this pragmatic approach will require the project to network strongly with existing community-based interventions in Vietnam, learn lessons from past projects, and establish proactive dialogues with various overlapping projects in the area of BD-NB. Heed should be paid to two fundamental conclusions from Vietnam’s experiences in community-based SUF conservation to date: no community-based intervention has been demonstrated to be sustainable; and none of the models attempted thus far have demonstrated real and significant gains for biodiversity and livelihoods.

In contributing to the existing and on-going experiences of community-based conservation, project proponents should also be aware that, although new models may be developed for BD-NB, the project will not make significant novel contributions to putting community-based

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conservation principles into practice in the Vietnamese context. At the level of the park, if the assessment of market forces as prime drivers of immediate threats, a low-key community-based conservation approach will not address the main issues confronting park management (or the threats responsible for increasing livelihood vulnerability of local people).

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Focus on a public-private sector collaborative management process that responds to perceived primary threats to both biological diversity and livelihoods of commercial market forces.
2. Develop a tourism management strategy, through a participatory process, as the focal output of this priority public-private (and possibly community) collaborative management process.
3. Explore tourism as the principle ecosystem service mechanism to deliver incentives from non-extractive resource use to all stakeholders participating in collaborative management interventions.
4. To engage communities, focus on developing and demonstrating effective, sustainable economic incentives for adopting greater levels of responsibility forest management responsibility.
5. Explore novel opportunities for local government and community participation in park planning, and decision making: primarily participatory zonation and institutional structures respectively.
6. Building on existing experiences, develop an integrated package of participatory park functioning interventions based on negotiated agreements couple with participatory monitoring.
7. Exploit the opportunity of unsustainable financing for forest protection contracts to pilot new agreements developed through participatory processes with increased responsibilities/benefits.
8. Consider supporting sustainable natural resource agreements between park and communities should the ‘operating licence’ of second VCF grant be approved for the park.
9. Forge strategic alliances with a limited number of the various other projects operating in the area of BD-NB national park; maintain a dialogue with all other projects in the area.
10. With other motivated stakeholders (projects), take the initiative to instigate a national-level learning network on collaborative SUF management, with a view to establish a national working group.
11. Develop and establish a sound, low-cost (biodiversity and livelihood) impact monitoring system that can be used by the project and the park during and beyond the lifetime of the project.
12. Avoid replicating similar (unsustainable) models already attempted for collaborative SUF management in Vietnam (see Appendix I – Swan, 2008), particularly community ranger forces.