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# **DA CHAYS ECOTOURISM CONCEPT PAPER**

**MARCH 2010**

**FINAL REPORT**

**PREPARED FOR  
WWF VIETNAM:**

**FORMULATION OF AN ECOTOURISM DEVELOPMENT MODEL  
FOR DA CHAYS COMMUNE AND BI DUP NUI BA NATIONAL PARK**

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## ABBREVIATIONS

AMSL	Above Medium Sea Level
B & B	Bed and Breakfast
BDNBNP	Bi Dup Nui Ba National Park
CBT	Community Base Tourism
IT	Information Technology
ITDR	Institute for Tourism Development Research
IUCN	The World Conservation Union
JICA	Japanese International Cooperation Agency
MTDP	Mekong Tourism Development Project
NGO	Non Government Organization
nite	an overnight stay
OTA	Open Tourism Activity Area
pax	an individual tourist
PR	Public Relation
PTA	Prohibited Tourism Activity Area
RTA	Restricted Tourism Activity Area
TIC	Tourist Information Center
UNWTO	World Tourism Organization
US\$	American dollar
VNAT	Vietnam National Administration of Tourism
WWF	World Wildlife Fund for Nature

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## 1. PART ONE – REVIEW OF LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND OPTIONS

The legal framework for tourism development in protected areas has been developing significantly in Vietnam in recent years. Those planning and legislative documents have been formulated and issues by not only the tourism Government authorities but also the natural resource and environmental management sector. Both reports developed by JICA and Craik's missions have reviewed those documents, particularly those covering natural resources management. Therefore this study will discuss only main points of the two reports as well as further present tourism specific planning and legislative issues, aiming at provide a legal framework into the local community's control and participation in tourism development in the protected area.

### 1.1. TOURISM DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES, PLANS AND POLICIES

Development plans and policies are important State management instruments that provide strategic directions and necessary supports for managing and developing economic sectors. Tourism development plans and policies hence are integral part of State management in the tourism sector in Vietnam. Several tourism related management plans and policies have been formulated resulted in shaping an enabling environment for the sector, stimulating local community's control and participation as follows.

According to the JICA mission (2008, p. 4), the latest approved Tourism Development Strategy for Vietnam in the period 2001 – 2010, the on-going Revising Vietnam Tourism Strategy have put Dalat in the list of the key tourism centers of Vietnam. Similarly Dalat was identified as the center of the Central Highlands Tourism Sub-region (PM, 2005). The tourist city is one of the seven key priority tourism investment zones in Vietnam (ITDR 2003, p. 5). Mountainous convalescence is identified as the main type of tourism to be developed in the tourist city. Dalat will be strategically linked to external tourist routes and centers such as Nha Trang, Mui Ne, Ho Chi Minh City or Dak Lak that would enhance the attractiveness of this destination and competitiveness of the region alike.

Those strategic directions would provide Dalat with a great opportunity to attract a huge tourism investment budget from the Government in terms of infrastructure development, destination marketing and promotion, human resources development as well as business development investment projects from private investors in the coming years. In fact, the strategic directions have been realized in the last 5 years, for instance construction of new roads connecting to Nha Trang, Dong Nai, Ninh Thuan and Binh Thuan; staging of the recurring Dalat Flower Festival; opening of the Dalat Art, Culture and Tourism College; operation of the Dalat Golf Course, the Dalat Cable-Car system, 5-star hotels and numerous other tourist facilities in the city. The local communities in Dalat would have more opportunities to get involved in and benefit from different types of and approach to tourism development in the destination. In the city, there have been a proliferation of the locally own and run tourism businesses, ranging from small souvenir shops to up-market tourist accommodation and attraction facilities. In the rural areas, the local people have been involved in the supply of community based tourism and ecotourism activities and services directly to tourists or tourism enterprises.

Whereas the tourism sector has been fairly established in the city, there have been little development efforts and practices in the rural areas, including the Bidoup – Nui Ba National Park. Except some scientific studies or investment projects in rural mountainous tourism attractions and resorts, there is no specific strategic planning projects for those destinations. As a result tourism development decisions have been case-by-case or in isolation, uncoordinated approach. A clear example can be seen from emergence of “so called” eco-resorts along the newly built National Road No. 723, making a waste, if not unsustainable use, of the natural resources.

Craik (2008, p. 4) pointed out that the province put a high priority on a comprehensive tourism development by using natural and ecological resources. Whilst there is not site planning to guide tourism investments, the unplanned exploitation of natural resources for developing inappropriate types of tourism can lead to damaging or destroying the fragile natural resources and environment in the sites. Notably that the concept of “comprehensive development” can be mistakenly understood as mass development, looking for quantitative, rather than qualitative, growth. Usually local communities have less advantages to take part in and fairly benefit from mass tourism development. Their businesses tend to be the small-scale informal sector, family-own and low-quality, low profitability.

However the local people living in poor and remoted areas in Vietnam can be benefited from various Government and international development programmes. The most profound poverty alleviation programme in Vietnam (Programme No. 135) has supported to train ethnic minorities on new production practices to improve farm productivities, develop basic infrastructure facilities in the villages, and strengthen the administrative management capacity of commune heads (Craik, 2008, p. 4). Numerous ethnic minorities people living in those areas have been provided an access to the basic infrastructures such as road, electricity or clean water that unlock opportunities for tackling poverty. Those resources are definitely essential to tourism development in the remoted areas where natural and ethnic minority cultural attractions are remaining very distinctive and appealing to tourists and the industry.

In protected areas, the participation of local communities in tourism related businesses has been facilitated under development plans or programmes, aiming at improving their awareness and livelihoods and thus contributing to poverty alleviation, preservation of cultural identities and conservation of natural resources and environment. The Management Strategy for a Protected Area System in Vietnam to 2010 or the Decision on Approval of the National Action Plan on Biodiversity up to 2010 and Orientations towards 2020 support the local community to promote the sustainable use of biological resources in protected areas (Craik, 2008, p.4). Usually the Government and development sectors support the local communities with various essential capacity development services such as scientific research, training, work and business development planning and management, micro-credits, PR and market access and so on. During recent years, a number of community based ecotourism development projects and initiatives have been successfully introduced in Vietnam that brought about a new trend of developing sustainable tourism with a strong focus on roles of local people.

## 1.2. TOURISM LEGISLATIONS AND REGULATIONS

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If tourism strategies and plans are important Government instruments that support to develop a tourism sector in the country, tourism legislations regulate the sector development under a legal framework.

Several Government laws and sub-law documents stipulate the land-use right of local people in forests, including special use forests and protected areas. First of all, it is necessary to specify the ownership of the local people in protected areas because it is usually a big challenge for the local people's involvement in tourism. As pointed out by the JICA mission, there are two ways for the local people to have their ownership over the forest land in Vietnam. For the production or planted forests, the State can assign or lease the land to households or individuals to do ecotourism businesses (Law on forest protection, Article 55). The forest owner needs to prepare a plan for planting, nurturing, tending or protecting such forests in combination with ecotourism (Article 57). However, there are usually not distinctive tourism attractions in production forests but other types of natural forests. The local people need to have different approaches have the ownership and carry out their ecotourism businesses in those areas. They may establish some types of economic organization such as cooperative or enterprise to do ecotourism businesses. The same law stipulates that the State shall lease special use forests to economic organizations for ecotourism under the forest shadow (Article 50). The Decree on the implementation of the Law on forest protection and development specifies that the leasing period can be 50 years (Article 23) and the lease must be stipulated by the Prime Minister (Article 21). As a result local communities can have the ecotourism business of their own. However, attention must be paid to business management capacity of local people as they often do have sufficient required knowledge and skills to plan and develop the business. Perhaps some collaborative mechanisms may help address the constraints. The Decree clearly stipulates that forest owners can sub-lease forests to ecotourism businesses (Article 34 and Article 55). The Regulation on forest management (under the Decision No.186 of the Prime Minister) states specifically roles of the management board of protected areas that they may establish an ecotourism section to do ecotourism businesses (Article 14) or the management boards of special use forests shall make arrangement of bufferzone for residents to participate in the protection, conservation and rational use of forest products and natural resources as well as ecotourism services (Article 24). Obviously local people, the management board of the protected area and a private tourism enterprise can enter into a contractual partnership to make an investment and operation of ecotourism businesses in the special use forests.

Regarding the participation of local communities have been further regulated in a number of legislation. The Law on tourism (Article 7) confirms participation of local communities in tourism development, even with rather vague conditions, as follows:

- Local communities shall have the rights to participate in and enjoy lawful benefits from tourism activities; be responsible for preserving tourism resources and nurturing the local cultural identity; and maintaining security, safety, social order and environmental sanitation to generate the attractiveness of tourism.

- Local communities shall be provided with conditions to invest in tourism development, restoration and promotion of various traditional cultures, folklore arts, crafts, and production of local goods in service of tourists, contributing to raising the material and spiritual life of local inhabitants.

Regulations on management of ecotourism activities in National Parks and Nature Reserves (Decision No. 104) also stipulates that:

- Indigenous community is allowed to participate in and benefit from ecotourism activities (in Article 4);
- Organizations and individuals that operate ecotourism business have to give priority to indigenous communities to participate in their operations (in Article 7);
- Local residents have rights to participate and benefit legally from tourism activities and are responsible for protection of natural resources (in Article 7); and

Regarding development and operation of ecotourism businesses in protected areas, there is an array of legislations and regulations. The Law on environmental protection regulates that tourist resorts must comply with environmental protection requirements such as a master plan with environmental impact assessment and tools for wastes and hazardous wastes collection (Article 31). The operators of tourist resorts and sites must take protection measures such as environmental rules at the sites; installing sanitary and waste facilities, and ; keeping environmental sanitation (Article 45 and 52). They must also have solutions to manage tourists on site by issuing environmental protection rules and instructions and take care of wastes and litters. The Law on forest protection and management states that “ecotourism activities must comply with the forest management regulations” (Article 45). Its guiding Decree also specifies that exploitation activities in special-use forests must ensure the conservation of biodiversity and tourism (Article 52).

Law on environmental protection said that :

- Organizations, individuals who manage, do travel business, enjoy in traveling at tourism areas must obey following environmental protection measures, for example, post up a notice on environmental protection at the tourism area, arrivals and guiding how to carry out; making enough facilities like water closets, equipment for collecting waste, etc. (Article 45).
- Economic, industrial, processing, high technology sections, industrial zones, tourism areas, entertainment areas must meet all requirements on environmental protection like obeying development planning, implementing content of the report on environmental impact, having enough equipment for collecting common waste of all types, and meeting the demand of receiving classified waste from producing, business, services sections (Article 36).

Regulations on management of ecotourism activities in National Parks and Nature Reserves (Decision No. 104) stipulates that:



- Collection of forest products, illegal hunting of wild fauna and other activities that negatively impact on ecosystems of NPs and NRs are prohibited (in Article 5);
- Responsibilities of the management boards of NPs and NRs are to manage and protect forest and control forest fire over forest areas that are used for ecotourism development, to regulate the number of visitors and days of stay, and to develop regulations on tourist management including "dos" and "donts".

More specific tourism legislations over management of tourism businesses state several requirements in the Law on tourism and other sub-law documents (decrees, guidelines) as the following.

- Register tourist accommodation business; Take measures to ensure security and order, environmental sanitation, safety, fire prevention; Establishment of tourist accommodation establishments shall have facilities and equipment which meet the minimum standard for tourist accommodation business (Article 64).
- The village tourists guide could be interpreted as narrators (Article 78), the persons who deliver on-site narration to tourists at tourist resorts or tourist spots. As required, narrators must have good knowledge of tourist resorts and tourist spots, and skills of communication with tourists and cultured behavior. Competent state agencies in charge of tourist resorts and tourist spots shall stipulate the training in professional knowledge and skills and criteria for narrators, as well as issuance and withdrawal of narrator's certificates.
- Regulations on rights and obligation of travel enterprises at home and abroad about obeying, popularizing and guiding tourists Vietnam tourism law and regulations of environmental protection. Tourist's transportation enterprises must ensure means with safe and environmental protection.

### **1.3. CONCLUSIONS ON TOURISM POLICIES AND PLANS**

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Similar to many other new tourism destinations in remoted rural mountainous areas, tourism legislation and planning system is well established at the national and provincial levels that guides future tourism development projects in the commune. Being located inside a protected area, Law on forest protection, its guiding decree, the Decree No 186 of the Prime Minister on forest management and the Decision 104 on management of ecotourism activities in national parks and nature reserves have provided a legal platform for developing ecotourism projects in the commune. Those legislations allow the local people to have the land right use in production or planted forests including some of the recommended sites in the following sections of the document. Nevertheless, a tourism destination planning document is required before granting those lands to the local people as well as outside investors in order to ensure right allocation of land for development projects and avoid unexpected encroachments into prohibited areas. Currently there is no tourism planning project in the study area of the park.

There some options for the local people to get involved in the local ecotourism businesses. The park's management board may establish an ecotourism unit within their organization structure to conduct ecotourism businesses in the area. That unit have to work on a financial self-sufficient basis and is allowed to make decisions on ecotourism business development. However the existing legislations do not clarify rights and obligations of the business unit with regard to investment resources, fund development and management, personnel income policies, and so on.

The unit can also be in joint venture with local people and/ or outside investors to develop local ecotourism businesses. Although the current laws allow them to work with their partners in any type of tourism businesses, in fact parks' staffs are usually more advantaged in involving in eco-tour guiding businesses. Therefore it is advisable that the local people in Dachays could be involved in providing other services such as homestay, services for ecolodges, transportation, cultural performance, etc. Private investors could be more interested and strong in business management and marketing skills.

Moreover the local people have opportunities to develop ecotourism businesses of their own in the study area. Current laws allow them to establish tourism businesses in their residential areas and a number of ecotourism businesses in local production or planted forests that do not create harmful impacts on the local environment.

Nevertheless, all current laws have paid special attentions to protecting natural resources and environment in the protected area. Several constraints are imposed on the local ecotourism businesses including types and levels of tourism business development, zoning plan and other environmental protection measures.

## **2. PART TWO – FIELD ASSESSMENT OF LOCAL TOURISM POTENTIALS**

### **2.1. NATURAL TOURISM POTENTIALS**

#### **2.1.1. Geographic location**

The study area is conveniently located on the northeastern part of Bidoup – Nui Ba national park, 70km east of Da Lat city and 80km west of Nha Trang. It has the border with Khanh Vinh district of Khanh Hoa province to the east and Bac Ai and Ninh Son districts of Ninh Thuan province to the southeast.

This location is very suitable to develop outdoor and nature based tourism activities. It can be reached in 2-hour drive from 2 main tourist centers of the Southern Central region of Vietnam. Based on the geographical accessibility standards, the study area is ranked 2/4 (specifically less than 100km, less than 2-hour drive, accessible by 1 – 2 means of transportation).

#### **2.1.2. Climate**

Although located in the monsoon tropical Southern Central and Highlands region, the study area has the sub-tropical climate regime with an average annual temperature of 18°C, quite moderate without extreme hot/ cold months. The average annual rainfall is 1,755 mm, highest in September. There are about 170 rainy days annually, even higher in high locations such as Bidoup Summit or Hon Giao ranger station/ pass. The humidity is stable at 75% - 85%. The number of foggy days is 80/ year and 8 – 16/ month.

Based on climate criterias for human activities (VNAT, 2005), the study area is ranked 1/4 with regard to temperature. However, attention must be paid to the extreme climate condition in high locations where it is too foggy, rainy and high humidity.

#### **2.1.3. Topography**

Stretching entirely highlands and high mountains of Lam Vien Highlands, the end of South Truong Son Mountain Range on average elevation of 1,500m – 1,800m, Bidoup – Nui Ba national park topography is stratified into several layers with various high mounts. Especially Bidoup Mount (2,287m) is one of the 10 highest summits in Vietnam. The topography is lower to the South – North with various low mountain peaks. This topography creates amazing views of mountainous landscapes in the region.

Moreover the national park has many rivers and streams such as Krong Kno, Da Nhim as well as lakes, waterfalls. Together with the high forest coverage, the study area is ideal destination for developing outdoor and natural based tourism activities that contribute to diversifying tourism products of Da Lat.

## 2.1.4. Types of forest

Table 1: Existing status of forest land in Bidoup – Nui Ba national park

Types of forests	Area (ha)	% of total land
Natural forest	57,955	89.5
- Broad-leaved evergreen forest	21,252	32.8
- Coniferous forest (pine)	20,614	31.8
- Mixed forest	15,910	24.6
- Bamboo forest	219	0.34
Planted forest (pine)	1,039	1.6

(Source: Scientific study of Bidoup – Nui ba national park, 2004)

There are several types of forest ecosystems in the national park that is perfect conditions to develop ecotourism activities.

Medium-mountain tropical evergreen thick forests: located at 1,700m or higher with the average temperature under 18°C. The rainfall is high, from 2,300 mm – 3,000 mm, making the humidity of 89% - 95%. There are even fogs and light rains in the dry season. Therefore this type of forest is really thick and primitive – home to high-value trees and endemic fauna species of the Bidoup – Nui Ba region. Especially there are high-mountain dwarf (*rung lun*) and mossy (*rung reu*) forests available in this area that are created by the mixture of steam waters from sea and mountain.

Broad-leaved and coniferous mixed thick forests: located at 1,700m or higher on the slope of mountains. There are endemic old coniferous species of Bidoup such as 2-leaved pine, pink conifers, white conifers, etc.

Low-mountain thin tropical coniferous forests: this is the largest destination of pure 3-leaved coniferous forests (*Pinus Khasya*) in Vietnam. This type of forest is normally attractive to general interest tourists given its easy accessibility, scenic landscapes and ability to provide fresh air, suitable for outdoor activities.

Bamboo and broad-leaved mixed forests: located along the Krong No river, at the elevation of 800m – 1,200m, on the granite mountains or alluvium soil.

Flora system: There are 97 endemic plant species, of which 62 are listed in Red Data Book of Vietnam and IUCN and 28 are latinized as original place of the species, in the park.

Fauna system: There are also 95 families and 385 species of animals, of which 36 and 26 were listed in the Red Data Book of Vietnam and IUCN, respectively. BDNBNP is also well known as a bird sanctuary in the region. In fact, it is regarded as one of 221 endemic bird areas in the world.

Table 2: Fauna species in Bidoup – Nui ba national park in Nov. 2003

Class	Number of species	Number of families
Mammal (Mammalia)	51	24
Bird (Aves)	118	42
Reptile (Reptilia)	26	11
Amphibian (Amphibia)	13	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>208</b>	<b>81</b>

(Source: Scientific study of Bidoup – Nui ba national park, 2004)

## 2.2. CULTURAL TOURISM POTENTIALS

This is home to the Chil people – a branch of the K'ho ethnic minority group. The local community is organized at the village level, called “bon”, and followed the matriarchy custom where women have the right to inherit and manage the family's properties, give their first name to children, etc.

### 2.2.1. Handicrafts and dressing

The local people have their own traditional handicraft production techniques. They plant cotton plants on mountain fields, make textile fabrics by their traditional looms, and use forest plants to dye the fabrics. Handicraft items include clothes, bags or housing items. Women usually wear a knee-length skirt colored and decorated identically regardless of age or social class. Men wear a knee-length loin-cloth and a simple t-shirt without sleeves and collar. They also have bamboo knitting job to produce living items in their house such as baskets or furnitures. They produce model handicrafts to sell to tourists as souvenirs. Nevertheless the traditional handicraft jobs in the study area have been fallen into oblivion because of low-demand and low-profitability of the production as well as competition from alternative housing and living items by mass production.

### 2.2.2. Housing architecture

Most of the local houses are in the wooden architectural style. However this is not the traditional long house-on-stilts. Typical their house have 3 modules including the living room, bedrooms and a separate kitchen and toilet that is very much similar to the traditional architecture of the Kinh people in the rural region. Some of local houses were even built in the Kinh people concrete architecture. These houses are built very near each other, leaving little public spaces for gardens, children playgrounds or community events.

### 2.2.3. Festivals

The new rice ceremony is one of the traditional festivals nearly coinciding with the Kinh people's lunar New Year. They hold this festival to pray for good weather and prevent wild animals from destroying their crops. They worship the new rice in order for their off-spring aware of important precious rice. The offerings of the ceremony include new sweet smelling rice, a bid bellied jar of wine which is drank out of the jar through bamboo straws, a cock, a castrated hog, and other wild animals. The festival begins with the ceremony to pray to the Gods, which is led by a holy man, and is followed by a wine throwing ceremony to pray for good luck for everyone. Finally the participants drink wine, sing love songs, recite long poems and sing "tam pot" folk songs accompanied by the boisterous sound of gongs. The festival lasts all night long until the next morning.

Buffalo fighting rites is an important ceremonial to worship Yang following harvest and for the happiness of all people in the village. The rites draw the participation of 300 artisans from 11 delegations in the province. After the rites, folk games and traditional cultural activities such as gong performances were also held.

However, local people in the study area presently stage those festivals in a much more simple way, focusing mostly on entertainment and drinking activities.

### 2.2.4. Art performance

Yal Yau singing (story telling): this is a kind of pre-musical art usually performed by elderly people. Story telling is mixed with singing.

Nri singing: using rhyming in singing (similar to folk singing) with various types of singing such as ceremonial Nri, love Nri, experience sharing Nri.

Tam poi singing: songs simultaneously exchanged between several people. Normally one group gives a question and the another provide the answer in singing.

Lah long singing: love songs usually performed by the youth.

Dan da (Lithophone): an ancient musical instrument with 7 slabs of stone. Its main function is to keep the rhythms.

Gong and chieng musical instrument: belong to self echo musical instrument group, made of copper. Goong has knob and Chieng do not. The most popular Chieng group has 6 units.

Drum: a kind of dug-out "doc moc in Vietnamese" drum entirely made of a trunk of tree. They use a drumstick, elbow or palm to perform.

However, the local people in the study area have not maintained their traditional art performance. They changed to use modern musical instruments and audio-visual equipments in their traditional ceremonies and festivals.

### 3. PART THREE – THE ECOTOURISM MODEL

#### 3.1. CONCEPTUALIZATION OF THE MODEL

##### 1. Identification of tourism activity areas (zoning):

Zoning is indispensable tools in achieving both development and conservation purposes at the same time. Zoning is the division of a site into sectors based on activity, desired benefits of visitors, site capability, conservation objectives, and management strategies. This visitor impact management tools have been utilized popularly in other national parks and protected areas in Vietnam as well as in the world. The Bidoup - Nuiba national park already had its forest use and biodiversity conservation zoning plan that form a trong basis for formulating its ecotourism zoning plan.

This section provides an analysis, specific to the key tourist activity areas of the study area and its potential for tourism development. A tourism activity rating is allocated to each area or site on the basis of the level of recommended tourism activity. A description of tourism activity area ratings is provided in Table 3.

*Table 3: Description of tourism activity area ratings*

<b>Tourism Activity Area Rating</b>	<b>Description</b>
Open Tourism Activity Area (OTA)	<p>⇒ All tourism activity and development allowed including construction of tourism infrastructure such as accommodation or ancillary buildings</p> <p>⇒ All tourism activity development must adhere to local regulations, such as building requirements and activity restrictions</p>
Restricted Tourism Activity Area (RTA)	<p>⇒ Tourism activity is allowed by permit or concession only</p> <p>⇒ Limited construction allowed but with strict environmental impact assessments and management under the control of the BDNB NP and/ or Lam Dong PPC. Tourism activity is generally managed and regulated by carrying capacity. These are sensitive sites or areas and should only be accessed under supervision.</p>
Prohibited Tourism Activity Area (PTA)	<p>⇒ No tourism activity should be allowed.</p>

Open Tourism Activity Area (OTA): Taking into considerations present conditions of available infrastructures and further development needs, the following sites are proposed to apply the OTA management mechanism: national road # 723, Klong Klanh and Dung K'si villages, ranger stations, furture visitor reception center at the Giang Ly ranger station.

Restricted Tourism Activity Area (RTA): the 02 natural trails: Hon Giao ranger station – Hon Giao mount – Giang Ly ranger station, Bidoup ranger station –

Bidoup Mount – Klong Lang ranger station, and sites on the trails (e.g. Giang Ly pine hill, summits, streams, forests, etc.)

Prohibited Tourism Activity Area (PTA): environmentally sensitive areas, habitats of special wildlifes and flora species. Those sites would be identified in the remaining area of the park.

The more detailed tourism spatial arrangement for the study areas together with proposed tourist facilities are illustrated in the Annex 1 – Dachays ecotourism map as a result of an initial investigation into the local forest use plans, biodiversity conservation plans and socio-economic development situations in the study area.

## 2. Type of trekking and adventure activities:

Trekking trails in forests are proposed in order to manage distribution and behaviors of tourists in the natural areas as well as provide them with best opportunities to experience the destination.

Two long treks are proposed in the previous section on tourist activity areas. Those treks may last 8 hours to 2 days 1 night. However, tourists can take just a section of the trek from 1 – 2 – 4 hours depending on their time, interest and health availability. Special interest groups can even do the trek in some days. Given its topographic conditions, the treks should be designed with the hardship level from 3 – 5/5 (medium to hard).

An signage system is proposed to install along the trek to provide interpretation for tourists. The sign should have a clear theme, a small amount of writing and is well laid-out. The sign should be built using local construction materials such as bamboo, wood or rock. Proposed themes include endemic flora and fauna species, types of forests and some environmental awareness raising contents. For sample interpretive signs, please refer to the Annex 2 – sample interpretive signs in protected areas.

In addition to environmental interpretative and education activities, the treks should provide tourists with a number of nature based tourism activities including mountain climbing, rock climbing, waterfall canyoning, kayaking, bird and wildlife watching.

## 3. Other tourist activities and services:

The following tourist activities and services are proposed to develop in the study area in order to enhance the destination's attractiveness:

- Scientific researches and study tours to the local forests and ecosystems
- Birding activities along the trekking trails
- Sightseeing and photography
- Cycling along the Road # 723
- Team building in forests



- Camping on the tops of mountains and inside forests, especially near river, streams.
- Forest lodge stay at the Giang Ly mountain (indicated on the ecotourism map)
- Homestay in Chil ethnic minority villages of Klong Lang
- Cultural shows and interactions in the local villages
- Village tours
- Gardening, farming
- Voluntary works

4. Type of accommodation services:

There are two types of accommodation facilities to be recommended: ecolodge and homestay.

An ecolodge is a small hotel or guesthouse that incorporates local architectural, cultural and natural characteristics, promotes environmental conservation, and produces social and economic benefits for local communities. There are some guidelines on designing and constructing ecolodges as follows (MTDP, 2005):

- Use local architecture and building materials: This means that you must build the lodge to look like a traditional home or house. Construction materials should be local, such as bamboo, rattan, wood, locally made bricks or stone. This is actually the cheapest and most common way to build a house in Dalat hill tribe areas, so most carpenters know very well how to do it in this fashion.
- Minimise the use of energy: This means avoiding air conditioning and other electric devices that use too much electricity. You should install solar energy to meet some power needs, such as lighting and hot water.
- Use local products and minimise the use of chemicals in daily operations: This means that you should use local food products (not canned imported products), locally produced bed sheets, table cloths and other items in your lodge. You should not buy chemical bug sprays, poisons or toxic cleaning fluids when there is a suitable substitute. Install screens to keep out the bugs, use non-toxic rat poison (or have housecats) and use simple soap and water for cleaning. All of these ideas will save money and the environment.
- Minimise and manage your waste: This means not using things that make a lot of waste, such as disposable water bottles, canned foods, or foods wrapped in plastic. This also means to recycle and reuse items when possible, especially glass and plastic.
- Employ local people and support their community: Your lodge should give work opportunities to nearby villagers. You may also support the community by helping with activities at a nearby school.

- Minimise negative impacts on nearby villages: You should provide information to tourists on cultural do's and don'ts. You should also speak with local villagers regularly to learn how you can help them and to learn if there are any problems created by tourists that stay at your lodge.
- Support conservation of nature: You can do this by giving information to your guests about nature tourism in your area. You can also help by not selling wildlife products and by supporting the conservation activities in a protected area nearby. Another simple way is to protect the trees around your lodge and prohibit hunting on your property.

For sample photos of ecolodge and a checklist, please refer to the Annex 3 – Sample photos of ecolodges and checklist.

Wikipedia described that homestay is a form of tourism and/or study abroad program that allows the visitor to rent a room from a local family to better learn the local lifestyle as well as improve their language ability. Hosting a homestay participant also allows the local family to earn some additional, needed income. Having low profitability, as it is, homestay can not be regarded as strictly commercial activity, but more of cross cultural exchange. Students generally arrange a homestay with their school or educational institution, but can also informally arrange to stay with a family through social connections, and through a variety of private agencies. There are a number of online homestay agencies that connect students with hosts all over the world (usually for a nominal fee).

Homestay scenarios can range from a completely immersive family experience, to a very basic room rental. Depending on the age of the student, homestays can be paid or unpaid. In the immersive family experience a homestay student lives, eats, and shares the majority of their time in the host country with the hosts and their family. Family events such as dining out, amusement parks, camping, travel, etc. usually involve the host student who may or may not be expected to pay a portion for the participation (tickets, parking, gas, travel expenses, et al.) The student is invited to participate in Holiday festivities (Thanksgiving, Christmas, etc.) and family events (weddings, birthdays, etc.). At the other end of the spectrum, students may simply be renting a room within a private home with minimal supervision from a host or family.

Additionally, there are a working homestay agreements where a student is expected to perform duties such as yard work, farm work, babysitting, maid services - usually in exchange for accommodation fees or as part of. A clash of cultures can sometimes result between a homestay student and the host family. To mitigate any issues, most homestay arrangements involve a contract or written agreement between the host and student.

For sample photos of homestay facilities, please refer to the Annex 4 – Photos of sample homestay facilities.

##### 5. Tourist information center:

Tourist information center is defined as a place, which is located near the center of the city or around some tourist attractions to serve tourists with needed information to ensure that visitors have the best knowledge about the destinations, so that their visit is secure and enjoyable. TICs often provide reservation services for accommodation and entertainment and maintain

supplies of relevant guidebooks or maps for sale or free depend on each country or city.

Most of the center's staffs should be well educated with proficient foreign languages so they can help tourists with most updated and useful information. In addition, all of TICs will have their own training program to support all necessary skills and techniques for their staffs in serving tourists. Moreover, at tourist information center, tourists also can give their feedbacks to improve the quality of serving international tourists. Then, TIC will be the most suitable place to receive all those recommendations from tourists.

Furthermore, tourist information centers will play a very important role in advertising for the local tourism development. TIC is a mirror of the quality of the local tourist services because it is the resource of data for statistics, reports and other relevant fields. Tourist information centers in each destination will collect all information about that local area and try to bring the best one to tourists and then improve the image of that area in customers' mind. TIC can be seen as a bridge, which is used to link the business and the local government, the NGOs and local development organizations to reach the general goals of that area in developing tourism.

In case of the study area, a TIC is really needed to provide specific knowledge on ecotourism and community based tourism activities and services for their clients and promote the destination which are currently not available in Da Lat. The main center should be built in Da Lat city, possibly in the current park's management office. Another tourist information section of this center should be embedded in the future reception center at Giang Ly to serve tourists coming to the destination. In the Giang Ly center, there should have a small museum/exhibition featuring natural and cultural tourism attractions of the destination, including exhibits, models, picture gallery, slide shows, video room, environmental education materials, counselling service at the reception center. The center can also provide specialist and on-site tour guide services.

#### 6. Ownership and management modalities:

There are different stakeholders involved in the construction and operation of tourist facilities and services in the study area. Although the local people should be most priority to take part in provision and management of services, other stakeholders such as the national park or tourism enterprises have strong interests and essential roles in the tourism development process, thereby need to be involved actively as well.

Firstly, the local people should be organized and supported to develop the tourism activities and businesses in the area. Presently there is no tourism business organization in the area, except 3 local food stalls in Klong Lang village. As discussed earlier, they need to organize themselves as an economic organization in order to have more business opportunities and supports from both Government and international development programmes. They may need to establish a management board, a cooperative or even enterprise to manage tourism businesses. In which the enterprise mode gives them the highest level of entrepreneurship and the management board mode is most informal. Nevertheless, a careful study with the participatory approach is proposed to carry out in order to examine the pros and cons of each type of community organization and support the decision making process.

The local people can provide the following businesses and services:

- contribution of land, properties and other investments to developing tourist facilities and services;
- construction workers and supply of local construction materials;
- maintenance and cleaning services;
- security and safety services;
- homestay services;
- food and drink services;
- transportation and portering services;
- art performance services;
- selling handicrafts
- working for local tourism businesses in the park such as the ecolodge or the Giang Ly reception center;

Secondly, the national park's management board should establish a tourism service unit to work on ecotourism businesses and other development activities. The national park could develop and launch a leasing and concession fee system as discussed in the legal document review section. The resource use leasing policy should pay more attention to the benefit of the local community such as incentive rental price or inclusion of local employment requirements in the leasing contract with private investors. The fee must be approved by the provincial People's Council.

The management board is the State management agency in the protected area in terms of natural resources management. They could issue and reinforce management regulation, plan and policies in relation to utilization of natural resources for ecotourism activities and services in the park. Obviously they will control all local ecotourism businesses in the future. In cases of proposed infrastructures and tourist facilities to be built in the park territory, they need have joint investment and management of the ventures.

The management board could also provide essential technical assistance for the local people and private tourism enterprises engaging in tourism activities and services in the future. They can coordinate training courses and awareness raising workshops in the field. They can provide market information and business development supports.

A team of specialist eco-tour guides should be established to provide services to tourists who take part in trekking and other tourist activities in forests.

Last but not least, there should have private investor(s) who jointly invest in building and operation of the proposed tourist facilities and services such as the ecolodge. The interviewed tourism businesses in Da Lat showed their great interest in the ecotourism projects and look to have a business opportunity. They play very essential role in marketing the destination and selling the local

offerings. They have their own distribution channels and business partners who can commercialize the local offerings in the most cost-efficient way. They can also transfer the business operational technologies and know-how to the local people and provide important business management capacity building supports.

### 3.2. BI DUP SUMMIT TREKKING TRAIL

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1. **Title/ name: Trekking Trail to the Bidoup Mount**
2. **Brief discussion:** The trek starts at the Bidoup ranger station after crossing Da Nhim river in order to minimize effort to climb up the high mountain. The total length of the trek is estimated 20km. This is a hard trek, possibly ranking 3/4. Although some interviewed rangers said that they can do it in a day, it is strongly recommended to complete the trek in 2 days 1 night at least. Moreover, the trek should start after lunch so that tourists can reach to the overnight location in the late afternoon. Another reason is that tourists usually get to this area from Da Lat or Nha Trang by that time.

There is a motorbike trail from the Bidoup ranger station to the elevation of nearly 2,000m AMSL. It may take more than half an hour motorbike drive or 3 hours of hiking to get to this point. The hardship level of the section is above easy. Think coniferous forests or conifer and broad-leaved forests are dominant in this section of the trek.

After taking a rest at the end of the motorbike trail, tourists will start climbing up to the top of the Bidoup mountain for another hour. On fine weather days, it is said that tourists could see the Nha Trang sea from this location, indicating a superb overlooking view from here. This is ideal venue for resting, having a quick bite, taking photos, watching birds and beautiful landscapes. Trekking down to the second mountain summit for another one hour to reach to the overnight camping site, near a stream. It is recommended to build camping facilities on the site, including wooden grounds, wooden cottages or huts, a septic toilet and especially cooking facilities with fuel (not using firewoods). The hardship level of this section is high as the topography is quite steep. The trekking section is featured by dwarf and mossy forests and wildlife watching opportunities (i.e. gibbons or birds). There are also some Fijian Cypress (*Forkienia hodginsii*) forests, only available at high elevation of more than 2,000 m AMSL.

After the breakfast in the morning next day, continue trek down towards to Road # 723 direction. The total length of the trek is more than 10km, taking about 6 hours. This section is less steep than the previous one and thus medium level of hardship. The trek also passes some mountain summits and different types of forests such as Fijian Cypress (*Forkienia hodginsii*) with the endemic species of 3-leaved conifer or broad-leaved forest with Fijian Cypress or Chestnut. Birding and wildlife watching are other attractions. The trek is ended up at the Klong Lang ranger station.

3. **Type of accommodation:** The recommended type of accommodation on the route is camp in tents or staying in cottages or huts.
4. **Size:** The estimated demand is max 20 pax a day (1 – 5 groups). Therefore, for the cottages or huts, the recommended capacity is 20 pax, thus 5 units with 4 pax each.
5. **Appx. price for B & B:** Price is estimated for the most common group size of 4 pax and broken down (per person) as follows:

Accommodation (1 night): 15 US\$

Guide (2 days): 25 US\$

Porter (2 persons x 2 days): 15 \$US

Meals (2 days): 35 US\$

Entrance fee: 5 US\$

Total costs: 95 US\$

Mark-up (20%): 19 US\$

Selling price: 115 US\$

6. Ownership model: fully owned and run by the national park.
7. Management model:
  - The national park: provision of safety and security services, environmental conservation control, visitor impact management, provision of specialist guiding services, statistics and reporting.
  - The private business partners: marketing and selling, transportation to and from the site, guiding/ translation service, visitor impact management, financial management.
  - The local people: Porter service, cooking services, maintenance of the trek and tourist facilities.
8. Local people' benefits: participate in portering and cooking services, supply of foodstuffs (roughly 50 \$US/ pax).
9. Unique Selling Points: bird watching, wildlife exposure, adventure and outdoor experiences, Bidoup Mount, primitive forests in a protected area, good accessibility and regional linkages.
10. Potential difficulties/ problems: tourist safety can be the most difficult aspect of this trekking tour development. As all activities are happening in primitive forests, tourists have to take different types of risks such as health problem, accidents, or loss in the forest and so on. This is most critical during the first stage of the trek development when both the organizers and tourists have little experiences. Another difficulty is related to participation and sharing benefits with local people as the tour is taking place entirely in forests.

### 3.3. GIANG LY PINE FOREST ECOLOGE

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1. **Title/ name: Giang Ly ecolodge**
2. Brief discussion: The proposed location to build this ecolodge is located on the top of a pine forest, 30-minute walk from the Giang Ly ranger station following the ranger trail. The trail is not difficult and crossing a stream where water can be pumped to a tank in the ecolodge. An electric generator can be installed near the stream just for water pumping and heating in the ecolodge. No electricity is provided in the lodge but oil/ kerosene/ paraffin lamps for lighting. In addition rain water is available especially in the rainy season. There are 3 large space on the site with an area of appx. 500 sq. m each, suitable to build the lodge. It is suggested to build 5 huts and one long house with a capacity of 20 pax.
3. Type of accommodation: this is an ecology themed and environmental friendly and education-oriented lodge with very limited services (mainly B & B).
4. Size: max. 30 pax a night.
5. Appx. price for B & B: 50 US\$/ nite/ hut for one family or two pax; 25 US\$/ nite/ pax.
6. Ownership model: This is a joint venture between the national park, a private investor and the local community of Dachays. The national park contributes the land lease fee, the local people contribute local construction materials and labors and the private investors contribute finance resources as the working capital during its start-up and operation. If any, the local people should have preferred loans from a local bank or an international development project and thus contribute some financial resources as well. Alternatively the national park can give the land use right to the local people (if they establish an economic organization) and get the concession of using the land and natural resources by getting commission of a fraction of the total revenue (refer to the case of the Cat Tien National Park and the Forest Floor Lodge for the detail).
7. Management model:
 

The national park would take the responsibility to supervise the operation of the lodge in line with conservation management regulations. The ecotourism business section of the park can also be involved in provision of some services in the lodge such as reception, natural interpretation and information.

The local community would be the main labor force of the lodge. They can take part in different services such as : housekeeping, cleaning and maintenance, cooking, etc.

A private investor is proposed in order to provide management know-how and technologies to operate the lodge. Their proposed positions include General Manager, department heads, especially the finance and accounting.
8. Local people' benefits:



The local people have several opportunities to take part in provision of services for the ecolodge including:

1. Employment
2. Foodstuff supplies (vegetables, pork, chicken, beef, etc.)
3. Commercialization in the informal sector (handicrafts, art performance, etc.)
4. Benefit sharing mechanism (paying for dividends, concession fee, raising fund)

9. Unique Selling Points:

The ecolodge is situated in an unique and strategic location for developing this type of business. This is the first and only one accommodation facilities in the core zone of the national park. It can be reached easily from both Da Lat and Nha Trang. The ecolodge is the ideal venue to start or end up several treks in the destination.

Its landscapes is definitely spectacular, unlimited overlooking view to top of mountains and forests underneath. It is very convenient to link the lodge to the surrounding biodiversity attractions as well as local ethnic minority culture. The lodge would also provide tourists with extraordinary environmentally educational and conservational experiences.

Last but not least the authentic, comfortable and artistic design and décor of the lodge is prerequisite.

10. Potential difficulties/ problems

The ecolodge project can only be realized when there is an investment, especially from the private sector. It is the most difficulty to find and invite the most appropriate investor to collaborate with the national park and the local people in this project. It is strongly recommended to undertake a feasibility study for this investment project.

On the other hand the local people should play very important role in this project. Presently no one in the local community understand what ecotourism and business are. It is very challenging to draw interest and encourage local people to participate actively in this project. In the first step, it is wise to find and involve some champions who can be the agent of change in the future.

### 3.4. DA CHAYS HOMESTAYS

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1. **Title/ name: Homestay services in the 2 villages of Dachays commune**
2. Brief discussion: The service is provided in the local wooden houses of the Chil ethnic minority people in the two villages of K'long Lanh and K'si. In the beginning stage, it is recommended to keep the number of homestay houses minimum, possibly 02 houses in the each village. The selected houses should be separated from the village center, possibly nested in gardens or fields on the hill with a nice view. The houses should be upgraded to meet the requirements of tourists, especially the toilet, hot water, cleanliness and bed rooms. Although its capacity may be higher, it is strongly recommended to allocate max. 4 pax a house in order to avoid unexpected changes of normal living habits of the host family. The services are very basic, mainly B & B. However, tourists would have a great opportunity to experience the daily life of the local people, interaction with the local people and participate in community events.
3. Type of accommodation: local wooden houses with very basic facilities, yet richness in cultural identity and social experiences.
4. Size: 2 – 4 pax each homestay house
5. Appx. price for B & B: 5 \$US/ pax/ nite
6. Ownership model: fully owned and run by local people
7. Management model: this is a type of family run businesses
8. Local people' benefits: they would enjoy the full benefit of hosting tourists in their house, including lodging and catering service charges.
9. Unique Selling Points: This is the only lodging service of this kind in Da Lat. The homestay would allow tourists to best experience the local cultural and social situations as well as contribute best to the benefits of the local people at the destination where they are coming to visit. In addition, the villages can be easily linked to touring routes along the Road # 723 or natural sites in the national park. The services are at the standard level and the prices are moderate.
10. Potential difficulties/ problems: The most difficulty to promote this business is related to the awareness and skills of local people. There are a huge need to build capacity for the local people in terms of tourism vocational and managerial skills training and business development supports.

## 4. PART THREE – RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to develop the community based ecotourism business development project in the study area aiming at generating the maximum benefits and commercial opportunities for the local people and the park, preservation of the traditional cultural identities and servation of the natural resources and environment, the following actions are recommended.

### 4.1. RASING AWARENESS AND TRAINING

Awareness raising workshops should be convened in the beginning of the project. The target groups are local people and national park's staffs who will directly and indirectly involved in ecotourism development activities and services. The meeting time can be max. 2 days. Sharing practical experiences, cases and participatory approach are strongly advised. The following themes/ topics should be presented and discussed:

1. Scientific and economic values of local natural resources and environment. Sustainable approaches and techniques to utilization of resources in tourism businessment;
2. Scientific and economic values of local traditional cultural identities. Proper approaches to utilization of resources in tourism business development;
3. Relevant Government legislations, regulations and policies;
4. Introduction to tourism management and its potential impacts on the local natural and cultural resources;
5. Mechanisms and solutions to promoting active and broad participation of the local people and maximizing their benefits;

Some tourism occupational training courses could be provided for the local people and national park's staffs who are directly involved in supply of tourist services. Those training courses should be very relevant to the needs, conditions and abilities of the trainees. They should be customized and deliverd on site. It is advisable to keep the class size max. 20. The training should be given in 3 – 5 days. Sharing hands-on experiences and practical skills are main focus of the training. The following skills are proposed:

1. Tour guiding skills
2. Front office skills
3. Housekeeping skills
4. First-aid skills
5. English/ French speaking skills
6. Homestay management skills
7. Tourism business management skills

## **4.2. ESTABLISHMENT OF A COMMUNITY BASED TOURISM MANAGEMENT SYSTEM**

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There are different types of community organization which can manage local tourism businesses provided by the local people and control the impacts of tourism development within the community alike. When the project is started, it is necessary to conduct participatory planning exercises with the local people to get their inputs in designing the community organization and working out a community based tourism agreement. Nevertheless the following model of a community based tourism organization is proposed as a reference, taking into consideration experiences from other community based tourism projects in Vietnam and other developing countries.

### **4.2.1. Functions**

Da Chays Community-Based Tourism (CBT) Management Board is a social organization formed by local people in the commune. The Board, which is laid under direct jurisdiction of Da Chays Commune People's Committee, will be operating on a part-time basis.

The Board's office is located right at the Klong Lang gate and open 4 hours every day. The office staffs on duty shall have the responsibilities to answer questions, provide information and receive service requests of the customers as well as timely report to the Board's Chairperson and other relevant parties. All operational expenses of the Board, including salaries for its members will be taken from the income generated from community-based tourism.

### **4.2.2. Duties**

- The Board has the responsibility to manage all tourism activities within Da Chays commune.
- The Board has the responsibility to prepare working plans on weekly and monthly basis as well as implement them and provide guidance to relevant people, including regular activities identified in the plans and unexpected circumstances as well.
- The Board has the responsibility to organize activities for the development and enhancement of service quality, keep controlling and monitoring the quality of services and their charges offered at the commune or handling violations on a regular basis.
- The Board has the responsibility to fairly distribute tourists to private guesthouses in the commune.
- The Board has the responsibility to carry out tourism promotion and marketing activities. The Board should coordinate with relevant agencies to carry out promotion and management over tourism business activities in the commune.
- The Board has the responsibility to carry out statistical work, to do market and policy mechanism research as well as provide guidance to relevant people. To report to relevant parties, including commune's advisory council for community-based tourism on the situation and results of tourist service business operation in the commune.
- The Board has the responsibility to act as a coordinator in partnership with relevant agencies to organize training activities aiming at building up capacity for the community.

#### 4.2.3. Organizational structure

There are following positions with expected responsibilities in the board as follows.

- 01 Chairpersons
- 02 Chairpersons
- 01 Accountant
- 04 other members

Their responsibilities include:

##### The Chairperson:

- To manage the preparation and implementation of plans for community-based tourism development (including plans for investment, exploitation, business operation, promotion etc., and make relevant decisions)
- To take overall responsibility for tourism business operation in the commune
- To be responsible for personnel management
- To be responsible for financial management.

##### The Vice Chairpersons:

- To assist the Chairperson in management works
- To manage the assessment of tourism activities in the commune
- To be responsible for other works such as preservation, protection, maintenance of trekking trails and health care issues.
- To welcome guests visiting the office and advertise for community-based tourism products.
- To organize training activities for building up community capacity.
- To be responsible for security matters when processing visitor registration for temporary residence at the commune.

##### The Accountant

- To be responsible for the organization and management of matters pertaining to finance
- Management of community-based tourism fund.

##### Other members

- Member 1: To be responsible for the management of tour guides and concierges.

- Member 2: To be responsible for the organization and management of food supply and catering for tourists.
- Member 3: To be responsible for the organization of sport and cultural activities as well as museum exhibition.
- Member 4: To be responsible for the organization, coordination for visitors to enjoy homestay and lodging services with the community.

In addition to the members of the management board, the following groups of service suppliers are advised to establish in the community:

- Homestay and lodging service group
- Food and beverage catering group
- Art and sport performing troupe
- Reception and tour guiding group

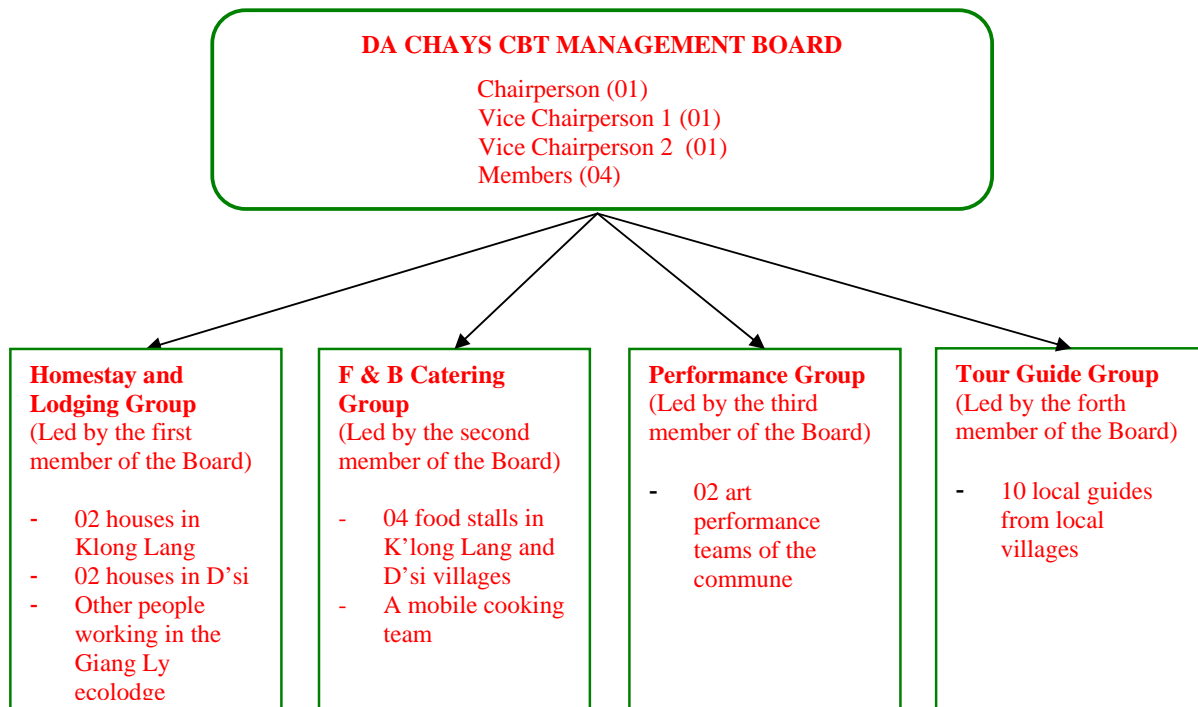


Figure 1: Organizational chart of Da Chays CBT Management Board

### 4.3. PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT AND MARKETING<sup>1</sup>

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#### 4.3.1. The context of ecotourism development and marketing

There is still great variation in the understanding of what constitutes an ecotourism product. While it is broadly accepted that we are talking about a nature-based experience that is managed in a sustainable way, many presentations covered other types of product and wider issues of sustainable tourism. There are regional differences here: a strong focus on wildlife and wilderness is apparent in the Americas and Africa, while in Asia there is particular interest in the associated cultural dimension and in Europe ecotourism is often linked to rural tourism and landscapes shaped by man. A common thread is the concept of a product that provides the visitor with an authentic understanding of the area's natural and cultural heritage, and involves and benefits local people.

In all regions, the purpose behind the development of ecotourism products can be equated with sustainable development objectives. In some situations the underlying motive may be to benefit conservation, through generating more resources or providing an alternative, more environmentally sustainable, local economic base. Elsewhere, the motivation may be more to do with diversifying the economy and the tourism market, or tackling rural poverty. Many products are developed for a multitude of reasons. In all cases, the principles behind successful product development and marketing are similar.

Although there may be similarities in objectives and principles, the starting point and individual circumstances of each project may be vastly different. Current levels of visitation, inherent attractiveness of the area, accessibility and infrastructure, ecological sensitivity, local skills base, and community structure and aspirations, will vary. These differences exist within all regions as well as between them. Therefore each individual project needs to be very carefully assessed and planned.

#### 4.3.2. Key components of ecotourism products

The composition of ecotourism products should vary in order to satisfy different market segments and local conditions. However, some general priorities were identified at the preparatory conferences.

- Address quality, authenticity and security. Throughout the preparatory conferences, the importance of these three attributes was underlined. Quality does not necessarily mean luxury, but attention to detail and understanding customer needs. Authenticity is about meeting a visitor aspiration of 'seeing the real thing' while respecting the sensitivities of local communities and environments. Security is about visitor safety, perceived and real, but can also be applied to wider issues of reliability.
- Give top priority to the interpretation of nature and culture. The most essential component of an ecotourism product is the inherent quality of the landscape and wildlife. The UNWTO market studies confirmed this as the main visitor motivation, but closely followed by the opportunity to meet local people and experience cultural traditions and lifestyles. Ecotourism is distinguished by providing an experience that is both educative and enjoyable. Quality of interpretation is of paramount importance; within this, the value of good local guides, who know their subject and how to put it over, has been strongly emphasised.

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<sup>1</sup> Adapt from Richard (2002).

- Design and manage service facilities to maximise sustainability. Although not the driving force in an ecotourism offer, accommodation, catering, and opportunities to make purchases are essential components of the product. There is a whole host of planning, design and management issues here that affect viability, environmental impact, enterprise and employment opportunities for local people, value retained in the local economy and the quality of the visitor experience. Case studies presented during the preparatory conferences have demonstrated a wealth of good practice in this area and a growing body of knowledge internationally, on topics such as: eco-lodge design and management; village based accommodation and homestay programmes; use of local produce and traditional dishes; and handicraft production and sales.
- Address destination as well as individual product issues. Successful and sustainable product development in ecotourism also needs to take account of infrastructure, environmental management and visitor services in the destination as a whole. For example, the need for more sustainable transport options to and within the destination was stressed at the European preparatory conference.
- Relate ecotourism to sustainable activity tourism, where appropriate. Although ecotourism is clearly distinguished from activity tourism, it is apparent that some ecotourists are looking for activities such as hiking or trail riding to complement the product offer. This appears to be particularly true in mountain areas, in regions like Europe and Central Asia. In maritime locations, such as small island states, making activities like diving and yachting more environmentally sustainable was seen as an issue for ecotourism. Three conferences also raised the controversial question of the relationship between hunting and ecotourism, recognising that this activity, when carefully controlled, can provide resources for wildlife management and raise the perceived value of certain species within local communities.

#### **4.3.3. Promoting ecotourism messages and products**

In general the preparatory conferences have called for more promotion of ecotourism, while recognising that the level of promotion of any one location should be determined by its carrying capacity and take account of the views of the local community.

- Promote ecotourism as a concept. There is a particular desire to see more active promotion of the principles and values of ecotourism, to recipient communities and to the travelling public. There is a need for a stronger international campaign to make tourists aware of both the harmful and the beneficial impacts of their activities, and how this depends on their travel choice. This could go beyond simply the generic message, with promotional support for relevant certification schemes and for activities such as donating to conservation causes in destinations visited. One conference emphasised the need to focus on the promotion of ecotourism to young people, as a receptive audience and the travellers of the future.
- Grasp the significant opportunity presented by the Internet. The Internet has had a major impact as a medium for promoting individual ecotourism products and the considerable potential it presents is widely recognised. It lends itself well to the ecotourism market, which is particularly responsive to up to date, detailed information and reports from previous travellers. A cautionary note was sounded about the lack of consumer trust in making bookings through the Internet, but this is being overcome as specific sites and brands are becoming better known. The advent of IT based Destination Management Systems will help to link demand to supply more efficiently.
- Use a range of techniques and partners. Despite the growth in Internet use, there was general recognition that ecotourism products should continue to use a range of promotional tools in their marketing, including working with specialist media and tour operators. There



was a strong call for national and local tourist organisations to become more actively engaged in promoting ecotourism themes and products, in their publications and through travel fairs and familiarisation trips.

- Provide comprehensive and educative information at all stages. The detail and accuracy of information supplied to visitors in advance of their stay is particularly important in this sector. Ecotourists need to know what to expect. As well as covering travel details and facilities, this should include information on the ecology and culture of the area and how to respect it. Likewise, the quality of information supplied during their stay, for example by hosts, protected area authorities or local tour operators, can greatly affect the visitors' experience and their impact on the local community.
- Create loyal ambassadors. Almost all conferences stressed the importance of 'word of mouth' recommendation as the most potent form of marketing. Providing visitors with a quality experience, getting feedback from them and maintaining some post-visit contact, will help to turn them into committed ecotourists and ambassadors for conservation.

#### **4.3.4. Technical support for communities and enterprises**

In all regions there is a recognised need for local communities and small enterprises to receive relevant technical support to assist product development and marketing.

- Provide relevant local training. Locally available skills training is required, covering guiding, environmental management, customer care, catering, languages, promotion and information technology. It has also been emphasised that people from indigenous and local communities should be supported in taking up management positions in ecotourism. Capacity building of this kind has been assisted by governments, NGOs, donor agencies, educational institutions and the private sector, often working fruitfully in partnership. The importance of developing such programmes with local people and private enterprises, to ensure they are tailored to need and have local ownership, has been stressed. Some projects have demonstrated the advantage of including local government officials and NGOs in training programmes.
- Encourage people to look together at the local resource and at other projects. A number of conferences pointed to the value of local study tours to raise people's awareness of conservation issues and the opportunities of ecotourism. Projects were also presented where the stimulation and sound practical knowledge came from visits to successful ecotourism projects elsewhere. There may be opportunities to develop more twinning and multi-lateral links between projects.
- Provide targeted, accessible financial assistance. The important contribution of microcredit and small grant schemes for ecotourism was demonstrated by a number of projects, and there has been a call for more financial support that is within the reach of local entrepreneurs, including resources for marketing. However, one preparatory conference emphasised the need to avoid developing ecotourism products that will remain dependent on public subsidy in the long term.

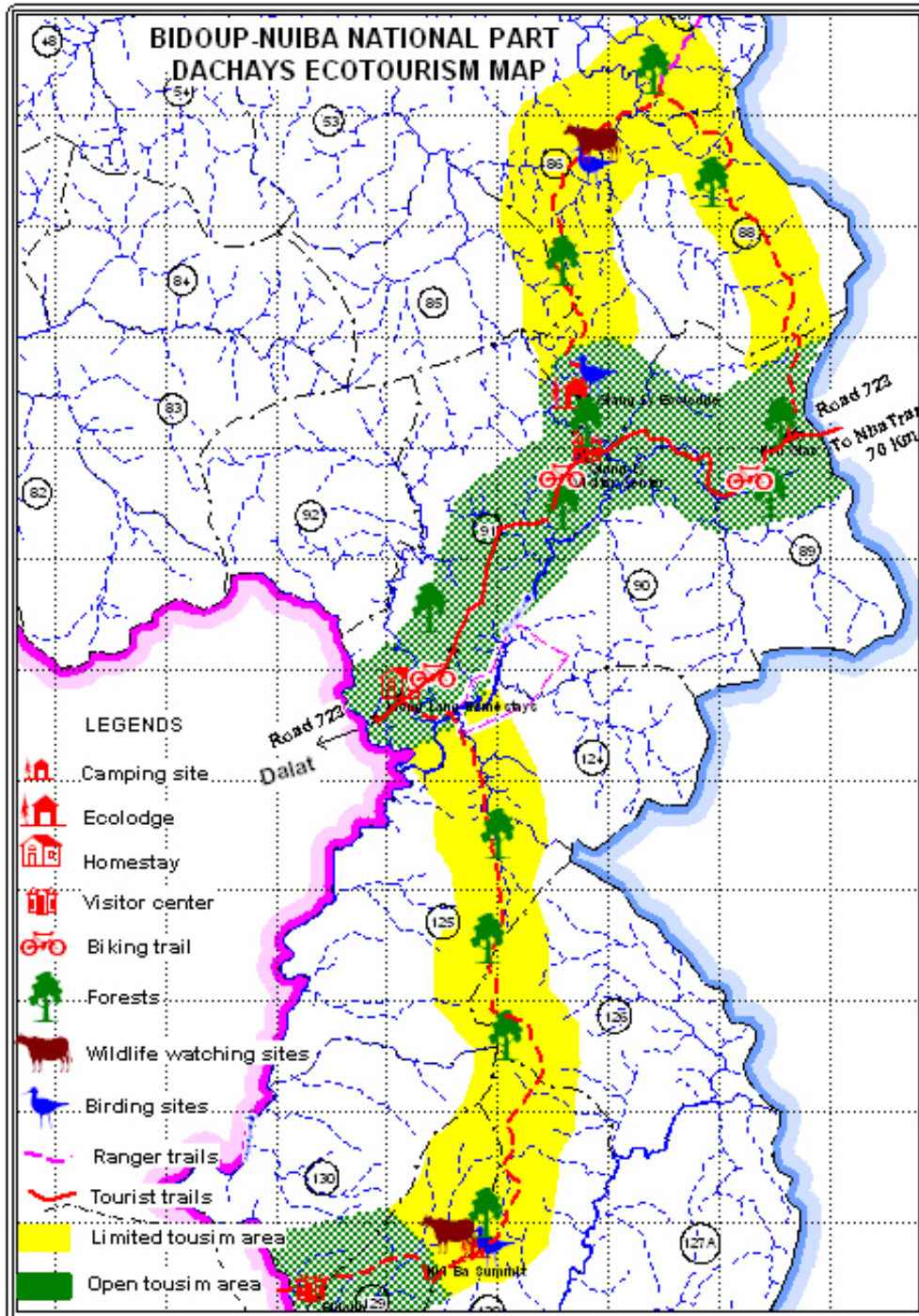
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## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX 1: DACHAYS COMMUNITY ECOTOURISM MAP

For the original high resolution image, please check this link out:  
<http://www.4shared.com/dir/17190884/8e9080fc/sharing.html>





## APPENDIX 2 – SAMPLE INTERPRETIVE SIGNS IN PROTECTED AREAS





### APPENDIX 3 – PHOTOS OF SAMPLE ECOLOGES





**APPENDIX 4 – PHOTOS OF SAMPLE HOMESTAY FACILITIES.**

