NON-TIMBER FOREST PRODUCTS (NTFPS) SUB-SECTOR SUPPORT PROJECT – PHASE II

INTERNAL REVIEW

Final Report

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IUCN - The World Conservation Union

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Acronyms

5 MHRP	5 Million Hectare Reforestation Programme
ALF	Action Learning Fund
ARDO	Agriculture and Rural Development Office
CTA	Chief Technical Advisor
DPC	District People's Committee
DPD	Deputy Project Director
ELG	Ecosystems and Livelihoods Group (of the IUCN Regional Office)
FD	Forestry Department of MARD
FPD	Forest Protection Department (MARD)
FSIV	Forest Science Institute of Vietnam
FSSP	Forest Sector Support Programme
GoV	Government of Vietnam
HH	Households
HRD	Human Resources Development
ICD	International Cooperation Department (MARD)
ICDP	Integrated Conservation and Development Project
IUCN	The World Conservation Union
LFA	Logical Framework Analysis
MA&D	Marketing Analysis and Development
MARD	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NCRO	North Central Regional Office (of the project) in Ha Tinh
NGO	Non Government Organisation
NPD	National Project Director
NRO	Northern Regional Office (of the project) in Quang Ninh
NSC	National Steering Committee
NTAB	National Technical Advisory Board
NTFP	Non Timber Forest Product
PD	Project Document (also on occasions Project Director)
PIP	Project Implementation Plan
PMU	Project Management Unit
PPC	Provincial People's Committee
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal
PSC	Project Steering Committee
RC	Research Centre (as in the NTFP RC)
RF	Research Fund
RO	Regional Office
RT	Review Team
RUP	Resource Use Planning
ToR	Terms of Reference

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The successful conduct of a review such as this depends on the input and contribution of many people. We would like to acknowledge the considerable assistance we have received as we have undertaken our tasks. The project team arranged efficient and effective logistical support throughout the mission, and this made our task easier. We are particularly grateful for the way that project staff and partners offered their considered thoughts and assessments about the project is an open and constructive manner. The constructive engagement we had with everyone involved helped us greatly to clarify and crystalise our ideas.

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 Introduction and recurrent themes

This internal review took place in February 2004, approximately one and a half years after the project commenced. The team was in-country for two weeks, of which five days were spent in the field. The review was conducted in close dialogue with the project team and key partners in an endeavour to assist the project to reach conclusions about the challenges faced in moving ahead, and in formulating broad approaches to do this. The detailed recommendations we have made are our own, but they have built on many of the broader ideas and suggestions that have come from project staff and partners. Not all groups will be satisfied by all of our recommendations, but our deliberations and conclusions have benefited from a variety of perspectives, and we have tried to integrate these. Our final conclusions have been guided by one major consideration:

1. What is necessary for the project in order to help it achieve its goal and objectives of using NTFPs to contribute to poverty alleviation and conservation in Vietnam.

During the course of the review several recurrent themes became evident. These are:

2. Lack of a clear vision, and strategies (both short and long term) for guiding project activities;
3. Slow progress with initiating activities (particularly field activities);
4. Problems associated with organisational structures (particularly unclear roles and overlapping authority and responsibility among key project and partner groups and individuals);
5. Problems with managing project affairs.

We have framed our response to these themes by identifying specific *issues* and suggesting specific *recommendations* aimed at addressing each issue. These are given below.

1.2 Learning from Phase I

Issue:
A considerable knowledge base is available from Phase I of the project. Phase II was designed to build on that base, but relatively little of this has been extracted and applied to Phase II—there is a sense that the wheel is being re-invented once again.

Recommendation 1:
An explicit attempt be made to re-visit the documentation from Phase I and extract the information that can be of strategic and tactical guidance for approaches and activities in Phase II. Guidance in this task should be sought from the IUCN Country and Regional Offices.

1.3 Project design, approach and strategy

Issue:
The PD has proven to be an adequate guide for project implementation, and activities basically follow its format. However, some project staff feel that it gives inadequate strategic guidance and that aspects of the LFA need major revision.

Recommendation 2:
Major revision of the LFA in the original PD should be delayed until substantial implementation experience is gained (possibly until early 2005). If the PMU decides that there are some small sections of the LFA seriously constraining the project's ability to implement activities effectively, then these sections could be revised by a small team of those staff directly involved.

Issue:
The PIP fails to give sufficient strategic guidance for implementation, and it gives undue emphasis to the strengthening of the NTFP RC over that intended in the PD, by raising this aspect to be the first of three themes.

Recommendation 3:
The PIP should be set aside as a vehicle for viewing the project, and the project should revert to the conceptual structure outlined in the PD. This should provide a sufficient framework for guiding implementation and reporting on project activities. However, the draft progress report for the second semester of 2003 should be accepted in its current three-theme format to avoid unnecessary additional work.

Issue:
The absence of a clear and shared "vision" and commonly understood strategies to guide the identification and implementation of project activities was a common thread throughout discussions with project staff and during the field visits by the RT. In particular, there are no clear strategies for:
- Guiding project field implementation;
- Strengthening the capacity of the NTFP RC (elaborated in Section 4.4 below);
- Support to the NTFP network;
- Partnership development, including capitalising on the strength of different partners (elaborated in Section 8 below).

The fundamental role for the PMU is to provide this strategic guidance to the project. In the absence of this guidance, decisions on project activities will be *ad hoc*, unclear and unsystematic and as a result, the project will risk not achieving its objectives.

Recommendation 4 (to be read in conjunction with Recommendation14):
A process be established to develop a vision for the project and strategies to guide implementation, in particular to provide direction in:
- **Implementing field activities to test:**
  - **The use of NTFPs for conservation and poverty alleviation;**
  - **Mechanisms for scaling up;**
- **Developing generic principles and guidelines for using NTFPs as vehicles for conservation and poverty alleviation throughout Vietnam.**

Recommendation 5:
The PMU should focus its attention on strategic issues (as indicated above), prioritisation of activities and creating opportunities for project staff and partners to participate in this process. This should include revisiting the five "strategic approaches" outlined in Section 3 of the PD.

High quality outside support and guidance for this task is needed on a regular basis during the life of the project. The IUCN Country and Regional Offices will need to play an important role in providing and facilitating this regular support.

Issue:
A clear and focused strategy for project support to the NTFP RC is necessary. This is particularly important regarding the GoV signals for research centres to become more self-sufficient (and by implication more client-oriented) in the years ahead (see Box 3 for an elaboration of this issue).

Recommendation 6:
The project should concentrate capacity building of the NTFP RC on a limited number of areas which are considered a high priority in terms of contributing directly to the sustainable use of NTFPs for poverty alleviation and conservation of biodiversity.

1.4   Organisation and structure of the project

Issues:
- The PSC could be more proactive in helping the project focus on the "big picture" issues through strategic guidance;
- The NTAB, which was designed to provide linkages between the project and FSSP, the 5 MHRP and other relevant programmes, could play an important role as a sounding board for discussing both strategic and technical aspects of the project to complement the role of the Steering Committee.

Recommendation 7:
We encourage the PSC and NTAB to adopt a strategic role. This should be reflected in the task descriptions of these committees.

Issue:
The enlargement of the PMU to include the Director of the FSIV as the Project Director, along with unclear limits of authority and responsibility of individual members of the PMU, has complicated and slowed management decision making and led to a situation where there is lack of clarity and confusion over many management issues.

Recommendation 8:
The PMU undertake an exercise to review the working methodology and approaches of its members, to define the limits of authority and responsibility that apply to individual members and various groupings of members of the PMU.

Issue:
The increased demands of Phase II compared with Phase I (plus the assumption of additional work loads by the DPD) have meant that the DPD is unable to devote the time needed to exercise effective management of the project.

Recommendation 9:
Options be considered for providing necessary high level management inputs into the project, including the possibility of:
- *appointment of a senior national expert to support the PMU in decision making and implementation or,*

- *making the DPD position a dedicated full time position.*

Issue:
There are different opinions among the main project implementing partners about what types of administrative and technical support are needed by the project and can be provided from the IUCN Country and Regional Offices, and how this support can be accessed and mobilised.

Recommendation 10 (to be read in conjunction with Recommendation 17):
The PMU and senior members of the IUCN Regional and Country Offices should meet to:
- *Identify the various types of administrative and technical support required by the project;*
- *Agree on where the necessary capacity exists and how the support can be provided;*
- *Agree on workplans which specify the type of technical inputs and the timing of delivery;*
- *Identify mechanisms by which ad hoc suggestions from outside the project, e.g. from IUCN technical programs regionally and globally, can be raised, discussed and action agreed upon.*

1.5   Management and administration

Issues:
The management style emanating from the PMU is not effective in encouraging staff enthusiasm and moving forward efficiently and effectively with project implementation.

Good working relationships have not always been established between the project and partner organisations. This has inhibited the ability of the project to move ahead.

Recommendation 11:
The PMU members, and in particular the CTA, should change their management style and adopt appropriate working methods and approaches for project management with a focus on:
- *Improving, clarifying and speeding up decision making processes;*
- *Decentralising relevant decision making and project management, with a clear role for ROs and field site partners in the implementation of field activities;*
- *Prioritising and allocating time to the fundamental functions of the PMU; i.e. focusing on strategic issues and on promoting common understanding of project strategies, rather than on minor tactical issues;*
- *Stimulating and facilitating debate, thinking and action learning, both within the project team and with project partners;*
- *Establishing a cooperative relationship within the PMU and with the project partners.*
- *Reviewing and clarifying authority and responsibility for key areas of decision making among PMU members, and between the PMU and IUCN.*

Issue:
Many management challenges have been identified during the course of this Review.

Recommendation 12:
A high level meeting be organised to include the Director of the ICD, Chairman of the project Steering Committee, Director of FSIV, IUCN Country Representative,

representatives from IUCN RO and the Netherlands Embassy, to consider what is needed
to address the recommendations made by the review team, in particular:
- *Recommendations 11 (re. Management style of the PMU)*
- *Recommendation 17 (re. Budget line 402).*

1.6   Activities

Issue:
Notwithstanding the difficulties normally associated with establishing projects, the general perception is that the project has been excessively slow in initiating substantive activities. Undue attention has been paid to micro management and elaborate and time consuming decision making processes rather than encouraging decentralised initiatives and field work.

Recommendation:
Action needed to address this issue is captured in Recommendation 11 above.

Issue:
The original project design as intended in the PD included decentralised authority to the ROs for major decision making in the planning, implementing and monitoring of field activities. Such a decentralised approach to management has not been put in place.

Recommendation 13:
The authority for planning, implementing and monitoring of field activities should be decentralised to the ROs. ROs should be given adequate support so that they can fulfil their mandate to strengthen communications and partnerships with local authorities, other organisations and households to establish a good cooperative relationship and reach agreement on what to do and how to do it.

Issue:
There is no clear strategy to guide field implementation, and no long term vision of what the project will develop (generic guidelines or models) to contribute to the use of NTFPs for conservation and poverty alleviation outcomes in Vietnam.

Recommendation 14 (to be read in conjunction with Recommendation 4):
Develop, in a consultative fashion, a long term vision and strategies for the project (to be refined over time based on learning from project experiences) to guide field implementation.

1.7   Linkages with other organisations

Issues:
The added value of the present partnerships (particularly with Eco-Eco, CRES and some of the District partners) has not been adequately or effectively explored (Objective 4 in the PD has not been effectively developed).

There has been insufficient inventory and analysis of the potential of various new partners (including departments of FSIV) to work with the project.

Recommendation 15:
PMU should adopt a more consultative and participatory approach to developing
partnerships with an emphasis on effective two-way communication and dialogue leading
to equitable give-get outcomes in the relationships. This process should aim to (re)define
the nature of the relationships so that the partners are able to provide added value.

Recommendation 16:
Carry out an inventory of potential partners plus an analysis of their strengths to identify
what they can contribute to the work of the project—particularly to aspects such as:
- *Analysis of field experience and identification of lessons learned in relation to scaling up;*
- *Policy implications emanating from project experiences;*
- *Providing support for specific technical expertise such as NTFP surveys, production and processing in Vietnam;*
- *Market analysis for NTFPs;*
- *National and regional policy and strategy formulation for the NTFP sub-sector development (in particular aimed at poverty alleviation and conservation);*

1.8   Budget

Issue (see also Section 5.3):
There are different views among the Vietnamese partners (including MARD), IUCN Country
Office and IUCN Asia Regional Office on which group has the authority to access budget
line 402. These differences have become deeply divisive to the extent of seriously inhibiting
some aspects of project progress and damaging relationships between these project partners.

Recommendation 17 (to be read in conjunction with Recommendation 10):
There should be a meeting between IUCN Regional and Country Offices, PMU, Chairman
of Steering Committee, Director of ICD and the Netherlands Embassy to reach agreement
on procedures for accessing budget line 402, and in particular, to identify:
- *The needs of the project for different types of support from IUCN Regional and Country Offices;*
- *The procedure for making decisions about how and when this support should be provided and how to assess results.*

1.9   Monitoring and evaluation

Issue:
The focus in the M&E systems set up to date is on compliance monitoring ("Has the activity
been carried out?"). This is important for planning and reporting purposes, but the biggest
challenge for the project will be to monitor and evaluate the *impact* of the project's activities,
i.e. to develop indicators and to measure progress towards achieving the higher levels in the
logical framework hierarchy: the project's goal and objectives, particularly: What is the
project's impact on biodiversity conservation, poverty alleviation and national economic
development (i.e. the project goal)?

Recommendation 18:
The project further develops its M&E system to address explicitly the issue of impact
monitoring, including the evaluation of unintended consequences of project activities.
Systems need to be put in place (e.g. collection of baseline data) from the onset of the

project so be able to measure impact later. The project might need to seek outside assistance to establish a comprehensive impact monitoring system, including formats and methods for (1) profiles/ baseline data, (2) case studies by project teams, and (3) additional in-depth studies on selected issues.

1.10 Discussion

All project partners who were interviewed by the RT insisted that the project is very relevant and that they are keen to see the project succeed:

- The project has been designed to address specific result areas of the FSSP, and MARD is looking for a significant contribution from the project to increase the Government's capacity to promote poverty alleviation and biodiversity conservation;
- For IUCN, in addition to assisting Vietnam's poverty alleviation and biodiversity conservation efforts, the project represents an important opportunity to further the learning about NTFPs and their role in the poverty alleviation – conservation nexus. Because of the size, relevance and potential of the project, IUCN considers it a "flagship project" and it is looking for the project to provide experiences and lessons which can be applied not only in Vietnam but regionally and globally.
- The Netherlands Embassy regards this project as a major investment of its available budget in an area of key interest for the Netherlands Government.

All these parties follow project progress closely and are committed to its success.

The review team recognises that the time consuming tasks necessary to establish a project as a functional entity make it difficult to commence meaningful activities early in the life of a project. Nonetheless, we feel that the PMU could have been more effective in ensuring that output oriented activities were given a higher priority.

Perhaps the most important deficiency in the project to date is the lack of a clear vision and strategies (short and long term) for guiding the project's implementation, in particular in the field. We believe this is a serious short coming and needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency. The PMU, and particularly the CTA, has an important responsibility in addressing these issues. We do not underestimate the difficulties involved and emphasise that it will require the on-going input of high quality technical support from outside the project. It is also not something that should be seen as a one-off activity, but will require commitment over the life of the project. If it is done well it could be the conceptual (and intellectual) pivot of the project and the vehicle to bring the project team (and its partners) together around a common mission. IUCN has a critical role to play (and a responsibility) in bringing international thinking and best practice to bear on these issues.

We have suggested 18 recommendations for consideration by the project and its key partners. However, among these are several that we believe to be critical to ensure the future well being of the project. These are:
- *Recommendation 4* regarding the development of a vision and project implementation strategies
- *Recommendation 5* regarding the role and responsibility of the PMU in developing the vision and strategies;
- *Recommendation 10* regarding IUCN's role in the project;
- *Recommendation 11* regarding the management style of the PMU;

- *Recommendation 12* regarding a high level meeting to address the management recommendations of the RT;
- *Recommendation 17* regarding budget line 402.

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2. CONDUCT OF THE MISSION

The mission was carried out in February 2004 on the request of the PMU and the IUCN Vietnam Country Office. The Terms of Reference for the mission are shown in Appendix I. The proposed workplan for the mission was discussed with IUCN and the project team on 11th February, and adapted to reflect the needs of the project and the government. This is shown in Appendix II. The team spent five days in the field, with two days spent in the north and three days spent in the south (including travelling time). Nine days were spent in Hanoi.

The team used a range of approaches to obtain the necessary information. These included:

- Review of selected documents (list of documents consulted is given in Appendix III);
- Meetings with the project partners, project staff and key informants in Hanoi and at the field sites and with IUCN managers in Bangkok (a list of people met is given in Appendix IV);
- A participatory workshop with the project staff on Day 2 of the mission to reach consensus (by the staff) on their perceptions of the key strengths, challenges / problems and recommendations for the project;
- Focus group discussions with groups in the field, in particular,
  ➢ Senior members of the Regional Office teams;
  ➢ Selected members of several field site teams and local partners;
- Field inspections of project sites;
- Discussions with villagers.

It was considered desirable to develop the key findings of the review in a collegiate and collaborative manner with the project teams to help to draw out their experience. The results of the participatory workshop (shown in Appendix V) were a valuable reference point for the review and assisted the team to develop and test hypotheses during the course of the work. As ideas were developed during the field visits, these were shared with the project team with the request that they provide feedback (during the time of the field visit if possible) to ensure that the emerging findings accorded with the project's experiences and to avoid misinterpretation by the review team.

The RT prepared their initial recommendations in a participatory exercise on the morning of 20th February and these were shared with the DPD and CTA (separately) during the afternoon. A draft report was written between 21st and 23rd February and submitted to the project and the IUCN Country Office on 24th. This was the basis for a debriefing presentation made separately to the project team (including IUCN) and the Netherlands Embassy on 24th. The draft report was translated into Vietnamese and circulated for comment. A debriefing meeting was held with the IUCN Regional Director and senior members of the IUCN Asia Regional Office in Bangkok on 25th February as part of the process of formulating an IUCN response to the findings of the review. The Team Leader of the RT took note of the many comments forwarded by project staff when he revised the report. The final report was submitted to the project and the IUCN Country Office on 11th March.

Because of the large amount of information to assimilate and the limited time available for cross checking and verification, there are likely to be some errors of fact or interpretation in the report. We have done our best to minimise these. The structure of the report has generally followed the topics outlined in the ToR, although some of the suggested sections in the ToR have been combined to allow a more coherent and integrated narrative to be presented. We

have attempted to address all topics in the ToR, although we have given emphasis to those aspects that we considered to be critical in terms of assisting the project to move ahead effectively and quickly.

3. EVOLUTION OF THE PROJECT

3.1 The link with the Phase I project

The *Non Timber Forest Product Sub-Sector Support Project Phase II (in short, the NTFP project, Phase II)* was preceded by a pilot NTFP project (or Phase I) (1998 – 2002). The pilot NTFP project contributed significantly to enhancing the knowledge and capacity of the Government of Vietnam for understanding and guiding NTFP use in Vietnam (See Box 1).

Box 1. A summary of Phase I results

The pilot NTFP project generated the following main results:

- The capacity of the NTFPRC has been improved. A draft Strategic Development Plan including an operational plan, organogramme and a human resource development plan has been produced; an Information Management System (IMS), including among others a web page, a local area network, an expanded library collection and NTFP product profiles, has been developed and put in place at the NTFPRC; the skills and knowledge of NTFPRC and NGO staff have been enhanced in topics relating to NTFP conservation and development areas (such as strategic planning, coordination of multi-partner activities, project management and administration, information technology and management, RRA/PRA, Participatory Action-Research (PAR), NTFP resource monitoring, NTFP processing, gender awareness and analysis, horticultural techniques and collaborative forest management).

- Several important methods for researching, planning, and facilitating NTFP-based conservation and rural development initiatives have been adapted and tested for the Vietnamese context, such as: NTFP Market Analysis & Development; participatory action research (PAR) for understanding local NTFP dependency, gender and sustainability issues; participatory planning for NTFP-based rural development and conservation initiatives. Various training approaches and materials associated with most of these methods have also been produced and, a small pool of trained field workers now exists who can use and train others in their use. Local management systems for sustainable NTFP use were designed and initially tested through development of village action plans and collaborative trials for the regeneration of wild NTFP resources, household land-use planning and the conservation of fuel wood through the use of improved cook stoves in pilot villages of the project field sites. Experience has been gained or improved in growing approximately 15 NTFP species in plantations, including those yielding medicine, fruit, fuel wood, and construction material.

- Awareness raising achievements of the pilot NTFP project include the project contribution (as far as NTFP issues are concerned) to the development process of FSSP; expanding NTFP networking at national and international levels; a series of studies, surveys, assessments, and case studies on various aspects of NTFP sector; a distribution system for project publications (i.e. mailing list, web site), training for NTFP users at field level; and awareness raising activities for different stakeholder groups and at different levels (from village to Central Government).

- The pilot NTFP project has helped to establish for the first time mechanisms for effective collaboration between the project partners, which are both Governmental, and non-governmental organisations.

Source: Abstract from the Project Document, NTFP Project Phase II.

After the conclusion of Phase I, there were numerous outstanding challenges to supporting the sustainable use and development of NTFPs. Phase II was designed in order to:

- Expand geographically and thematically the positive results of the pilot NTFP project
- Continue the method development and action-learning activities of the pilot NTFP project to address key challenges and critical gaps in NTFP knowledge, capacity and governance.

Proposal development started after the external evaluation of Phase I in August 2001. A design team worked in March 2002 to formulate the proposal and write the project document for Phase II. The formulation of the project proposal for Phase II has taken account of the following events and inputs:

- Adjustments and additions to forest sector strategies and programmes, including the establishment of the Forest Sector Support Programme (FSSP);
- The specific importance and dominance of the Five Million Hectare Reforestation Programme (5MHRP) in the forest sector, and the importance and relevance of Government poverty reduction and forest conservation programmes;
- The external evaluation of the pilot NTFP project;
- The results of the pilot NTFP project (documented in various project reports and through several reviews and assessments); and,
- Consultations with national level stakeholders undertaken in late 2001 and early 2002.

The project was designed as a clear contribution to the FSSP, contributing to several of the FSSP result areas. Integration with national level priority setting and coordination processes was further promoted through the establishment of a joint PSC with the Vietnam Programme of Tropenbos International.

Finally, given the size and importance of the project, and to promote better entry into the national policy arena, it was decided to "elevate" the project in the government hierarchy, by making the Director of FSIV the National Project Director. (In Phase I, the Director of the NTFP RC, which is a sub-centre of FSIV, was the National Project Director. In Phase II, he is the Deputy Project Director.)

Box 2. Phase II goal and objectives

The Project has been designed to support the common goal adopted for the Forest Sector Support Program (FSSP), which is:

> "To achieve sustainable management of forests and the conservation of biodiversity through: (a) protection of the environment; (b) improved livelihoods of people resident in forest areas; and (c) enhanced contribution of forestry to the national economy."

Under the FSSP goal, the Project's goal is:

> ***To strengthen the capacity of research and management institutions in Vietnam for supporting the ecologically sustainable and equitable use of Non Timber Forest Products (NTFPs) that contribute to: biodiversity conservation; improved livelihoods of poor people resident in and around forest areas; and, national economic development.***

The Project has six specific objectives organised under four component headings as follows.

Component 1. Strengthening National NTFP planning, research and information services

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Objective 1	National strategic and policy frameworks relevant to the ecologically sustainable and equitable development of NTFPs are improved
Objective 2	Capacity of the NTFPRC/MARD and other relevant institutions is strengthened to assist with the development and implementation of national strategies and policies related to the ecologically sustainable and equitable development of NTFPs.
Objective 3	Other institutions and stakeholders involved in forest research and development; poverty reduction; and, biodiversity conservation programmes are financially supported to undertake NTFP related research & development and engaged in information sharing through networks
Component 2. Transferring existing methods for sustainable NTFP development to practitioners and training institutions	
Objective 4	The use of existing approaches and methods for promoting ecologically sustainable and equitable development of NTFPs is expanded through relevant training and extension institutions.
Component 3. Demonstration and Pilot sites	
Objective 5	Knowledge is gathered and local systems of sustainable NTFP management are piloted and demonstrated to inform and assist the implementation of reforestation, poverty reduction and biodiversity conservation programmes.
Component 4. Enhancing Project effectiveness and sustainability	
Objective 6	Project approaches and practices are established that foster the institutionalisation of effective resource use, partnership building, action-learning, and gender responsiveness in project implementation and within the host and partner organisations.

The project design and its elaboration in the Project Implementation Plan (PIP) is discussed below in Section 4.2.

3.2   The transition from Phase I to Phase II

After the external evaluation in August 2001, all parties (Government of Vietnam, IUCN, Netherlands Embassy) in principle agreed that a second Phase was desirable and no fundamental disagreements arose during the formulation of Phase II and subsequent contract negotiations. However, as with so many similar projects, lengthy consultation, review and approval processes within the participating organizations resulted in an almost inevitable hiatus between the end of Phase I and the beginning of Phase II. This led to some loss of momentum, departure of several staff and some loss of institutional memory about Phase I. Officially, Phase I ended on 30 June 2002, but activity levels decreased during the last few months of the project. The Contribution Agreement between the Netherlands Embassy and IUCN for Phase II was signed in August 2002, and the project starting date was backdated to July 2002. The MoU between IUCN, FSIV and the NTFP RC was signed in April 2003.

3.3   Milestones since the beginning of Phase II

Table 1 provides an overview of the milestones achieved between July 2002 and February 2004. The table indicates that the project has undertaken many steps to set up the organization and infrastructure to implement the project: to date most MoUs are signed, equipment has been purchased and staff has been recruited. In addition, and not listed in the table, several steps have been undertaken to elaborate project components, e.g. the gender

and livelihoods consultancy, the formulation of a communications strategy, an M&E plan and a consultancy to formulate a marketing strategy. Basic operational procedures have also been developed and implemented.

Table 1. Project milestones since the beginning of Phase II

Focus	When	What
2ND SEMESTER 2002		
Starting up	1 July	Starting date of project (backdated)
	August	Signing of the contribution agreement between the Netherlands Embassy and IUCN
	December	Selection of the CTA
	During semester	Secondment of RC staff
	During semester	Recruitment of VN staff
	During semester	Purchasing of equipment
1ST SEMESTER 2003		
Staff Recruitment	January	Project approved by MARD
	February	Arrival of the CTA
	February	Revised workplan 2003 produced
	April	Signing of the MoU between IUCN, FSIV and the NTFP RC
	April	Appointment of NPD & DPD
	April	Selection of 5 field sites
	April	Arrival of the Training Advisor
	May	Arrival of Field Advisor NCRO
	June	Completion of key staff recruitment for National Project Office
	June	Kick off workshop
2ND SEMESTER 2003		
Planning of subcomponents & establishing partnerships	July	Arrival of Field Advisor NRO
	August	Inception report & PIP submitted to NL embassy
	August	Completion of key staff recruitment for Regional Offices
	August	Project Presentation workshop
	August	Launch of the Research Fund
	September	1st meeting of the PSC
	October	Staff recruitment completed
	October	Phase II vehicles in operation
	October	Workplan 2004 produced
	November	1st meeting of the NTAB
	November	2nd meeting of the PSC
	December	1st meeting of the NTFP network
	December	Launch of the ALF
	During semester	Five PRAs completed
	During semester	Two MoUs signed with partners at field level
1ST SEMESTER 2004		
Beginning field activities	February	1st internal review mission
	February	Field activities ready to commence

3.4 Learning from Phase I

During the course of Phase I an explicit effort went into learning lessons from project experiences, including developing strategic guidance for engaging with beneficiary groups and identifying appropriate field activities. While there is a substantial knowledge base from

Phase I that has been brought into Phase II, relatively little of this is being used to inform activities in Phase II. This point was made quite strongly by the staff during the participatory workshop. Examples of the outcomes and lessons that came from Phase I that could be relevant for Phase II include:

- Strategies for making decisions on the selection of project interventions at the pilot sites and approaches for establishing pilot scale models;
- The methodology for NTFP market analysis;
- Several activities in support of the RC, such as the formulation of an HRD plan;
- Approaches for impact monitoring.

The individuals involved in implementing Phase I and designing Phase II currently hold formal positions in the IUCN Regional Office in Bangkok. They are available to provide bridging between the phases and to provide technical oversight of Phase II. However, to date, the project has chosen not to take advantage of their expertise. We find this reluctance inexplicable.

Issue:
A considerable knowledge base is available from Phase I of the project. Phase II was designed to build on that base, but relatively little of this has been extracted and applied to Phase II—there is a sense that the wheel is being re-invented once again.

Recommendation 1:
An explicit attempt be made to re-visit the documentation from Phase I and extract the information that can be of strategic and tactical guidance for approaches and activities in Phase II. Guidance in this task should be sought from the IUCN Country and Regional Offices.

4. PROJECT DESIGN, APPROACH AND STRATEGY

4.1 The Project Document
Views on the Project Document (PD) are mixed, with some people feeling that the document is an effective vehicle for viewing the project, while others feel that it is somewhat difficult to understand and not clear in terms of the guidance needed for implementation. Few project documents are perfect in the light of experience, and our view is that it is quite satisfactory for the present. It provides the project and its partners with an appropriate strategic and operational focus to guide implementation.

Having said that, the review team feels that the PD could have addressed the following issues more clearly:

- An articulation of a "clear vision" for the project. (This was raised by staff during the staff meeting). For example, there is no mention of producing a set of generic guidelines or a strategy to guide:
  o NTFP related interventions at the pilot sites which address both conservation and poverty alleviation objectives;
  o The scaling up of pilot site experiences to contribute to NTFP sub-sector development throughout Vietnam aimed at using NTFPs for poverty alleviation and conservation.

Much of this is implicit throughout the PD, but it could be useful to make it explicit if it is agreed that this is a useful and achievable aim.

- The importance of including marketing issues as part of the overall project strategy, in particular in the field site activities. Again, market related issues are identified implicitly in the PD (see for example the discussion of sector issues in Chapter 2), but more explicit guidance about how to address these issues in Phase II would have been useful. This is particularly significant since Phase I generated much experience in this domain, through the adaptation of the MA&D methodology and accompanying capacity building activities.

- An analysis of the lessons learned from Phase I regarding partnerships and the implications for Phase II. This issue is discussed in more detail in Section 8 below.

Some aspects of the LFA in the PD are considered (by a few project staff) to be poorly done and need to be revisited to give better conceptual and practical guidance for implementation. We acknowledge that a few parts of the LFA could be improved, but we also feel that it would be premature at this early stage of implementation to devote substantial resources to doing a complete revision of the LFA. It would distract staff from getting on with implementation. Such a major revision is best left until sufficient implementation experience is gained to make a revision meaningful—perhaps early 2005 when a full year of field implementation has been carried out. If there are some small parts of the LFA that the PMU considers to be so poorly done that they constrain the ability of project staff to implement activities effectively, then these parts could be revisited as a small exercise involving only those staff who are directly involved.

By and large, project implementation to date generally follows the approach outlined in the PD.

Issue:
The PD has proven to be an adequate guide for project implementation, and activities basically follow its format. However, some project staff feel that it gives inadequate strategic guidance and that aspects of the LFA need major revision.

Recommendation 2:
Major revision of the LFA in the original PD should be delayed until substantial implementation experience is gained (possibly until early 2005). If the PMU decides that there are some small sections of the LFA seriously constraining the project's ability to implement activities effectively, then these sections could be revised by a small team of those staff directly involved.

4.2   The Project Implementation Plan
The PIP was produced in August 2003 and revised in October 2003 in conjunction with the Inception Report. It re-ordered the project components and objectives into three themes:

- Capacity building of the NTFP RC;
- Sustainable NTFP resources development and management—at project sites and elsewhere (through ALF) in target provinces;
- NTFP sector development.

In some ways this was a useful exercise in that it attempted to give the project a sharper focus and make its intentions clearer. The PIP basically re-ordered the project activities in the PD to fall under one of the three themes. It also attempted to define some guiding principles for project implementation, such as action learning, transparency, participation and poverty alleviation. However, we feel that it has not improved the situation for the following reasons:

- Many project staff feel that the PIP added to their confusion and did not give them the strategic guidance they were seeking to assist them with implementation;
- The DPD considers that the project structure given in the PD should be the frame of reference for reporting project activities and progress, so that following the three PIP themes for project implementation will confuse the reporting procedures;
- It is unclear to the Review Team what the implications of the grouping of project activities into three themes are for the logical framework;
- Elevating the strengthening of the NTFP RC from 1 out of 6 objectives (in the PD) to be the first of three themes (in the PIP) represents an important shift in the focus of the project. In doing this, the project may run the risk of unduly biasing its efforts towards this one institution when support to many others could be equally necessary[1]. (See paragraph 4.4 below for more discussion on the relation between the project and the NTFP RC.)

Issue:
The PIP fails to give sufficient strategic guidance for implementation, and it gives undue emphasis to the strengthening of the NTFP RC over that intended in the PD by raising this aspect to be the first of three themes.

Recommendation 3:
The PIP should be set aside as a vehicle for viewing the project, and the project should revert to the conceptual structure outlined in the PD. This should provide a sufficient framework for guiding implementation and reporting on project activities. However, the draft progress report for the second semester of 2003 should be accepted in its current three-theme format to avoid unnecessary additional work.

4.3 Vision and strategy
As is common for projects like the NTFP project, the PD leaves some room for interpretation. It also needs to be translated into specific priorities and actions. For various reasons, many of the specific choices to be made during the course of project implementation can not be prescribed in the PD. For example:

- Will support to a nursery run by the district contribute to achieving the project objectives? Or is it more appropriate to support village level nurseries?
- Is support to mushroom growing a priority for the project? If so, under what conditions?
- What kind of support will the project provide to the NTFP RC and in what areas?
- What specific partnerships will the project establish? What will the project and the partners gain from their collaboration?
- Should the project get involved in credit schemes? If so, in what way?

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[1] The PD is inconsistent in the formulation of Objective 2 and therefore slightly confusing on this issue as well: p. 18 states: "*Capacity of NTFP RC/MARD and other relevant institutions is strengthened…*", p. 19 states: "*Capacity of NTFP RC and other relevant institutions is strengthened...*". However, the Executive Summary states: "*Capacity of NTFP RC is strengthened...*"

- When should the project provide subsidies and when not?

In order to respond to these questions and to develop a coherent programme of work that contributes effectively to achieving project objectives and goals, a "vision" and a strategic framework is required to guide project implementation. Formulation of the framework through a participatory process contributes to the creation of a common understanding amongst project staff and partners of what the project is about. The framework should evolve over time, incorporating project experience and lessons learned. Such a "vision" does not come from a document, but needs to be articulated by the PMU, and relies particularly on leadership from the CTA.

Formulation of such a framework does not require rocket science. Some examples of elements of a strategic framework (based on Phase I experiences) are provided in Appendix VII.

During the participatory workshop with staff on Day 2 of the review, the project staff reached consensus that a major problem for the project is the absence of a vision or strategy emanating from the PMU. This results in an absence of a common understanding on how to accomplish project objectives (no clear focus and priorities) among project staff and stakeholders. Many of the issues identified in other sections of this report emanate from this core challenge--lack of a clear vision and strategies--including lack of a clear articulation of the project's approach to address the type of issues outlined in Table 2.

Table 2. Examples of strategic issues in connection with project components and objectives

Project components & objectives	Examples of strategies needed for:
Component 1. Strengthening National NTFP planning, research and information services **Objective 1** National strategic and policy frameworks relevant to the ecologically sustainable and equitable development of NTFPs are improved **Objective 2** Capacity of the NTFPRC/ MARD and other relevant institutions is strengthened to assist with the development and implementation of national strategies and policies related to the ecologically sustainable and equitable development of NTFPs. **Objective 3** Other institutions and stakeholders involved in forest research and development; poverty reduction; and, biodiversity conservation programmes are financially supported to undertake NTFP related research & development and engaged in information sharing through networks	• Addressing policy issues at regional and national levels (which policies, how to address these policies?) *NB. The RT noted with some concern that to date policy issues have received little attention in the project, although it is one of six objectives and although several proposals were made by project staff to begin addressing this objective* • Identifying priority areas for capacity building support within the NTFP RC • Networking within the NTFP sub-sector;
Component 2. Transferring existing methods for sustainable NTFP development to practitioners and training institutions **Objective 4** The use of existing approaches and methods for promoting ecologically sustainable and equitable development of NTFPs is expanded through relevant training and extension institutions.	• Developing partnerships with key training and extension institutions

Component 3. Demonstration and Pilot sites **Objective 5** Knowledge is gathered and local systems of sustainable NTFP management are piloted and demonstrated to inform and assist the implementation of reforestation, poverty reduction and biodiversity conservation programmes.	• Defining the role of the ROs (See also Section 7) • Expanding successful pilot models
Component 4. Enhancing Project effectiveness and sustainability **Objective 6** Project approaches and practices are established that foster the institutionalisation of effective resource use, partnership building, action-learning, and gender responsiveness in project implementation and within the host and partner organisations.	• Prioritisation of project activities (balance between tactical and strategic). • Coordination and cohesion of the various project activities; • Mobilising strategic and other inputs from IUCN and other sources; • Creating an action learning culture in the project; • Building on the achievements and lessons in Phase I (elaborated in Section 3.2) • Integrating consultancies into the overall project strategies (too much emphasis on stand alone activities, not connected to the core body of work); • Promoting coordination and cohesion between field activities and the activities of the Hanoi based groups (training, technical groups, communications).

Issues:
The absence of a clear and shared "vision" and commonly understood strategies to guide the identification and implementation of project activities was a common thread throughout discussions with project staff and during the field visits by the RT. In particular, there are no clear strategies for:
• **Guiding project field implementation;**
• **Strengthening the capacity of the NTFP RC (elaborated in Section 4.4 below);**
• **Support to the NTFP network;**
• **Partnership development, including capitalising on the strength of different partners (elaborated in Section 8 below).**

The fundamental role for the PMU is to provide this strategic guidance to the project. **In the absence of this guidance, decisions on project activities will be** *ad hoc***, unclear and unsystematic and as a result, the project will risk not achieving its objectives.**

Recommendation 4 (to be read in conjunction with Recommendation14):
A process be established to develop a vision for the project and strategies to guide implementation, in particular to provide direction in:
• *Implementing field activities to test:*
    o *The use of NTFPs for conservation and poverty alleviation;*
    o *Mechanisms for scaling up;*
• *Developing generic principles and guidelines for using NTFPs as vehicles for conservation and poverty alleviation throughout Vietnam.*

Recommendation 5:
The PMU should focus its attention on strategic issues (as indicated above), prioritisation of activities and creating opportunities for project staff and partners to participate in this process. This should include revisiting the five "strategic approaches" outlined in Section 3 of the PD.

High quality outside support and guidance for this task is needed on a regular basis during the life of the project The IUCN Country and Regional Offices will need to play an important role in providing and facilitating this regular support.

4.4   Strategy for supporting the NTFP RC

The Review Team received several comments from project staff that the nature, extent and focus of the capacity building support to be provided by the project to the NTFP RC is unclear. Furthermore, mixed signals were received by the RT about the ability of the RC to make the best use of the opportunity for support presented by the presence of the NTFP project.

Issue:
A clear and focused strategy for project support to the NTFP RC is necessary. This is particularly important regarding the GoV signals for research centres to become more self-sufficient (and by implication more client-oriented) in the years ahead (see Box 3 for an elaboration of this issue).

Recommendation 6:
The project should concentrate capacity building of the NTFP RC on a limited number of areas which are considered a high priority in terms of contributing directly to the sustainable use of NTFPs for poverty alleviation and conservation of biodiversity.

Box 3. Comments on the fate of research centres in a new globalised, client-oriented environment

The Government of Vietnam has signalled that research centres in the country will need to move towards becoming more financially self sufficient during the coming decade. This is a move that is occurring throughout the world and is not peculiar to Vietnam. Research centres in most countries are undergoing a rigid scrutiny of their role, focus and method of operating in a changing global environment. Government agencies (including research centres) are being forced to become more efficient, accountable and client-oriented. This requires fundamental changes in their way of working, for example in the form of:
* Competing with other institutions, forcing a clear definition of "comparative advantage";
* Delivering quality outputs that are required by clients;
* Pro-active fundraising and acquisitioning of work;
* Cost cutting.

These shifts are part of the overall thrust towards becoming more economically efficient in a globalised world—one that Vietnam is steadily embracing.

The experience in other parts of the world is that research centres that do not re-invent themselves to become more aligned to client needs steadily become irrelevant, lose funding support and often disappear.

There is a golden opportunity during the coming three to four years for the research centre to go through a strategic planning process to ensure that it is aligned to meet the future needs of Vietnam in

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the area of NTFPs. The project's resources (technical and financial) are available to support such a strategic strengthening of capacity to support this difficult transition. A draft strategy was developed during Phase I and a discussion paper has already been circulated during Phase II to stimulate thinking. It is highly likely that failure to embrace change will result in the demise of the research centre within a decade. Maintenance of the *status quo* is not a serious option if the research centre wishes to survive.

The decision to commence the process of adaptation and change is outside the control of the project *per se*, and depends on leadership from MARD, the FSIV and the NTFP RC itself. The project can assist with:
- Creating awareness of the imperative to change (e.g. providing examples of successful and unsuccessful change processes);
- Some aspects of the change process.

5. ORGANISATION AND STRUCTURE OF THE PROJECT

5.1 External to the project
There is some overlap between the discussion in this section and that in the following one on Administration and Management. This is inevitable, but we have done our best to maintain a distinction between organisational **structure** and the **management** and administration of that structure.

Most of the organisational structures set out in the PD have been established and are operating. The Steering Committee has met twice. One comment that could be made of its deliberations is that it focused mainly on reviewing the details of how the project was progressing rather than giving guidance on the vision and strategy needed by the project in order to achieve something of lasting value for Vietnam in the NTFP sub-sector. It would be desirable if the Steering Committee could play a stronger role in really steering the project in an appropriate "big picture", strategic direction.

The formation of a National Technical Advisory Board (NTAB) was proposed in the PD, and it is currently being modified to be more representative of the technical areas in which the project is working. We did not form an opinion on the appropriateness of the NTAB, or its ability to be an effective organisational structure.

Issues:
- **The PSC could be more proactive in helping the project focus on the "big picture" issues through strategic guidance;**
- **The NTAB, which was designed to provide linkages between the project and FSSP, the 5 MHRP and other relevant programmes, could play an important role as a sounding board for discussing both strategic and technical aspects of the project to complement the role of the Steering Committee.**

Recommendation 7:
We encourage the PSC and NTAB to adopt a strategic role. This should be reflected in the task descriptions of these committees.

5.2 The Project Management Unit

The PMU was established on the arrival of the CTA, and it is probably the single most important organisational structure in the project. The Review Team has grave concerns about the management effectiveness of the Unit, and these concerns are outlined in detail in the next section. Our focus in this section is on the structural aspects of the PMU. There was an explicit attempt to lift the profile of the project in Phase II and link it to a higher level of government than applied in Phase I by appointing the Director of the FSIV as Project Director. This is sound in principle, but has added to the complexity of decision making by adding a third person in to the consultative process. In addition, the Director of the FSIV is physically remote from the project base in the NTFP RC, and he is not able to devote a great deal of time to the work of the project. Further, the Deputy Project Director (and Director of the NTFP RC) also has substantial non-project duties. Hence, the CTA is the only full time member of the PMU. It became clear during the course of the review that decision making was constrained at times by the unavailability of the PD or DPD, and the limited time that the DPD could devote to the work of the project.

There is clearly no need for all members of the PMU to be involved in all decisions that affect the project. Decision making by committee is always somewhat problematic, and to be effective needs to be based on good, mutually respectful personal relationships. However, efficiency can be improved if there is clarity about the levels of authority and responsibility that apply to each member individually and to the PMU as a whole. The Project Director has indicated that he has delegated day-to-day responsibility for managing the project to the Deputy Project Director. It would be useful if the specifics of this delegation were spelled out in detail. Specifying which management decisions could be allocated to individual members of the PMU and which needed to be made jointly could complement this. A format along the lines of the following table might help with the discussion and negotiation.

Table 3. Indicative table of suggested decision making authorities for members of the PMU (to be negotiated before completion)

Management area	Decision making authority D=decides alone, and other PMU members not advised DA=decides alone, and other PMU members advised C=decision made in consultation and others advised				
	Full PMU	**PD**	**DPD & CTA**	**DPD**	**CTA**
External Relations					
PSC meeting dates & invitations		C			
PSC agenda & background documents		C			
PSC minutes	D				
NTAB meeting dates & invitations			C		
NTAB agenda & background documents			C		
NTAB minutes			C		
Approval of MoUs with local and national partner organisations			C		
(General) Liaison with IUCN					DA
(General) Liaison with MARD				DA	
(General) Liaison with INGOs					DA
Human Resources					
Approving leave applications of				C	

project staff					
IUCN staff supervision					C
Consultant's contracts			D		
Planning & reporting					
Annual project workplan			C		
Quarterly project workplan			DA		
Annual project report			C		
Six-monthly project report			DA		
Quarterly unit work-plans and reports			DA		
Activities					
Approval of requests for missions/fieldtrips			DA		
Approval of trip reports					D
ToRs and selection of consultants			DA		
Workplans of consultants					D
Day-to-day supervision of consultants					D
Reports of consultants			DA		
Financial management					
Approving equipment purchase up to $XX			DA		
Annual Budget			C		
Six-monthly liquidity planning			DA		
Monthly financial reports			DA		
Quarterly Unit budgets and financial reports			DA		
Etc.					
Etc.					

It is recognised that in the multi-level authority sharing system that applies in the project, it is often difficult to place clear boundaries on authority as suggested in Table 3. The table might prove a useful basis for discussing the issues objectively, but efficient decision making will ultimately depend not on the slavish following of a table of authorities, but on the building of collegiate and trusting relationships within the PMU.

During the review team's discussions with the ICD Director, a suggestion was made that a mid level English speaking support person could be provided to the PMU. Another possibility could be for a senior national expert to fill this position to provide advice and assistance to the PMU in decision making and implementation. However, we also feel that there could be dangers inherent in such a move, as an additional person in the PMU could further complicate the situation unless lines of authority and responsibility are very clearly defined. Such a person could also easily subsume the role of the DPD unless the relationships were carefully managed. We believe that the project is sufficiently large and important for all major partners to warrant considering the appointment of a full time DPD.

Issue:
The enlargement of the PMU to include the Director of the FSIV as the Project Director, along with unclear limits of authority and responsibility of individual members of the PMU, has complicated and slowed management decision making and led to a situation where there is lack of clarity and confusion over many management issues.

Recommendation 8:
The PMU undertake an exercise to review the working methodology and approaches of its members, to define the limits of authority and responsibility that apply to individual members and various grouping of members of the PMU.

Issue:
The increased demands of Phase II compared with Phase I (plus the assumption of additional work loads by the DPD) have meant that the DPD is unable to devote the time needed to exercise effective management of the project.

Recommendation 9:
Options be considered for providing necessary high level management inputs into the project, including the possibility of:
- **appointment of a senior national expert to support the PMU in decision making and implementation or**
- **making the DPD position a dedicated full time position.**

5.3 Relations with IUCN

There also seems to be considerable overlap in the roles and responsibilities between the project and some of its principle partners, in particular the IUCN Country and Regional Offices[2]. This has led to uncertainty, confusion and frustration on all sides to the extent that relationships between the project and the Country Office are severely strained. A similar situation applies to the relationships with the Regional Office. This situation constrains some aspects of project management and the provision of essential support and technical assistance.

Again, there are two aspects to this issue. One revolves round *structure* and the other round how *management* is applied to any given structure. On the structural side, we feel that much greater clarity could be obtained by agreeing on the precise nature of the involvement by both the Country and Regional Offices in the project. Clarifying roles would, for example, free up time for the IUCN Programme Officer, whose current tasks for the project are attached as Appendix VI, to concentrate on supporting technical issues and networking rather than administration and management which is the responsibility of the PMU. In this way, the added value for IUCN's involvement in the project would become much more apparent.

A contribution to part of the structural apportionment of roles is shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Indicative table of possible division of roles and responsibilities between MARD, PMU and IUCN (to be negotiated before completion)

R=Responsibility; JR=Joint responsibility; S=Support; C = to be consulted

Domain	MARD	PMU	IUCN
External Relations			
Liaison with NL Embassy, including	C	C & S	R

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[2] An example of the overlap of roles with the Country Office is the way that the ToR for this Review mission were handled. Initially, the PMU had the responsibility of developing the ToR and negotiating them with the Team Leader of the Review. Subsequently, this role was taken over by the Country Office, although the PMU retained an input. An avalanche of emails ensued between the project and the Country Office over various minor details, and these generated more heat than light. The Team Leader finally signed his contract with the Country Office during the final few days of the mission.

Domain	MARD	PMU	IUCN
reporting			
Organising PSC meetings & minutes	JR	JR	C
Organising NTAB meetings & minutes	C	R	C
Liaison with other relevant ODA projects		R	S
Human Resources			
Staff Recruitment & contracts:			
• Advisors	C	C	R
• Consultants		R	
• National Staff		JR	JR
Staff supervision:			
• CTA			R
• TAs		R	
• Consultants		R	
• National staff		R	
Planning & Reporting			
• Annual workplan & report		JR	JR
• Six monthly Progress report		JR	JR
• Annual Budget & financial report		JR	JR
• Quarterly Unit workplans & reports		R	
• PIP & Inception report		R	JR
Financial Management			
• Expenditure BL 101–104 (CTA & TAs)			R
• Expenditure on other BLs		R	
Etc.			
Etc.			

NB. Within IUCN, a task division would need to be established between: Country Representative, Programme Coordinator, Programme Officer, Office Manager, Accountant (all in the IUCN Vietnam Office) and the Head of ELG and the Coordinator of the Regional Forest Programme (both in the Regional Office in Bangkok).

The views of the project team were very clear on this issue of the provision of support from IUCN during the participatory workshop on Day 2 of the mission when they reached consensus that:

- Technical support from IUCN VN has been limited (so far mainly administrative support only);
- The role of IUCN in the project – Country Office and Regional Office – is unclear and (there is limited) acceptance of IUCN's role by partners;
- IUCN does not respond effectively to the project's technical needs;
- (The project) has not yet tapped into IUCN's wider technical expertise.

The suggestion from the staff for addressing these issues was to develop a "detailed plan to enhance support from IUCN" to address:

- Technical;
- Supervision / quality control;
- Advisory support;

We agree with this general assessment by the project staff, although we acknowledge that there are many aspect of IUCN's support that would not normally be obvious to many of the project staff. Hence, their comments need to be qualified somewhat. Nonetheless, their perceptions were strongly expressed and universally held. Project staff are clearly looking for more technical support from IUCN than they are currently receiving.

It is clear that there are many technical and other inputs needed by the project if it is to have any chance of moving ahead quickly and effectively. The notion of the PMU engaging the IUCN Regional Office on a consultancy basis only when the PMU thinks it needs certain services is not a useful way of thinking of the relationship. IUCN has much more to offer than occasional technical consultancies. Box 4 indicates the general rationale for IUCN's engagement in field projects. Within this overall rationale, the Country Office and Regional Office each have their own specific mandate and responsibilities.

Box 4. Rationale for IUCN's support and engagement with field projects

IUCN has a strategic interest in having a direct involvement in field projects in order to:

- Ensure quality of project action (international best practice);
- Use project results to inform and influence policy and practice nationally and internationally[3];
- Provide project staff with a professional sounding board for developing and testing conceptual and practical approaches;
- Facilitate reflection and learning;
- Deliver specific technical inputs as requested by the project (e.g. annual internal reviews).

N.B. To date, it is only the last of these points that has been utilised by the project.

It would be helpful if an attempt could be made to develop and nurture a relationship between the project and the IUCN Regional and Country Offices so that there is a regular interchange of ideas so that the project becomes connected to the wider IUCN networks both in the region and beyond. There should be regular visits from the Regional Office to the project to assist with the difficult conceptual and practical challenges that have been outlined earlier in this report. If the project does not make progress in these areas quickly it will not gain the momentum or the capacity that is needed for success. We feel that at least three visits should be made by the Regional Office during the coming year to assist with crafting a vision and strategy for the project, and at least two visits per year over the life of the project so that this outside expertise can be used as a sounding board for the project to test evolving ideas and refine the strategic and operational approaches.[4]

One way ahead to address this issue is to carry out a negotiation between the PMU, and the IUCN Regional and Country Officers aimed at:

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[3] For example, the poverty alleviation results of Phase I have had an important impact on IUCN's global positioning in the poverty-conservation debate.
[4] The PD anticipates regular internal review missions by IUCN (at least annually). Regrettably, the present mission only took place 18 months after the official starting date of the project. The RT feels that this was late; if the mission had taken place earlier (as originally scheduled), remedial action to address the project weaknesses identified now, could have been initiated earlier and less time would have been lost.

- Identifying the various types of administrative and technical support required by the project;
- Agreeing on where the necessary capacity exists and how the support can be provided;
- Agreeing on workplans which specify the type of technical inputs and the timing of delivery;
- Identifying mechanisms by which *ad hoc* suggestions from outside the project, e.g. from the Country or Regional offices, can be raised, discussed and action agreed upon.

Issue:
There are different opinions among the main project implementing partners about what types of administrative and technical support are needed by the project and can be provided from the IUCN Country and Regional Offices, and how this can be accessed and mobilised.

Recommendation 10 (to be read in conjunction with Recommendation 17):
The PMU and senior members of the IUCN Regional and Country Offices should meet to:
- *Identify the various types of administrative and technical support required by the project;*
- *Agree on where the necessary capacity exists and how the support can be provided;*
- *Agree on workplans which specify the type of technical inputs and the timing of delivery;*
- *Identify mechanisms by which ad hoc suggestions from outside the project, e.g. from IUCN technical programs regionally and globally, can be raised, discussed and action agreed upon.*

There will be a need for the IUCN Regional Director to arbitrate on any issues relating to internal IUCN division of authority and responsibility between the Country and Regional Offices.

6.   MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION

The suggestions above in section 5 address some of the ***structural*** issues which can help to advance the modalities by which the project interacts with IUCN, but good ***management***, with its underlying requirement of sound relationships, will be what determines the effectiveness of the suggested changes.

The management style of the PMU is not effective in harnessing and focusing staff enthusiasm, and staff feel constrained from getting on with the job. This has led to considerable frustration as was evidenced during the participatory staff workshop on Day 2 of the review where staff reached consensus on the following challenges:

- Present organizational structure and management systems [between project and its partners, between head office and regional offices (lack of delegated authority)] is not effective – organizational structure is cumbersome (many levels and partners), unbalanced (staff resources) and inequitable (staff salaries);
- Information flow and communication within the project is poor;
- PMU does not work cooperatively and lead effectively;
- Lack of transparency in some PMU decisions.

Our analysis has confirmed the perceptions expressed by the staff, and we have summarised the situation more comprehensively by attempting to identify the underlying causes behind the problems identified by staff. These are:

- Cumbersome and time consuming decision making arrangements;
- Poor prioritisation of activities (particularly emphasis on tactical rather than strategic issues);
- Tendency towards strongly centralised control rather than maximising decentralised authority and responsibility;
- Strong tendency to micro-manage project activities in the centre and the ROs;
- Tendency (on occasions) to by-pass ROs in making decisions with district partners;
- Excessively bureaucratic procedures and systems that consume considerable time and energy for limited benefit;
- Lack of clear definition of authorities and responsibilities for PMU members, ROs, IUCN and partners;
- Insufficient exchange of ideas and information through discussions and visits to ROs and field sites;

It is possible that if these management challenges are not addressed effectively, there is a danger of losing good staff in the near future.

An indicative list including some of these management challenges is presented in Table 5, along with some suggestions for possible solutions.

Table 5. Indicative list of examples of PMU management challenges and some possible solutions

Management challenges	Examples	Possible solutions
Cumbersome and time consuming decision making arrangements.	Three people are members of the PMU, with the NPD distant from the project office.	NPD formally delegate *specific* tasks to the DPD for day-to-day operations, so that everyone is aware of the arrangements.
Strong tendency to micro-manage project activities in the centre and the field offices.	CTA spends time on small issues such as reviewing the fuel consumption of project vehicles; approving small items of expenditure; DPD concerned with minor details relating to arrangements of student visits to NRO.	• Devote time to strategic management and delegate tactical management to work units. • Spend more time in the field, guiding project interventions, building capacities, facilitating learning and extracting policy lessons.
Poor prioritisation of activities.	Time has been allocated to tactical details at the expense of strategic issues	
Tendency towards strongly centralised control rather than maximising decentralised authority and responsibility.	Decisions for virtually all field and other activities are made by the PMU—not just the approval of activities but the fine detail of the individual activities.	Delegate tactical management to work units and regional offices—trust people.
Excessively bureaucratic procedures and systems that	Constant revision of activity proposals (particularly	Simplify procedural systems and free up people's time to

consume considerable time and energy for limited benefit.	focusing on small details) before approval.	get on with the job.
Poor information flow and collaboration within the PMU.	Sending students to the field (DPD is aware for several months, CTA is informed a few days before students are about to leave). DPD and CTA do not give the same message	Work towards building good relationships within the PMU, and ensure information is shared.
Poor information flow between PMU and RO	DPD has meetings with Cam Xuyen DPC without informing RO; Students are dropped without informing RO.	Ensure that ROs are kept fully informed of activities that fall within their sphere of authority and responsibility.

Issues:
The management style emanating from the PMU is not effective in encouraging staff enthusiasm and moving forward efficiently and effectively with project implementation.

Good working relationships have not always been established between the project and partner organisations. This has inhibited the ability of the project to move ahead.

Recommendation 11:
The PMU members, and in particular the CTA, should change their management style and adopt appropriate working methods and approaches for project management with a focus on:
- *Improving, clarifying and speeding up decision making processes;*
- *Decentralising relevant decision making and project management, with a clear role for ROs and field site partners in the implementation of field activities;*
- *Prioritising and allocating time to the fundamental functions of the PMU; i.e. focusing on strategic issues and on promoting common understanding of project strategies, rather than on minor tactical issues;*
- *Stimulating and facilitating debate, thinking and action learning, both within the project team and with project partners;*
- *Establishing a cooperative relationship within the PMU and with the project partners.*
- *Reviewing and clarifying authority and responsibility for key areas of decision making among PMU members, and between the PMU and IUCN.*

Issue:
Many management challenges have been identified during the course of this Review.

Recommendation 12:
A high level meeting be organised to include the Director of the ICD, Chairman of the project Steering Committee, Director of FSIV, IUCN Country Representative, representatives from IUCN RO and the Netherlands Embassy, to consider what is needed to address the recommendations made by the review team, in particular:
- *Recommendations 11 (re. Management style of the PMU)*
- *Recommendation 17 (re. Budget line 402).*

We have suggested several changes aimed at making the project run more smoothly and efficiently. However, it is wise to remember that a perfect organisational structure and sound procedural systems will not guarantee effective outcomes if they are managed badly. Conversely, good management will normally triumph over bad structure and bad systems. Of fundamental importance is the *quality of management*, which is founded on sound, mutually supportive and respectful personal relationships. We want to emphasise here that building and maintaining these relationships is not the responsibility of one person alone: all members of the PMU and partner organisations have an important role to play in this.

7. ACTIVITIES

7.1 General progress
Almost everyone met with during the conduct of the review commented that progress in initiating activities (particularly field activities) has been very slow. We recognise that commencing a new phase of any project can be a lengthy and difficult process. Delays often occur with staff recruitment and because lengthy bureaucratic decision making procedures can slow down such things as: purchasing equipment, negotiating and signing MoUs, establishing field offices, etc. The milestones shown in Table 3 of Section 3 indicate the various steps taken since the project commenced and this gives some indication of what was necessary to set up the project. Much has been achieved--all staff are in place, regional offices are established and functioning, procedural systems and operating practices have been established, some MoUs have been signed with implementing partners and PRA surveys have been carried out in several field sites. However, after one and a half years into the project, no field trials have yet been initiated and few other activities directly linked to achieving project outcomes have been undertaken. Many of the activities planned for 2003 were not completed. In fact, the 2003 workplan was revised twice during the year to reduce the number of activities, and even then achievement fell short of what was planned.

Although over-ambitious planning may have played a role in this, we feel that the PMU could have been more effective in ensuring that field and other high priority activities were commenced earlier in the life of the project. This does not mean taking shortcuts in the participatory and analytical aspects of the project. On the contrary, more effort could have been made in facilitating and guiding these processes and in allowing greater participation of key project staff in decision making.[5] Although the PMU members appear to us to be very dedicated and hard working, their *priorities* and time allocation (a valuable resource!) seem to have focused less on these strategic issues than the project requires.

Issue:
Notwithstanding the difficulties normally associated with establishing projects, the general perception is that the project has been excessively slow in initiating substantive activities. Undue attention has been paid to micro management and elaborate and time consuming decision making processes rather than encouraging decentralised initiatives and field work.

Recommendation:
Action needed to address this issue is captured in Recommendation 11 above.

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[5] For example, in the PD, the establishment of ROs was proposed to assist the PMU with the development and guidance of field activities, but to date, ROs have not been allowed to play that role.

Issue:
The original project design as intended in the PD included decentralised authority to the ROs for major decision making in the planning, implementing and monitoring of field activities. Such a decentralised approach to management has not been put in place.

Recommendation 13:
The authority for planning, implementing and monitoring of field activities should be decentralised to the ROs[6]. ROs should be given adequate support so that they can fulfil their mandate to strengthen communications and partnerships with local authorities, other organisations and households to establish good cooperative relationships and reach agreement on what to do and how to do it.

Many of the reasons for these management problems are covered in detail in the section on Management and Administration, but several additional points relevant to guiding field and other activities are made here.

7.2 Strategic approach to field implementation

The absence of a vision and strategy as discussed in Section 4.3 above came through most clearly during discussions about how to go about identifying what field activities (in both home gardens and natural forests) and which target beneficiaries, to focus on. Staff were not able to respond to questions about what decision making criteria were used. They seem to be groping in the dark and are relying on the PRA surveys to provide guidance on what activities to focus on—one staff member even referred to "implementing the PRA".

The NTFP project is basically an Integrated Conservation and Development Project (ICDP) and staff are struggling with the dilemma that plagues all such projects regarding the nexus between conservation and development outcomes. In particular:

- What balance should be sought between activities aimed at conservation outcomes and those aimed more explicitly at poverty alleviation, and how can these be linked?
- What is the frame of reference for addressing these questions and making choices about what activities to focus on?

These questions are being addressed in other settings in Vietnam and the wider region, and much has been learned about what needs to be done (see Gilmour and Nguyen Cu 2003 and a summary of the lessons learned from ICDPs in Vietnam and elsewhere in Asia in Appendix VIII). The Head of the Ecosystems and Livelihoods Group at the IUCN Regional Office in Bangkok (who was involved in backstopping Phase I and who wrote much of the Phase II PD) has much to offer in addressing these conceptual and practical issues.

Staff are not receiving any guidance from the PMU in addressing these important tactical and strategic decisions, even though these issues were addressed during Phase I and a (partial) framework was developed to contextualise these dilemmas[7]. This is shown in Appendix VII and reproduced in part below.

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[6] NB. The change in name from Regional Field Station (RFS) (in the PD) to Regional Office (PIP) needs explanation since it may signal a change in the role of these offices.

[7] The Head of the Ecosystem and Livelihood Group at the IUCN Regional Office in Bangkok (who was involved in technical backstopping Phase I and designing Phase II) also has much to offer in addressing these conceptual and practical issues.

***The process of identifying and testing appropriate conservation – development related
interventions (from Phase I)***

The schema below outlines the action-learning steps used for testing market oriented
interventions which benefit conservation.

Analysis of linkages between conservation threats leads to -- identification of the people within the population who are causing these threats -- followed by analysis of their livelihood needs and opportunities

↓

A *strategy* for market oriented livelihood improvements that reduces conservation threats

↓

Recommendations for land use and livelihood improvements, enterprise and market developments that are *causally linked* to conservation strategies

↓

Participatory implementation of the recommendations in the pilot sites with voluntary interest groups from among the target population

↓

Testing and refinement of the recommendations by the participants

↓

Adoption of livelihood improvements and reduction of conservation threats

It is acknowledged by staff that the project is supposed to have a "learning" culture.
However, it is not at all clear just what this means and how they might go about learning
from their experiences and applying the learning to advancing the cause of using NTFPs in
Vietnam for poverty alleviation and conservation outcomes. Korten (1980) suggested that
projects should go through several stages in their development with each stage being marked
by explicit learning (see Box 5).

Box 5. Development stages of a project
Because the way ahead is never clear (with projects such as ICDPs), the implementers need to feel their way forward. Korten suggests a "learning process approach" where: *"...a new program should progress through three development stages in which the focal concern is successively on learning to be **effective**, learning to be **efficient**, and learning to **expand**."* (Korten, 1980: 480). Note the emphasis Korten has given to *learning*.

Phase II of the NTFP project is largely still trying to learn to be effective and efficient, although there is some potential to learn to expand by building on some of the experiences in Phase I. The question arises about the form that the learning will take, and how the knowledge coming from the learning will be packaged and made relevant for Vietnam.

Further, little attention has been given to debating just what the project is aiming to leave behind at the end of the phase. Should the project be aiming to develop and test a set of generic strategies and approaches to address poverty alleviation and conservation by focusing on NTFPs? What would be the key building blocks of such a "model"?

Good quality guidance and support (and leadership from the PMU) will be needed throughout the life of the project to address the difficult conceptual and practical issues raised in the preceding paragraphs.

Issue:
There is no clear strategy to guide field implementation, and no long term vision of what the project will develop (generic guidelines or models) to contribute to the use of NTFPs for conservation and poverty alleviation outcomes in Vietnam.

Recommendation 14 (to be read in conjunction with Recommendation 4):
Develop, in a consultative fashion, a long term vision and strategies for the project (to be refined over time based on learning from project experiences) to guide field implementation.

7.3   Some observations regarding specific implementation issues
- *Defining the types of NTFPs for project attention*

On several occasions the question was raised about the desirability of including non plant NTFPs (animal species) within the remit of the project. The question of including eco-tourism among the activities was also raised. Given the problems associated with project progress and focus, the Review Team is of the view that, until the project is running efficiently and effectively, the project team should focus largely on plant NTFPs. Devoting resources to working with animal NTFPs (particularly aspects of wildlife management and trade) would distract the staff from addressing the already considerable challenges facing them. The only exception to this blanket suggestion is where staff can demonstrate explicit links between the proposal to work on non plant NTFPs and project objectives of contributing to poverty alleviation of defined target groups, *and* NTFP conservation. Suggestions by the NRO to work with geckos could fall into this category. We also believe that eco-tourism *per se* does not fit within the focus of the project, and addressing this issue would dilute the work of the project, and further confuse the vision and strategy.

- *The Action Learning and Research Funds*

The RT was not able to review progress with the establishment of these two funds. However, the team did note that according to the PD, the approval and oversight of ALF applications will be done by the RTABs. The RT questions the wisdom of that procedure. Action Learning is a fairly complex process, which is relatively new in Vietnam. RTABs may not represent the right skill set for assessing the quality of Action Learning project proposals and their implementation. Additional specialised technical inputs may be required to assist in that process. It may be more appropriate for this to be done at the central level because of the

greater access to knowledge and understanding about action learning. This could be an opportunity for broadening the partnerships and increasing linkages with other organizations.

8.   LINKAGES WITH OTHER ORGANISATIONS

The NTFP sub-sector in Vietnam has many players with different roles, responsibilities and capacities. Among these players, the NTFP RC plays an important but not exclusive role. Therefore, in order to adequately support the development of the sub-sector, the focus of the project should not exclusively be on the NTFP RC, but on a range of important players. To this end, the PD emphasizes the importance of establishing partnerships, both at the field level and nationally.

The project has undertaken a number of initiatives in this field: the PIP provides a partial inventory of potential partners, MoUs have been established with several field site partners, a networking meeting with a large number of different institutions was organised and the training unit has established connections with a number of potential training partners. The choice of several of the local field site partners, based on considerations of sustainability, seems a reasonable one and it will be interesting to monitor the evolution of these local partnerships.

Notwithstanding these initiatives, the RT feels that to date the project has paid insufficient attention to:

- Articulation of the mutual benefits and "strategic importance" of some of the partnerships currently being established. Partnerships should be based on a "give-get" relationship: each of the actors in a partnership should bring something to the relationship and should get something out of the relationship. For example, it is not at all clear what the added value is of bringing in Hanoi based partners to implement field activities at sites remote from Hanoi. What do they bring to the project and what does the project bring to them?
- Exploring the possibility for establishing innovative, strategic partnerships that have the potential to contribute to advances in the NTFP sub-sector. The establishment of such partnerships is particularly significant at the national level with relevant units of MARD and FSIV.

The RT acknowledges that these are not simple matters. Many organizations in Vietnam seem to have only a fairly vague notion of their own identity, niche and strengths and it is often difficult to identify specific added value of entering into partnerships. Furthermore, establishing (or ceasing!) partnerships is often partly driven by other agendas (political, personal relationships, etc.).

The PD was perhaps not explicit enough in extracting lessons from Phase I and drawing conclusions for the design of Phase II. Instead, this "sticky" issue was left to the project implementing partners and the project team to resolve. Furthermore, during the Phase II formulation process, expectations were raised (or at least not dampened) that the partnerships (in particular with Eco-Eco and CRES) would continue as in Phase I.

Issues:
The added value of the present partnerships (particularly with Eco-Eco, CRES and some of the District partners) has not been adequately or effectively explored (Objective 4 in the PD has not been effectively developed).

There has been insufficient inventory and analysis of the potential of various new partners (including departments of FSIV) to work with the project.

Recommendation 15:
PMU should adopt a more consultative and participatory approach to developing partnerships with an emphasis on effective two-way communication and dialogue leading to equitable give-get outcomes in the relationships. This process should aim to (re)define the nature of the relationships so that the partners are able to provide added value.

Recommendation 16:
Carry out an inventory of potential partners plus an analysis of their strengths to identify what they can contribute to the work of the project—particularly to aspects such as:
- *Analysis of field experience and identification of lessons learned in relation to scaling up;*
- *Policy implications emanating from project experiences;*
- *Providing support for specific technical expertise such as NTFP surveys, production and processing in Vietnam;*
- *Market analysis for NTFPs;*
- *National and regional policy and strategy formulation for the NTFP sub-sector development (in particular aimed at poverty alleviation and conservation);*

9. BUDGET

Disbursement of the budget in 2003 (the first full year of project operations) has been quite low at less than 9% of the total project budget (see table 5). This reflects both the normal delays encountered in establishing a project and the slow start to activities noted in earlier sections of this report.

Table 5. Project budget and expenditure for 2003

2003 budget (euros)			2003 expenditure (euros)	% expenditure /total project budget
As at Nov 2002	Revised in Feb 2003	Revised in June 2003		
1,258,017	1,000,926	668,487	592,425	8.86

One area of the budget that has caused difficulties in the past relates to budget line 402, which is the budget allocated to IUCN for various inputs. There are various perceptions and points of view about where the control for this budget line should rest and the purpose to which it should be put. The Netherlands Embassy has made it quite clear that this line was inserted into the budget to harness IUCN's expertise. It would not be available for other purposes in the event that IUCN input does not eventuate. It is also clear from our discussions that this situation is well known by all project partners and not in contention.

Strong positions have been taken about how decisions are made about accessing this budget line, and feelings have run high.

We believe that the major question to be addressed in making decisions is: what is the best way to assist the project to reach its objectives?

Issue (see also Section 5.3):
There are different views among the Vietnamese partners (including MARD), IUCN Country Office and IUCN Asia Regional Office on which group has the authority to access budget line 402. These differences have become deeply divisive to the extent of seriously inhibiting some aspects of project progress and damaging relationships between these project partners.

Recommendation 17 (to be read in conjunction with Recommendation 10):
There should be a meeting between IUCN Regional and Country Offices, PMU, Chairman of Steering Committee, Director of ICD and the Netherlands Embassy to reach agreement on procedures for accessing budget line 402, and in particular, to identify:
- *The needs of the project for different types of support from IUCN Regional and Country Offices;*
- *The procedure for making decisions about how and when this support should be provided and how to assess results.*

Following on from this meeting, the IUCN Regional Director should determine the roles and responsibilities of the various IUCN components in both the Country and Regional offices in providing the required support to the project.

It was noted that the PIP changed the focus of several budget lines (301-303) from general capacity building of a range of institutions, to capacity building for the NTFP RC alone. This may have been an unintended shift and an artifact of the PIP. However, as it stands it is too narrow an interpretation of the capacity building aspects of the project. Going back to the PD from the PIP for conceptual guidance (as suggested in Recommendation 3) will provide an opportunity to reassess this situation and broaden the focus of capacity building as intended in the original project design.

10. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The project has undertaken several initiatives to set up and implement an M&E system: a draft M&E plan has been developed, indicators for the activities of each project group have been developed in a participatory fashion and M&E training has been carried out. This work has been well carried out and is an excellent start. However, the focus in the M&E systems set up to date is on compliance monitoring ("Has the activity been carried out?"). This is important for planning and reporting purposes, but the biggest challenge for the project will be to monitor and evaluate the *impact* of the project's activities, i.e. to develop indicators and to measure progress towards achieving the higher levels in the logical framework hierarchy: the project's objectives and goal. For example:

- What is the project's impact on biodiversity conservation and poverty alleviation (project goal)?

- What is its impact on the capacity of the NTFP RC and other institutions (Objective 2)?
- And also: what are the unintended consequences of project activities?

As stated in the draft M&E plan, impact monitoring is marred by all sorts of challenges and many similar projects have difficulty in addressing this issue. Nevertheless, it is of great importance to assess the progress of the project towards achieving its objectives and goal. In the end, *the success of the project will not be measured by the number of training courses implemented or the number of pilot site activities, but by its contribution to poverty alleviation and biodiversity conservation in Vietnam.*

Issue:
The focus in the M&E systems set up to date is on compliance monitoring ("Has the activity been carried out?"). This is important for planning and reporting purposes, but the biggest challenge for the project will be to monitor and evaluate the *impact* of the project's activities, i.e. to develop indicators and to measure progress towards achieving the higher levels in the logical framework hierarchy: the project's goal and objectives, particularly: What is the project's impact on biodiversity conservation, poverty alleviation and economic development (i.e. the project goal)?

Recommendation 18:
The project further develops its M&E system to explicitly address the issue of impact monitoring, including the monitoring of unintended consequences. Systems need to be put in place (e.g. collection of baseline data) from the onset of the project in order to measure impact later. The project might need to seek outside assistance to establish a comprehensive impact monitoring system, including formats and methods for (1) profiles/ baseline data, (2) case studies by project teams, and (3) additional in-depth studies on selected issues.

11. DISCUSSION

This internal review has taken place approximately one and a half years after the project commenced. The review was conducted in close dialogue with the project team and key partners in an endeavour to assist the project to reach conclusions about the challenges faced in moving ahead, and in formulating broad approaches to do this. The detailed recommendations we have made are our own, but they have built on many of the broader ideas and suggestions that have come from project staff and partners. Not all groups will be satisfied by all of our recommendations, but our deliberations and conclusions have benefited from a variety of perspectives, and we have tried to integrate these. Our final decisions have been guided by one major consideration:

6. What is necessary for the project in order to help it achieve its goal and objectives of using NTFPs to contribute to poverty alleviation and conservation in Vietnam.

As identified during the staff meeting on Day 2 of the review, the project has a number of strengths which provides it with the potential to be a successful and influential project in Vietnam and beyond. In particular, we would like to list the following project strengths:

7. The importance of NTFPs in Vietnam and the high profile of the project within the GoV;

8. The project design is basically sound and comprehensive and the project is endowed with adequate financial resources;
9. Enthusiastic staff in all units – the RT was particularly impressed with the RO teams.

The early months in the life of the project were taken up largely with the normal logistical tasks that face all projects during the inception stage. That stage is now past—staff have been appointed and are in place; necessary equipment has been purchased and is in use; and operating procedures and systems have been established. Field implementation is poised to commence. In spite of this, we feel that there are major constraints that apply to the project that, unless addressed, will seriously limit the project's ability to achieve its objectives. There are four recurrent themes that have become evident during the review. These are:

10. Lack of a clear vision and a strategies (both short and long term) for guiding project activities;
11. Slow progress with initiating activities (particularly field activities);
12. Problems associated with organisational structures (particularly unclear roles and overlapping authority and responsibility among key project and partner groups and individuals);
13. Problems with managing project affairs.

Perhaps the most important deficiency in the project to date is the lack of a clear vision and strategies (short and long term) for guiding the project's implementation, in particular in the field. We believe this is a serious short coming and needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency. The PMU, and particularly the CTA, has an important responsibility in addressing these issues. We do not underestimate the difficulties involved and emphasise that it will require the on-going input of high quality technical support from outside the project. It is also not something that should be seen as a one-off activity, but will require commitment over the life of the project. If it is done well it could be the conceptual (and intellectual) pivot of the project and the vehicle to bring the project team (and its partners) together around a common mission. IUCN has a critical role to play (and a responsibility) in bringing international thinking and best practice to bear on these issues.

The review team recognises that the time consuming tasks necessary to establish a project as a functional entity make it difficult to commence meaningful activities early in the life of a project. Nonetheless, we feel that the PMU could have been more effective in ensuring that output oriented activities were given a higher priority.

The list of four themes given above contains a mix of structural and management issues along with substantive technical issues all of which need to be addressed. It is useful to repeat here a comment made in an earlier section of this report:

"…it is wise to remember that a perfect organisational structure and sound procedural systems will not guarantee effective outcomes if they are managed badly. Conversely, good management will normally triumph over bad structure and bad systems. Of fundamental importance is the quality of management, which is founded on sound, mutually supportive and respectful personal relationships."

We feel that addressing the structural issues should be a relatively easy task, although it may need to be facilitated because of the (at least partial) breakdown in some relationships. This could provide the platform around which to address the management issues. However,

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fundamental changes in management require an acceptance of the need for fundamental changes to management style.

An additional observation relates to the conceptual and practical difficulties associated with implementing an ICDP, such as the NTFP project. Because of the dual objectives of poverty alleviation and conservation, there is an on-going conceptual and practical struggle to reconcile these two disparate threads. We reject the suggestion made by the marketing consultant that the project must decide which thread should be the primary focus of the project. The real world does not operate in simple dichotomies, and is vastly more complicated, requiring inevitable trade-offs and compromises. Furthermore, it is exactly the role of the NTFP project, and for that matter of ICDPs in general, to explore and "unpack" the complex linkages between biodiversity conservation and poverty alleviation. However, it is very clear that the project will require outside support from people who can assist the staff and partners to come to grips with some of these fundamental issues.

Finally, all project partners interviewed by the RT insisted that the project is very important and relevant for Vietnam, and that they are committed to its success:

- The project has been designed to address specific result areas of the FSSP and MARD is looking for a significant contribution from the project to increase the Government's capacity to promote poverty alleviation and biodiversity conservation;
- For IUCN, in addition to assisting Vietnam's poverty alleviation and biodiversity conservation efforts, the project represents an important opportunity to further the learning about NTFPs and their role in the poverty alleviation – conservation nexus. Because of the size, relevance and potential of the project, IUCN considers it a "flagship project" and it is looking for the project to provide experiences and lessons which can be applied not only in Vietnam but regionally and globally.
- The Netherlands Embassy regards this project as a major investment of its available budget in an area of key interest for both the Netherlands and Vietnam Governments.

All these parties follow project progress closely and are committed to its success. We can only encourage them to continue to do so and to assist with the implementation of our recommendations where ever appropriate and possible.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I   *Terms of Reference for internal review*
Appendix II   *Mission workplan and itinerary*
Appendix III   *List of documents consulted during internal review*
Appendix IV   *People met during review*
Appendix V   *Results of participatory workshop with project staff*
Appendix VI   *Tasks of the IUCN Programme Officer in support of the NTFP project*
Appendix VII   *Examples of elements of a conceptual framework for decision making developed in Phase I*
Appendix VIII   *Generic lessons learned from ICDPs – globally and from Vietnam*

APPENDIX I Terms of reference for internal review

1. Introduction

Background

1.1 The Project

Phase II of the Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFP) Sub-sector Support Project runs from July 2002 to June 2007. It follows a successful first phase entitled "Sustainable Utilisation of Non-Timber Forest Products" which ran from July 1998 up to June 2002.

The Project is funded by the Royal Netherlands Embassy in Hanoi which has given a contract to IUCN Vietnam Country Office for Project Execution. Project implementation is by the Forest Science Institute of Vietnam (FSIV) through its affiliated organisation, the Non-Timber Forest Products Research Centre (NTFP RC), in which the Project's Hanoi office is housed. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between FSIV, NTFP RC and IUCN defines the roles and responsibilities of each of these partners in the project.

Besides its office in Hanoi, in the Non-Timber Forest Products Research Centre, the project has Regional Offices in Cam Xuyen, Ha Tinh Province (North-Central Regional Office), and Hong Gai, Quang Ninh Province (Northern Regional Office).
There are three field sites supervised by each of the Regional Offices. The North Central Regional Office supervises field work in Dakrong District, Quang Tri Province, Tuyen Hoa District, Quang Binh Province and Cam Xuyen District, Ha Tinh Province.
The Northern Regional Office supervises field sites in Van Don District and Hoanh Bo Districts in Quang Ninh Province and in Son Dong District in Bac Giang District.
The Project has established an NTFP Research Fund and an Action Learning Fund. The NTFP Research Fund will award grants for NTFP related research nationwide; the Action Learning Fund will operate initially in the North-Central Region and the North-East Region of Vietnam, and perhaps subsequently, nationwide.
The project is designed to function with a diverse array of partners - in field work at field sites through to national level institutions on issues such as policy development and curriculum development.

The goal of Phase II is:

> *To strengthen the capacity of research and management institutions in Vietnam for supporting the ecologically sustainable and equitable use of non timber forest products (NTFPs) that contribute to: biodiversity conservation; improved livelihoods of poor people resident in and around forest areas; and, national economic development.*

The Project has six specific objectives organised under four component headings as follows.

Component 1. Strengthening National NTFP planning, research and information services

Objective 1   National strategic and policy frameworks relevant to the ecologically sustainable and equitable development of NTFPs are improved

Objective 2   Capacity of the NTFPRC/MARD and other relevant institutions is strengthened to assist with the development and implementation of national strategies and policies related to the ecologically sustainable and equitable development of NTFPs.

Objective 3   Other institutions and stakeholders involved in forest research and development; poverty reduction; and, biodiversity conservation programmes are financially supported to undertake NTFP related research & development and engaged in information sharing through networks

Component 2. Transferring existing methods for sustainable NTFP development to practitioners and training institutions

Objective 4:   The use of existing approaches and methods for promoting ecologically sustainable and equitable development of NTFPs is expanded through relevant training and extension institutions.

Component 3. Demonstration and Pilot sites

Objective 5   Knowledge is gathered and local systems of sustainable NTFP management[8] are piloted and demonstrated to inform and assist the implementation of reforestation, poverty reduction and biodiversity conservation programmes.

Component 4. Enhancing Project effectiveness and sustainability

Objective 6   Project approaches and practices are established that foster the institutionalisation of effective resource use, partnership building, action-learning, and gender responsiveness in project implementation and within the host and partner organisations.

1.2 Context of the review

In addition to permanent technical and managerial assistance to the project, IUCN provides support through review missions and other short-term inputs, such as this mission, which will be the first review mission in Phase II of the project. The present review will help the project team to consolidate initial implementation experience into a firm platform for the extensive scaling up of project implementation anticipated during 2004. It will also assist the project partners make an initial assessment of project performance, and may identify adjustments needed to enhance effectiveness and efficiency of project implementation.

2. General terms of reference

2.1 Objectives of the review

The objectives of the review are:

- To assist the project team and the project implementing partners in assessing the achievements, lessons learned and strengths and weaknesses of the project to date;

- To assist the project team in formulating possible adjustments in response to this assessment.

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[8] Work in this component will focus on plant NTFP species.

2.2 Approach of the review
It is important that the project team and the implementing partners learn as much as possible from the review, both in terms of process (How does one carry out an assessment?) and in terms of content (What does this particular assessment teach us?). Therefore, the review team will work in close collaboration with the project team. Frequent meetings and a number of workshop-like sessions and mini-seminars, together with informal interactions will form part of the activities of the mission in order to create fruitful interactions between the mission team members and the members of the project team.

3. Specific terms of reference
In principle, the mission members will review the entire project, "from project document to present activities and progress." It will focus on the general direction, approach and priorities of the project. Specific areas of attention will include:

a) Implementation issues
- *Conformity with project design*
  - How well does the project implementation follow the Project Document and the Project Implementation Plan

- *Approach and strategy*
  - Are the approaches and strategies selected by the project appropriate?
  - Are the approaches and strategies well articulated and understood by all relevant parties?

- *Activities*
  - Do activities reflect the project goal, objectives, approaches and strategies?
  - What is the project's progress compared with planned achievements?
  - Are the activities carried out in an appropriate way?
  - Are the priorities right (should eco-tourism and work with NTFP animal species be included?)

- *Organisation and structure*
  - Is the project structure effective? (including Steering Committee, National Technical Advisory Board, Project Management Unit, Project Secretariat, Project Implementation Units). What recommendations could be made in order to improve its effectiveness?
  - Are the co-ordination mechanisms between participating organisations appropriate and effective? Do they allow for the co-ordination of activities and for an exchange of information and ideas?
  - Are the roles and responsibilities of project principle partners (FSIV, NTFP RC, and IUCN (at both Country and Regional level)) clearly understood and carried out in an appropriate and effective way?

- *Management and administration*
  - Have project management and administrative procedures been established in a timely manner; are they appropriate and effective?
  - Are the project planning procedures appropriate and effective?

> ➢ Are the procedures for financial administration, including disbursement procedures, appropriate and effective?

> ➢ Is the management of personnel (including roles and tasks of the different project officers, deployment of staff within the project) appropriate and effective?

- *Linkages to other organisations*

> ➢ Are the project's interactions with other organisations, institutions, projects, etc. meaningful and sufficient?

- *Budget*

> ➢ Does the budget reflect the present priorities in activities? Are changes in the budget required? Is funding disbursement effective?

- *Monitoring & evaluation systems*

> ➢ Are the monitoring and evaluation systems of the project in place and effective?

b) Project Design
- *Goal and objectives*

  - Are the goal and objectives still relevant, complete, achievable and understood by all relevant parties?
  - In consultation with the Project Secretariat, the review team may wish to address additional issues.

4. Organisation and activities

4. 1 Mission team
The mission will comprise:
Two international consultants:
- Dr Don Gilmour, former Head of IUCN's Global Forest Conservation Programme, who will be the Team Leader

- Mr Guido Broekhoven, Coordinator of IUCN's Regional Forest Conservation Program.

Two Vietnamese consultants:
- Dr. Le Thac Can, Director of the Institute for Environment and Sustainable Development

- Dr. Pham Hoai Duc, Former Senior Officer of the Department of Forestry, MARD

4.2 Activities
The mission will carry out the following activities:
- Review relevant documents
- Visit Project Regional Offices and at least one field site in each region.
- To conduct meetings and discussions with:
  - CRES

  - ECO ECO

  - IUCN VN

  - NTFP RC

- FSIV

- The Chairman of the project Steering committee (Mr. Nguyen Ngoc Binh - Director of the Department of Forestry - DoF)

- MARD: ICD and DoF

- Netherlands Embassy

- Possible other resource persons or institutions, which may help the team to better the project context.

- On each field visit meet with Regional Office staff, District Peoples' Committee, DARD, local level partners such as farmers' associations etc.

- To facilitate and contribute to mini-seminars, workshops and other meetings

- To write a report with its findings.

A detailed Working Agenda will be discussed and agreed with the PMU and concerned people/organisations and the final version will be attached to this TORs.

4.3 Mode of operation
The team will be working closely with the Project Management Unit (Project Director, Deputy Project Director and Chief Technical Advisor), Adjustments to the Terms of Reference of the mission will be discussed and agreed with the Project Management Unit (PMU) before the changes become effective.

The mission's final report will be submitted to IUCN VN and the project PMU on the 25 February 2004 before the Team Leader's departure from Hanoi. Comments on the draft report will be emailed to the Team Leader by March 5th. He will then work to produce the final version of the report which he will submit to the IUCN Country Office and the project PMU by March 12th, 2004.

4.4 Outputs
The outputs of the mission will include:

- Increased understanding amongst the project team about project assessments and reviews

- A report prepared by the mission, including:
  - ➢ A brief description of the activities carried out
  - ➢ The findings and conclusions of the team
  - ➢ If deemed necessary, specific proposals and recommendations for making the project more effective and efficient

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APPENDIX II Mission workplan and itinerary

Day	Time	What	Who	Where
Tue 10	10.00 - 11.30	Briefing	Mrs. Aban M. Kabraji (IUCN Regional Director), Mr. Andrew Ingles (Head ELG group), Dr. Don Gilmour and Mr Guido Broekhoven	IUCN Asia Regional Office, Bangkok
	19.30	Arrival in Hanoi	Dr. Don Gilmour and Mr Guido Broekhoven	-
Wed 11	09.00 - 10.00	Briefing	Relevant IUCN staff plus 4 review team members	IUCN Country Office, Hanoi
	10.15 - 11.15	Briefing	Dr. Chien, Mr. Gerry + Review Team	NTFP RC, Hanoi
	11.30 - 13.00	Lunch	Review Team plus Hanoi based Project staff	NTFP RC, Hanoi
	13.00 - 15.00	Internal meeting	Review Team	NTFP RC, Hanoi
	15.00 - 15.30	Meeting	Yen	NTFP RC, Hanoi
	15.30 - 16.00	Meeting	Warwick	NTFP RC, Hanoi
	16.00 - 17.00	Meeting	Review Team + Proj V Director (Mr. Chien)	NTFP RC, Hanoi
	17.00 - 18.00	Meeting	Review Team + CTA (Mr. Gerry)	NTFP RC, Hanoi
	18.00 - 18.30	Internal meeting	Review Team (RT)	NTFP RC, Hanoi
Thu 12	08.00 - 09.15	Meeting	Mr. Binh, FD, Chairman of PSC	MARD, Hanoi
	08.30 - 13.30	Mini seminar (Interpreter: Tien Anh & Thuy)	Review Team, PMU, Maurits, Tuan Anh, Thang, An, Duong, Quang, Hue, Son, Dung, Tien Anh, Marian, Hung, Stefan, Ha	RC Library, Hanoi
	14.00 - 15.30	Meeting	Review Team + CTA (Mr. Gerry) + Embassy Staff	Nl Embassy, Hanoi
	16.00 - 17.00	Meeting	RT + EE staff	ECO ECO Office, Hanoi
	17.30 - 18.30	Meeting	Dr. Hung, NPD	NTFP RC, Hanoi
	18.30 - 19.00	Internal Meeting	RT	NTFP RC, Hanoi
Fri 13	08.30 - 09.30	Meeting	RT + CRES staff	CRES Office, Hanoi
	10.00 - 11.30	Meeting	RT + ICD staff (Mr. Minh, Mr. Long, Mrs. Van)	MARD ICD, Hanoi,
	11.30 - 13.00	Lunch	RT & Mr. Long, Mrs Van	Hanoi
	13.30 - 14.30	Meeting with Gender Officer	Ms. An *& Group 1 (Can, Guido)*	NTFP RC, Hanoi
	13.30 - 14.30	Meeting with Comm Grp	Ms. Hue, Son *& Group 2 (Don, Duc)*	NTFP RC, Hanoi
	14.30 - 15.30	Meeting with Marketing Officer	Mr. Duong *& Group 1 (Can, Guido)*	NTFP RC, Hanoi
	14.30 - 15.30	Meeting with Training Group	Mr. Maurits, Tuan Anh and Thang *& Group 2 (Don, Duc)*	NTFP RC, Hanoi
	15.30 - 16.30	Meet with M&E Officer	Mr. Quang *& Group 1 (Can, Guido)*	NTFP RC, Hanoi
	15.30 - 16.00	Meet with Accountant, JPO	Ms. Huong, Dung *& Group 2 (Don, Duc)*	NTFP RC, Hanoi

	16.00 - 17.00	Meet with Support Group	Tien Anh, Thuy, Chat, Dat, Hoa & *Group 2 (Don, Duc)*	NTFP RC, Hanoi
	15.00 - 17.00	Meeting	Don Gilmour & Mr. Thong	IUCN Country Office, Hanoi
Sat 14	09.00 - 11.00	Reading Project Docs	Team meeting	NTFP RC, Hanoi
	11.00 - 12.00	Meeting	RT, Maurits	NTFP RC, Hanoi
Sun 15	Whole day	Travel to Ha Tinh		-
Mon 16	08.00 - 09.00	Meeting	Leaders of PPC, Dard, DOSTE	Ha Tinh PPC
	09.30 - 10.00	Discussion	RT and all NCRO project staff	NCRO, Cam Xuyen
	11.00 - 12.00	Meeting	Members of RTAB	Ha Tinh
	12.00 - 13.30	Lunch	RT and all NCRO project staff	Cam Xuyen
	13.30 - 14.15	Meeting	RT, Mr. Tran Dinh Tien (Chairman), Mr. Nguyen Ngoc Bao (Cam Xuyen DPC) and other members in the RTAB	DPC office Cam Xuyen
	14.30 - 15.30	Meeting	Mr. Vo Ta Xa and Mr. Tran Van Sinh, Center of Technology Transfer	DPC office Cam Xuyen
	16.00 - 17.45	Meeting	Mr. Nguyen Thanh Son (Dir. Cam Xuyen Protection Forest Management Board)	Cam Xuyen Protection Forest Management Board
	15.45 - 17.00	Further discussion	NCRO team	NCRO, Cam Xuyen
Tue 17	08.00 - 12.00	Field visit Cam Son	Mr. Le Viet Chinh (Hamlet Leader of Cam Son Hamlet 1), Mr. Tran Van Bieu, Mr. Nguyen Van Dung (farmers), Mr. Tran Dinh Duy (Extension Worker of Cam Son)	Cam Son Hamlet 1 (Mr. Dat)
	13.30	Return to Hanoi		-
Wed 18	08.00 - 11.30	Travel from Hanoi for Hon Gai		-
	11.30 - 12.15	Meeting	NRO team	Ha Long
	12.00 - 13.30	Lunch with NRO	NRO team	Ha Long
	13.30 - 15.00	Travelling to Van Don		-
Thu 19	15.00 - 16.00	Briefing	RT, Head of Department of Economics	Van Don
	08.00 - 15.30	Field visit to Van Yen commune	RT & NRO members	Van Yen Commune
	15.00 - 18.00	Return to Hanoi		-
Fri 20	09.00 - 13.00	Discussions on recommendations	RT	NTFP RC, Hanoi
	11.45 - 12.45	Meeting	Don Gilmour, IUCN CR	NTFP RC, Hanoi

	15.30 – 16.30	Meeting	DPD, Duc, Can	NTFP RC, Hanoi
	17.00 - 18.00	Meeting	CTA, Don, Guido	NTFP RC, Hanoi
Sat 21	Whole day	Report writing	RT	Hotel, Hanoi
Sun 22	Whole Day	Report writing & reviewing	RT	Hotel, Hanoi
Mon 23	Whole day	Report writing	RT	Hotel, Hanoi
Tue 24	08.30 – 12.00	Preparation of presentation	RT	NTFP RC, Hanoi
	13.00 - 15.00	Debriefing	RT, relevant IUCN staff , Project staff	NTFP RC, Hanoi
	15.30 - 17.00	Debriefing	NL embassy	NL embassy, Hanoi
	17.30	Departure for Airport & Return to Bangkok	Don & Guido	-
Wed 25 Feb	09.00 - 12.00	Debriefing IUCN ARO	Don & Guido	Bangkok

APPENDIX III List of documents consulted during internal review

- Project Document (Jul 2002)
- Project Inception Report (Aug 2003)
- Project Implementation Plan (Aug 2003 – Revised Oct 2003)
- Progress Report Semester 2, 2002 (Feb 2003)
- Progress Report Semester 1, 2003 (Aug 2003)
- Annual Workplan 2003 (Rev version Feb 2003)
- Annual Workplan 2004 (Nov 2003 – Donor approval pending)
- MoU between IUCN VN, FSIV NTFP RC for project implementation (Apr 2003)
- MARD Comments on the Project Document (Nov 2002)
- Project Communication Strategy (Consultant Report Nov 2003)
- Gender and Livelihoods Strategy (Consultant Report Dec 2003)
- Marketing Strategy (Consultant Report (draft) Dec 2003)
- Project Partnerships – Discussion paper (May 2003)
- Partner selection criteria (Sep 2003)
- NTFP RC Training Needs Assessment (Jul 2003)
- NTFP RC Strategic Development Options - Discussion paper (Oct 2003) and also minutes of PMU meeting on this paper (Dec 2003)
- NTFP Research Fund - Strategy (Aug 2003)
- NTFP RF - Guidelines for Applicants (Sep 2003)
- NTFP Action Learning Fund (ALF) - Strategy (Mechanisms) (Dec 2003)
- NTFP ALF - Guidelines for Applicants (Dec 2003).
- Tam Dao Workshop Report (June 2003)
- Draft M&E Plan (Feb 2004)
- Training Annual Report (Jan 2004)

APPENDIX IV People met during the internal review

Nr	Name	Affiliation
IUCN Country Office		
1	Mr. Nguyen Minh Thong	IUCN Country Representative
2	Ms. Nguyen Thi Yen	IUCN CO, Project Officer
3	Mr. Warwick Browne	IUCN CO, Programme Coordinator
IUCN Regional Office[9]		
4	Mrs Aban Marker Kabraji	IUCN Regional Director, Asia Region
5	Mr. Andrew Ingles	IUCN ELG Group Head, Asia Region
NTFP Project PMU		
6	Dr. Trieu Van Hung	Project Director
7	Dr. Le Thanh Chien	Deputy Project Director
8	Mr. Gerry Neville	Project Chief Technical Advisor
NTFP Project Staff		
9	Mr. Maurits Servaas	Training advisor
10	Mr. Nguyen Van Duong	Marketing Officer
11	Mr. Vu Dinh Quang	M&E Officer
12	Ms. Bui Thi An	Gender Officer
13	Mr. Phan Van Thang	Extension & Training Officer
14	Mr. Le Tuan Anh	Training Officer
15	Ms. Nguyen Thuy Dung	Junior Project Officer
16	Mr. Pham Tien Anh	Interpreter
17	Ms. Nguyen Thuy Huong	Accountant
18	Ms Hoang Thanh Thuy	Interpreter
19	Pham Ba Chat	Driver
20	Dao Trong Dat	Driver
21	Ms.Ngueyn Bich Hue	Communication Officer
22	Ha Ky Son	Communication Officer & Librarian
23	Ms. Nguyen Thi Hoa	Office assistant
North-Central Regional Office Staff		
24	Ms. Marianne Meijboom	Field Advisor
25	Ms. Pham Thi Lien Hoa	Interpreter
26	Mr. Cao Thanh Hung	Field Station Manager
27	Ms. Tran Hoang Yen	Field Station Officer
28	Ms. Tran Thi Kim Lien	Field Station Officer
29	Mr. Pham Chu Toan	Accounts Assistant
30	Mr. Nguyen Dinh Luong	Driver
North Regional Office Staff		
31	Mr. Stephan Ziegler	Field Advisor
32	Ms. Pham Thi Thuy Ha	Field Station Manager
33	Ms. Pham Kim Ngoc	Interpreter
34	Ms. Nguyen Thi Minh Hue	Field Station Officer
35	Mr. Nguyen The Cuong	Field Station Officer
36	Ms. Tran Thi Kim Ngan	Accounts Assistant
37	Dang Dinh Chien	Driver
Royal Netherlands Embassy		
38	Mr. Ben Zech	First Secretary
39	Ms. Pham Minh Uyen	Junior Project Officer

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[9] Met by D.A.G. and G.B. only.

	ECO-ECO	
40	Prof. Nguyen Van Truong	Director
41	Prof. Ha Chu Chu	Deputy Director
42	Ms. Nguyen Lan Anh	Son Dong Project Site Officer
	CRES	
43	Prof. Truong Quang Hoc	Director
44	Ms. Vo Thanh Giang	Researcher
	MARD	
45	Mr. Nguyen Ngoc Binh	Director General, Forestry Department
46	Dr. Le Van Minh	Director General, Internat. Cooper. Dpt
47	Dr. Tran Van Long	Dep. Dir. Gen., ICD
	Ha Tinh Provincial Authorities	
48	Mr. Nguyen Xuan Tinh	Director of DOST
49	Mr. Nguyen Quoc Trieu	Director of Agricultural Extension Center
	Cam Xuyen District Authorities	
50	Mr. Nguyen Ngoc Bao	Chairman, District People Commission
51	Mr. Tran Dinh Tien	Chairman, District People Committee
52	Mr. Tran Van Sinh	Director, Technology Extension Center
53	Mr. Nguyen Van Ly	Dep. Dir., Technology Extension Center
54	Mr. Nguyen Thanh Son	Dir. Protection Forest Management Com.
	Cam Son Village Authorities and Farmers	
55	Le Viet Chinh	Village Head
56	Tran Dinh Duy	Extension Expert
57	Tran Van Bieu	Farmer
58	Nguyen Tien Dung	Farmer
	Van Don District Authorities	
59	Mr. Truong Cong Huu	Dep. Dir. Economics Office
60	Mr. Nguyen Van Son	Forestry Expert. Field Site Coordinator
	Van Yen Commune Farmers	
61	Ms. Pham Thi Nguyet	Farmer, Field Team member
62	Mr. Le Van Hung	Farmer
63	Mr. Nguyen Van Sinh	Farmer, mushroom producer

APPENDIX V Results of participatory workshop with project staff

Process

During a 3.5 hour session, facilitated by the Leader of the Review Team, each project group (technical group, communications, training, ROs, CTA, DPD) was asked to identify three strengths of the project, three challenges faced by the project and three recommendations to assist the project to move ahead more effectively. Each group took it in turns to identify an issue, which was then written on a whiteboard in English and Vietnamese, and discussed until consensus was reached over the exact nature of the issue, and the formulation of appropriate wording. The results are presented below. In a limited number of cases, no consensus was reached during the discussion, and this is noted after the item.

Strengths

1. Many lessons learned and some accomplishments from Phase I
2. Project focuses on NTFPs which play a [potentially] important role in the forestry sector and poverty reduction
3. Sufficient (ample) budget for implementation
4. Equipment meet requirements for project implementation
5. Intention to link practical field experience with policy development at national and local level
6. Project has comprehensive scope (Policy, research centre, field sites, wide partnership)
7. Phase II has introduced communication component
8. Project selected the correct counterpart (NTFP RC) [in theory]
9. Strong interest from MARD, FSIV and many groups want to join
10. Design emphasizes implementation through partnerships
11. Good (Sufficient) human resources
12. Project generally has good support from local government & people

Challenges/problems

1. No vision or strategy or common understanding on what the project is about and on how to accomplish project objectives (no priorities) among project staff and stakeholders [conservation versus livelihood nexus]
2. Limited integration with NTFP RC, FSIV and MARD
3. Present organizational structure and management systems [between project & its partners, between head office & regional offices (lack of delegated authority)] is not effective – organizational structure is cumbersome (many levels & partners), unbalanced (staff resources) & inequitable (staff salaries)
4. Technical support from IUCN VN has been limited (So far mainly admin support only)
5. Role of IUCN in project – CO; RO unclear & acceptance of IUCN's role by partners
6. IUCN does not respond effectively to the project's technical needs
7. Have not yet tapped into IUCN's wider technical expertise
8. Project document is not easily understood and does not build on achievements of Phase I.
9. Some omissions from Project document, e.g. marketing
10. Information flow and communication within project is poor
11. PMU does not work cooperatively and lead effectively (link to 10.)
12. Lack of transparency in some PMU decisions

13. Inappropriate approach to support poor local people & partners
14. The NTFP RC has difficulty in accessing RF
15. NTFPs interpreted narrowly (plants only; geographic focus)
16. Project budget is large – but investment to local people is small

Recommendations for project

1. Management capacity of PMU should be strengthened (within PMU and between PMU and other groups)
2. Need to review project document and PIP and make adjustment to address deficiencies noted under challenges
3. Develop a vision, strategy and implementation plan for the project and set priorities
4. To change mechanisms (including members and rules) of RF Board *[not full agreement]*
5. Build capacity of NTFP RC staff to write effective research proposals
6. Development of a strategy for integration with respect to planning & implementation (with MARD, FSIV, RC)
7. Ensure that there is a common understanding of the project amongst partners & project staff & other stakeholders
8. Develop a strategy & plan to support the technical group
9. Detailed plan to enhance support from IUCN:
   1. Technical
   2. Supervision/quality control
   3. Advisory support
10. Identify an individual in PMU to be responsible and accountable for project performance (and assign authority and responsibility*) [no consensus was reached on this issue]*
11. More technical focus, discussion as getting from Technical working group.
12. More regular meeting, workshops to reflect and review methodology and approaches, team spirits building (like workshop in Tam Dao).
13. Delegate authority and allow ROs to fully manage quarterly budget to improve effectiveness of ROs.
14. Widen the scope of Project to include other geographic areas: sectors wildlife, Eco-tourism.

APPENDIX VI Tasks of the IUCN Programme Officer in support of the NTFP project

by Nguyen Thi Yen - Forest Conservation Programme Officer
IUCN Vietnam Country Office
(presented to the project and revised based on the project comments in October 2003)

1. Areas for support and contribution agreed with PMU

- Reporting, monitoring and evaluation
- Development of project Administrative manual
- Communication and Networking
- Liaising and providing information
- Gender

Basically following support activities would be carried out in discussion and agreement with the relevant units/staff of the project:

1) Project management and coordination/monitoring and evaluation:
   - Support the preparation of sixth-monthly and annual progress reports, annual workplan, liquidity planning, etc. for submission to the donor; comment on draft reports, annual audit, workplans. Support revision of draft reports, workshops, etc.
   - Prepare progress reports and annual workplans for my own involvement and contribution to the project implementation as required by the project
   - Participate in relevant project meetings including Advisory Board, SC meeting, monthly, quarterly and annually meetings.
   - Support development of project M&E strategy and plan, as well as its implementation
   - Support internal technical review missions carried out by IUCN regional and global programmes; field visits by Steering committee members, the donor (if any), as well as IUCN Country Office
   - Support PMU in developing the project manual
   - Liaise with the donor
   - Be the focal point at IUCN Country Office for the NTFP Project: coordinate with IUCN Accountant, HRD, Admin staff when necessary, provide linkage between the project with the Country Office and relevant regional and global programmes.

2) Communication and networking
   - Providing relevant information to and linkages for NPO/ROs; Support Son (IT) in provided relevant website links or screen relevant information from related website. Support Communication group in providing the project with relevant up-to-date information
   - Link the project with other relevant local, regional national, and global projects/initiatives/programmes, including FSSP, ISG,
   - Support the establishment and operation as well as development of the Vietnam National NTFP network run by the project.

3) Gender and livelihood
   - Support in preparing TOR, comment on draft TOR, recommend potential candidates

- ➤ Support the preparation of the Gender strategy and plan as well as its implementation
- ➤ Participate in field surveys if required

4) Other technical areas
   - ➤ Provide relevant information on training programmes; support possible collaboration with other IUCN programme/projects in orgnanising relevant training coourses
   - ➤ Support in preparing TORs for short-term consultancies and recommend potential candidates -consultants as required by the project

2. Time allocation:

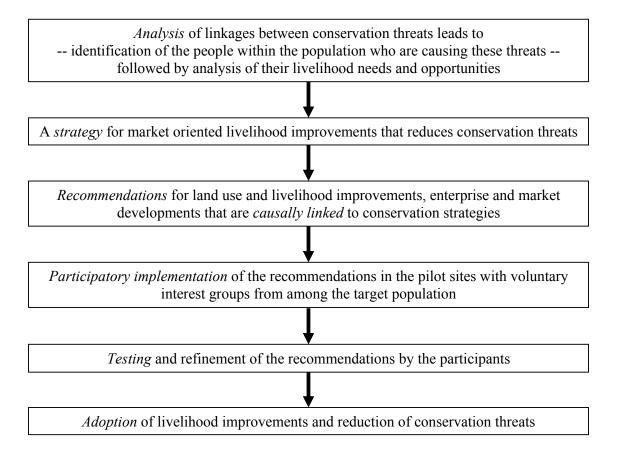About 10 days per month of which 5 days based at the NPO and 5 days based at IUCN country Office.

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APPENDIX VII Examples of analytical frameworks used for decision making in Phase I

The following three schema illustrate the type of planning and analytical frameworks used in Phase I to guide, test and analyse project interventions. The schema were used in project discussion papers and presentations and they are obviously presented here somewhat in isolation, merely to give an idea of the form that such analytical frameworks could take.

a) The process of identifying and testing appropriate conservation – development related interventions
The schema below outlines the action-learning steps used for testing market oriented interventions which benefit conservation.

Analysis of linkages between conservation threats leads to -- identification of the people within the population who are causing these threats -- followed by analysis of their livelihood needs and opportunities

↓

A *strategy* for market oriented livelihood improvements that reduces conservation threats

↓

Recommendations for land use and livelihood improvements, enterprise and market developments that are *causally linked* to conservation strategies

↓

Participatory implementation of the recommendations in the pilot sites with voluntary interest groups from among the target population

↓

Testing and refinement of the recommendations by the participants

↓

Adoption of livelihood improvements and reduction of conservation threats

b) *In-situ* **and** *ex-situ* **conservation strategies**

This schema illustrates how different interventions of the NTFP project fit within a broader range of conservation approaches. It also helped to clarify what were appropriate activities for the project to undertake and which activities were beyond the project's scope. During Phase I, the project:
1. Focused on *substitution and domestication*
2. Initiated activities in the area of *reforestation/forest restoration*
3. Carried out a feasibility study for *collaborative management* of Protected Area Management

WHERE		STRATEGY
Outside the forest/ protected area	**Homesteads/ Home gardens**	Substitution or domestication
		Alternative livelihoods
		(general) Alleviate poverty/economic development
		Compensation for lost access (health clinics) or crop damage
	Barren hills	Reforestation/forest restoration
Inside the forest/ protected area		Ban use, enforce the ban and move people out of the forest
		Collaborative management of wild resources
		Benefit sharing (e.g. tourism)

c) The relationship between the NTFP marketing strategy with the conservation strategy for the protected area

This schema depicts:

- That the *NTFP marketing strategy* is a part of the *total household NTFP use strategy*, which is in turn part of the *household land use & livelihood strategy*
- The linkages between the *household land-use & livelihood strategy* and the *conservation strategy for the protected areas*

By providing the answers to the questions in the different boxes, NTFP market related interventions may be identified which also contribute to the conservation strategy.

CONSERVATION STRATEGY FOR PROTECTED AREA

What are the main conservation threats to the protected area?

Which population groups are involved in generating these threats?

What are the possible strategies for mitigating these threats?

What supportive land use and livelihood changes could be made?

What kinds of NTFP products and marketing strategies could play a supportive role?

HOUSEHOLD LANDUSE AND LIVELIHOOD STRATEGY

What is the household's overall land use & livelihood strategy?

How do they meet their basic needs for:
  Cash
  Food
  Fodder
  Energy
  Shelter
  Medicine
  Materials for cottage industry

What problems to they face in meeting their objectives? What are the causes? Existing strategies for solving problems? Alternative intervention points?

TOTAL HOUSEHOLD NTFP USE STRATEGY

What is the household's degree of forest dependency?

What is the role of NTFPs in the household economy (subsistence cash income)?
Which NTFPs can be
Substituted
Domesticated
Sustainably harvested
Processed
Sold
Household production, processing & marketing strategies?

NTFP MARKETING STRATEGY

Pickup the standard MA&D methodology to:
Assess the existing products, markets and means of marketing
Identify and assess potential products, markets and means of marketing that support the identified livelihood and conservation strategies
Develop enterprise strategies and sustainable business plans
Follow up and backstop implementation of the enterprises

APPENDIX VIII Generic lessons learned from ICDPs – globally and from Vietnam
(Extracted from Gilmour and Nguyen Cu 2003)

Generic lessons learned[10]
1. Projects should be seen as part of a larger framework of planning and development (manage externalities) [WWF 1, 2, 5] [VN 8, 9]
(a) There should be serious political commitment to the project (at all levels). This implies that the concept of ICD is well understood. [WWF 3]
(b) Enabling policy and legislation should be in place
(c) Realistic institutional arrangements should be in place [WWF 9]
(d) There should be compatibility with regional development frameworks [WWF 5] [VN 1]
(e) There should be systematic attention to land ownership and other natural resource access and use rights of intended beneficiaries [WWF 9]
(f) There should be a commitment to institutional reorientation   [WWF 9]
2. The project should start small and scale up over time based on experience [WWF 6] [VN 4]
3. Attention should be given to ensuring that effective partnerships are forged with participating organizations [WWF 4]
4. Careful criteria should be used for site selection for trialling ICDP
5. Effective local participation should be actively pursued [WWF 8] [VN 1, 5]
6. Adequate financial resources should be available
7. Design and implementation should:
(a) Ensure adequate understanding of socio-economic context
(b) Specify how development activities will lead to enhanced PA management [VN 2]
(c) Develop viable alternatives to threatening natural resource usage   [VN 3, 6]
(d) Generate adequate and equitable economic or financial benefits
(e) Pay particular attention to equity issues with distribution of benefits
(f) Ensure strong links between development and conservation outcomes
(g) Ensure sustainability issues are considered when outside support (and staff) are withdrawn
(h) Ensure that attention is paid to evaluating the impacts of activities on both conservation and development [VN 7]
(i) Carefully consider how buffer zones should be treated, particularly in the absence of enabling legislation
(j) Ensure functional relationships between project staff and PA managers
(k) Ensure that activities are not based on presumptions that radical changes (to agricultural practices and to institutional arrangements) can take place in a short space of time
Additional issues from WWF lessons learned, not included above
8. Build on what exists (existing indigenous institutional arrangements for managing natural resource should be explicitly explored and built upon) [WWF 8]
9. Generate economic benefits for local people [WWF 10]
Additional issues from VN lessons learned, not included above
10. Focus on assisting the government to protect the forest and raise community awareness [VN 10]

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[10] The recommendations provided by Wells, *et al* (1992) are used as the basis, and the conformance of a global analysis by WWF (Larson, et al 1998) and an analysis of ICDPs in Vietnam (Sage and Nguyen Cu 2001) are shown as WWF and VN respectively.