

Action Plan for Implementing the Convention on Biological Diversity's Programme of Work on Protected Areas



(INSERT PHOTO OF COUNTRY)

(VIET NAM)

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Protected area information:

PoWPA Focal Point: (Name, contact details)

Ms. Thi Thanh Nhan Hoang
Deputy Director
Biodiversity Conservation Agency, Vietnam Environment Administration (VEA)
Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MoNRE)
Hanoi, Viet Nam
E-Mail: hnhan@vea.gov.vn

Lead implementing agency: (Add name of primary government agency)

Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MoNRE)

Multi-stakeholder committee: (Add description)

Yes

Description of protected area system

National Targets and Vision for Protected Areas

(Insert national targets for protected areas/Target 11 of the Aichi Targets. Include rationale from protected area gap assessment, if completed, along with any additional information about the vision for the protected area system, including statements about the value of the protected area system to the country)

The marine gap analysis report of Viet Nam focused on providing an overview of the coastal and marine resources of the country, institutional and policy references, and the priorities and goals of the government with respect to the conservation of its marine biodiversity resources. The report demonstrates the country's commitment to marine biodiversity conservation. It also highlights Viet Nam's adherence to the concept of marine protected area establishment, their appropriate locations, and the economic values that they possess.

With more than 3,000 inshore and offshore islands, islets and coastline extending over 3,260 kilometers, the territorial waters of Viet Nam is three times larger than the mainland. Coral reefs cover approximately 112,200 hectares, which is estimated to be 10 percent of the total coral reef cover of Southeast Asia. Represented by 350 species of corals, only 20 percent of the coral reefs have been evaluated to be in good to very good condition. The reefs are widely distributed in the country and are associated with the coastal areas and islands in the north (Quang Ninh and Hai Phong) and around offshore islands (Thanh Hoa, Nghe An, Ha Tinh, Quang Binh and Quang Tru).

Seagrasses cover an estimated area of 5,583 hectares and are represented by 15 species. In Viet Nam, seagrasses are distributed from north to south and along the islands found at a depth of 0 to 20 meters. These are highly concentrated in the coastal areas of the Phu Quoc Island, Con Dao, Truong Sa and some estuaries in the Central Area. Before 1943, mangrove forests were estimated to cover 400,000 hectares. By 2005, the area was down to 64,400 hectares and is on a continuous decline up to this day.

Unlike in the mainland wherein terrestrial protected areas has been established and managed since the 1960's, the establishment of marine protected areas has not been a priority in Viet Nam. Of the 189 natural protected areas that have been established in the country or are proposed for establishment, only a few have marine components such as the Cat Ba National Park, Con Dao and the Hon Mun marine protected area (Nha Trang Bay) covering a cumulative area of 28,400 hectares.

With the continuous decline of marine resources in the country, an initial 15 marine protected areas have been recommended for establishment in 1999. In 2001, the Hon Mun marine protected area was established with the support of the World Bank/UNEP, DANIDA and IUCN. In 2004, another marine protected area, Cu Lao Cham, was established and supported by DANIDA. However, the legal status of

these marine protected areas is still uncertain as they are still awaiting official approval from the government.

In Vietnam 61 KBAs, 59 IBAs and 4 AZEs have been identified. Out of the 61 KBAs only 31 are fully protected and 2 areas are partially protected. For 28 areas there is no protection.

Plans for the protection of Viet Nam's marine resources are embodied in its National Action Plan on biodiversity and includes the following objectives:

- Increase the total protected area of marine and wetlands of international and national importance to over 1.2 million hectare
- Restore 200,000 hectares of mangrove forests
- Develop five wetland areas that satisfy sufficient standards and conditions to be considered as wetlands of international importance
- Complete the system of natural protected areas that encompasses terrestrial, wetland and marine areas
- Restore 50 percent of specific and sensitive natural ecosystem that were destroyed (according to the action plan on biodiversity)

Coverage

(Amount and % protected for terrestrial and marine; maps of protected area system)

As per WDPA 2010 data 6.2% Vietnam's territory and 2.1% of its territorial waters are protected

Description and background

(Summary description)

In 1962, the Government of the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam established its very first "prohibited forest" to protect biodiversity. This became the precursor of the country's current protected area system. By 2006, the country has established 128 special use forest areas in ecoregions of the country that include 30 National Parks, 48 Nature Reserves, 12 Species/Habitat Conservation Areas and 38 Landscape Protection Areas, covering a total area of about 2.5 million hectares or 7.6 percent of the country's natural area. The protected areas also include areas of high cultural and/or historical values. However, all important forest ecosystem types, including all the known habitats of all rare and endemic flora and fauna, are given priority for conservation in the special use forest areas system.

Despite the increasing number of protected areas, there has also been an increase in the number of threatened species in the country. According to Viet Nam's Red Book of 2007, 882 threatened species of plants and animals have been documented in the country, recording an increase of 167 species in comparison to the list of threatened species first published in 1992-1996. Natural forests in the country are steadily declining and the remaining primary forests are found scattered in the central highlands, southeastern regions and northern central Viet Nam, covering an estimated area

of 570,000 hectares of approximately 1.7 percent of the country's land area. Several species of plants and animals have also been documented as already extinct in the wild.

Viet Nam has two laws that govern the establishment and management of protected areas in the country. These are the Law on Forest Protection and Development of 1991 that was revised in December 2004 and the Law on Biodiversity that became effective starting July 2009. The Law on Forest Protection and Development provides the guiding principles for the development and use of special use forests while the Law on Biodiversity focuses on protected area concerns such as categorization and decentralization of protected area management.

Despite the advances in the protected area establishment and management in the country, majority of the protected areas are actually small and are highly fragmented. A gap analysis for terrestrial protected areas coverage in Viet Nam, based on the gap analysis framework of Dudley and Parish (2006), has identified the following representation, ecological and management gaps:

Representation gaps

- The current forest protected area system does not include areas that have been identified as important bird areas or endemic bird areas.
- The evergreen forests, which accounts for 64 percent of the remaining natural forest in the country, and semi-deciduous forest located at elevations between 300 to 1,200 meters above sea level are under-represented in the forest protected areas.
- Known habitats of endemic species are not included or are represented only in a few protected areas.

• Ecological gap

- Portions of the protected areas have been claimed as part of the agriculture production landscape or as residential areas leading to smaller and fragmented habitats.

• Management gaps

- The protected area classification does not follow the IUCN categories. Conservation objectives based on the current classification system is unclear and does not allow for the sustainable use of natural resources by the local people living within and around the protected areas.
- There is an overlap in the management functions of the state agencies in charge of policies and management of protected areas in the country. The Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MONRE) is responsible for coordinating management activities pertaining to biodiversity and protected areas, while the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) has mandate over forest protected areas.
- It is mandated by law that management responsibility for individual protected areas should lie with the Protected Area Management Board (PAMB). Not all protected areas have PAMB and in the current set-up, the PAMB has very little power in decision making. Moreover, little attention has been given to the clarification of the mandates of the management board.
- Access to funding from the government for protected areas is limited. In addition, National Parks under the MARD receives a bigger allocation compared to the National Parks or Nature

Reserves managed by the province. Furthermore, the state budgets for protected areas have bigger allocations for infrastructure and equipment and only a small amount is used for actual biodiversity conservation activities.

Governance types

(Summary matrix of governance types)

Key threats

(Description of key threats, and maps, if available)

Scientifically Irrational Changes in Land Use

The concession of forested land and wetlands for agricultural cultivation, industrial plantation, and aquacultural farming, and urbanization and infrastructure development that have resulted to the loss and fragmentation of ecosystems and natural habitats and biodiversity depletion.

- Extending land for agricultural and industrial plantation, and aquacultural farming

This is one of the critical reasons for the loss of natural habitats in Vietnam. Many interior wetlands such as ponds, lakes, lagoons, and seasonal wet grassland are being threatened by the concession to irrigation construction, agricultural land, salt fields and shrimp farm (Table 7). In the North, forests are being destroyed by shifting cultivation practices, while in the Central Highlands and Southern-east regions the uncontrolled extension of industrial plantation that was seen as the biggest reason of deforestation over the past decades. Agricultural land in Vietnam has increased from 6.7 millions hectares in 1990 to 9.4 millions hectares in 2002.

- Infrastructure development

The construction of hydropower reservoirs, irrigation systems, roads, electricity lines and other infrastructures has directly resulted to the degradation, fragmentation, anti-migration, and the loss of natural habitats. These have severely threatened the survive of wildlife populations. In addition, infrastructure development also engaged with physical increase of population, and indirectly leading to biodiversity depletion.

Overexploitation of biological resources

Many communities in Vietnam, especially ethnic minority groups in mountainous areas, have to depend on forest resources for their survivals. Everyday they have to go to the forest to collect forest products, fuels, construction materials and do hunting for food. Due to fast changes in socio-economic development and population growth, the consumption habits of urban people are also changing. In addition, transportation network has improved that allowing local people can easily access and connect

to outside markets. These changes have motivated overexploitation of timber, medicinal plants and wildlife, and therefore making natural resources become exhausted over the country.

- Illegal exploitation of timber and non-forest timber products

In order to mitigate the decrease of area and quality of natural forests, Vietnam's Government have released many regulations to control commercial logging. However, illegal logging is still happening beyond the control, targeting to all forest types, including special use forests. The construction of road for wood transporting in fact has facilitated hunting and exploiting non-forest timber products, making more pressures on wildlife populations that are already affected by habitat depletion and fragmentation.

- Unsustainable fishing

About 1/5 of the country's population depend fishery resources for their lives. Fishing contributes a great part to meet domestic consumption and exportation. However, the increase in consumption together with unsustainable fishing management have led to overexploitation of aquatic products in many regions. Many valuable marine species are decreasing seriously, such as lobster (*Panulirus* spp.), abalone (*Haliotes* spp.), *Chlamys* spp. Destructive fishing techniques such as using explosive, poison and electricity are popularly used in both inland and coastal areas, and considered a severe threat to more than 80% of coral reefs in Vietnam.

- Illegal wildlife hunting and trade

Wildlife hunting is a local practice to meet living needs and entertainment. Actually, demands of national and international wildlife trading markets that are the main reason of wildlife hunting. Wildlife being commonly traded that are usually used for making traditional medicine, such as bears, monkeys, civets, turtles, lizards, pangolins, pythons and snakes. Many bird species are also trapped for selling out as pets. According to statistics, in 2002, the revenue of national and international wildlife trade via Vietnam was up to 3.050 tons and equivalent to USD66 millions (Nguyen Van Song, 2003, VEM-2005).

Although Vietnam has adopted its national action plan to control wildlife trade until 2010, but this has not reached to expected results because of the market is getting bigger with increasingly profits, why capacity of government's law-enforcement bodies is very weak, unable to stop wildlife trade in the country.

Introduction of new species and invasive alien species

The introduction of new species, especially those hybrid ones with high productivity, has led to decrease in both area and gene sources of native plants. This action has impoverished native gene sources, and several cropping gene were regrettably lost. For instance, in the period 1998-1999, in Krong No district of Dak Lak province 15 indigenous rice species were found losing (including 6 sticky rice species and 9 ordinary rice species) among 73 rice species locally recorded.

Over the past 20 years, many invasive alien species such as yellow snail (*Pomacea caniculata*), coypu (*Myocastor coypus*), khapra beetle (*Trogoderma granarium*), giant mimosa (*Mimosa pigra*) have been introduced and caused serious damages and attracted attention from public, scientists and managers. The uncontrollable mass-development of these species have invaded and damaged other species and gene sources, broken structures and functions of ecosystems, damaged crops, lessened farming productivity and even affected human health.

The Ministry of Fishery (2005) announced a list of 41 harmful invasive aquatic species (33 fish species and 8 other species) with classified groups: White-9 species (stranger species without negative effects to native aquatic biodiversity and traditional aquaculture); Grey-18 species (stranger species with uncertainty of negative effects on aquatic biodiversity and traditional aquaculture and thus continuous monitoring required); and Black-14 species (stranger species with harmful effects on aquatic biodiversity and traditional aquaculture and need to be strictly managed at farms and killed in natural aquatic areas).

Environmental Pollution and Climate Change

- Environmental pollution

At present, environmental quality in general is degrading. Many environmental components are depleted, and environmental pollution due to undisposed wastes are significant threats to biodiversity by destroying them and reducing the number of individuals, and indirectly damaging many wildlife habitats.

Pesticides are being commonly used in Vietnam, contributing to the decline of bird populations in rural areas and suburbs because they killed non-skeletal creatures which are part of the food chain.

Freshwater, coastal and marine ecosystems are also polluted by various sources.

- Climate change

Vietnam is anticipated as a particularly sensitive to global climate change, and predicted as one among ten countries will soon be seriously affected by climate change. Fragmented ecosystems might be weak to response to those changes, and might not avoid a mass loss of species at high speed.

The increase of average temperature will change geographic distribution and population structure of many ecosystems. Scientists have found evidence about species migration due to global warming. Increased temperature would facilitate forest fire, especially in peat swamp forests, dipterocarpus forests, and pine forests. Climate change together with the decrease of watershed forests and irrational water use might increasingly result more inundation, flash floods, landslide with severe impacts on the environment and human livelihoods.

Pressure from population growth

From 1979 to 2004, Vietnam's population has increased by 150%, from 52.7 millions to 81.6 millions people. The population is predicted to reach to 122 millions in 2050. At present, the population density of Vietnam is high, about 240 people/ km². The trend of population changes is related to internally migration within the country. Most of the migrants came to Central Highlands and Southern

East regions. For instance, during the year 1990 to 1995, the population of Dak Lak province has increased by 21%, mainly by migrants from other regions.

Because the national economy much depending on natural resources exploitation, therefore when the population increased, more resources to be exploited. The biggest pressure on resource consumption directly relates to the increasing demands of land for agricultural production and husbandry raising. This obviously leads to massive land use changes and thus seriously affect natural ecosystems. As a result, biological resources become exhausted with less species, make populations decreased, and gene resources impoverished.

Increasing consumption of natural resources

Vietnam is in the period of transition in economy, society and population. After a decade of economic reform, the annual GDP of Vietnam increases by 7% at average, ranking at the second in Asia. The rapid economic growth has affected the country's biodiversity in various ways, especially the rise in demands of consumption and resource concession at ever-high ratios.

Market demands for biological resources (wildlife, timber and non-forest timber products) are the key factor that creates pressures on those resources. Over the past few years, the control of wildlife trade has helped to mitigate illegal wildlife exploitation, hunting and trade activities. However, affected by the market economy, there violations once happened commonly over the country.

Shortcomings of Biodiversity Management

- State management system for biodiversity conservation less powerful

The Government decided Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment to act as the national focal point for CBD implementation in Vietnam. This ministry is responsible for developing and facilitating the implementation of the NBAP; and coordinating all CBD-related activities in Vietnam. Particularly, after the Biodiversity Law approved, MONRE is officially assigned to help the Government on the united state management of biodiversity in Vietnam. Authorised by MONRE, the newly-established Department of Biodiversity Conservation is responsible for consulting the Minister of MONRE to deliver biodiversity management tasks. However, this department is required adequate investment to enable them to do the assignment.

MARD is responsible for managing special use forests (forest ecosystems) and marine protected areas (marine ecosystems) while MONRE is responsible for establishing and managing wetland protected areas (wetland ecosystems). However, these ecosystems are always co-existing in a protected area NPAs. For instance, Xuan Thuy National Park (Nam Dinh) includes all three ecosystems: forest, marine and wetland ecosystems. Because of this overlapping, it is necessary to have an appropriate mechanism to unitedly manage biodiversity and protected areas in the country.

- Legislations for biodiversity conservation are unsystematic and inconsistent

Since 1995, Vietnam's Government and its Ministries have released more than 140 legal documents for biodiversity conservation and management. Some contents are prescribed in different

documents in respect to different specific areas; therefore they are found overlapping, inconsistent or even conflicted. Besides, several important contents are not legislated such as genetic access and benefit-sharing, biodiversity exploitation and utilisation. The enactment of the Biodiversity Law is an opportunity to fill that gaps. To enforce this law, a wide range of under-law documents needs to be prepared and approved by the Government to guide its implementation. This is a heavy task for the national management agencies for biodiversity in Vietnam.

-Mobilising community participation for biodiversity protection is insufficient

Community participation has a significant and decisive meaning to biodiversity conservation. However, Vietnam has had very few good models of community participation in nature conservation. Necessary policies and mechanisms have not been created to help the people understand their responsibilities and benefits when participating in biodiversity protection activities.

- Planning for sustainable biodiversity development at provincial, regional and national levels is still weak

Lacking long-term and scientific planning has led to irrationality in conserving and developing natural resources in each locality and over the country. Destructing newly-planted mangrove forests for shrimp-farming is an example that how weak planning would result to terrible waste.

- Investment for biodiversity conservation is limited

In recent years, investment for biodiversity conservation has increased in total budget and diversified in finding sources. However, the efficiency of investment is low. Funding for biodiversity conservation in Vietnam, especially ODA funding, has been considered high in comparison to that in other Southeast Asian developing countries (more than 20 millions USD in 2004-2005); but few projects were noticed successful. Moreover, with the economics being grown, ODA funding for Vietnam would be less committed in a near future.

Investment for biodiversity conservation is also insufficient, when little funding is allocated to management, strategic development and legislative formulation, capacity building, and public awareness raising as well as baseline biodiversity investigation. It is estimated that nearly 90% of biodiversity funding were spent for infrastructure construction, and only 10% was directly costed for biodiversity conservation and management.

New and complex issues in biodiversity protection such as genetic access and benefit-sharing, ecosystem-based approach adoption, and terrestrial and marine biodiversity conservation have not received sufficient attention.

Barriers for effective implementation

(Description of key barriers for effective implementation)

- Legislations for biodiversity protection are unsystematic and inconsistent plus many important contents not yet included in current legislations such as genetic access and benefit sharing, biodiversity exploitation and utilisation.

- Unadequate participation of community in biodiversity conservation leads to poor law enforcement in general. Deforestation and wildlife trade are still going on.

- Lacking professional agencies capable to manage biodiversity resources based on innovative approaches and methods.

- Investment for biodiversity is limited and untargetted; usually focusing on infrastructure construction rather than for scientific research, management and protection activities.

Status, priority and timeline for key actions of the Programme of Work on Protected Areas

Status of key actions of the Programme of Work on Protected Areas

Status of key actions of the Programme of Work on Protected Areas	Status
• Progress on assessing gaps in the protected area network (1.1)	2
• Progress in assessing protected area integration (1.2)	1
• Progress in establishing transboundary protected areas and regional networks (1.3)	1
• Progress in developing site-level management plans (1.4)	0
• Progress in assessing threats and opportunities for restoration (1.5)	2
• Progress in assessing equitable sharing of benefits (2.1)	1
• Progress in assessing protected area governance (2.1)	
• Progress in assessing the participation of indigenous and local communities in key protected area decisions (2.2)	0
• Progress in assessing the policy environment for establishing and managing protected areas (3.1)	2
• Progress in assessing the values of protected areas (3.1)	
• Progress in assessing protected area capacity needs (3.2)	2
• Progress in assessing the appropriate technology needs (3.3)	2
• Progress in assessing protected area sustainable finance needs (3.4)	1
• Progress in conducting public awareness campaigns (3.5)	1
• Progress in developing best practices and minimum standards (4.1)	0

• Progress in assessing management effectiveness (4.2)	1
• Progress in establishing an effective PA monitoring system (4.3)	2
• Progress in developing a research program for protected areas (4.4)	0
• Progress in assessing opportunities for marine protection	0
• Progress in incorporating climate change aspects into protected areas	0

Status: 0 = no work, 1 = just started, 2 = partially complete, 3 = nearly complete, 4 = complete

(Insert notes as appropriate)

Priority actions for fully implementing the Programme of Work on Protected Areas:

(Insert priority actions)

1. Soon releasing guiding documents for the implementation of the Biodiversity Law 2008, especially those to clearly identify the functions of managing biodiversity of involving ministries and local authorities;
2. **Raising public awareness** in implementing the Biodiversity Law and improving capacity for state management agencies regarding to biodiversity at central and local levels;
3. Creating **mechanism for connection and cooperation** among management and implementation agencies of biodiversity protection and focal institutions of biodiversity conservation.
4. Developing a national inter-sectoral **programme to study, preserve and develop biodiversity, which is in response to climate change**;
5. Developing **a monitoring programme and united management of biodiversity database**; Conducting **baseline investigations of biodiversity resources** at national scale;
6. **Promoting integration of biodiversity conservation** in national, ministerial, and local plans, programmes and projects; Priorities should be given to a/ regional biodiversity planning, b/ strict implementation of EIA for infrastructure construction projects and strict follow-up, c/ development of user-payment policies for commercial exploitation of biodiversity and ecological services.
7. Sustainably developing **the system of protected areas** in Vietnam through combining those objectives of protection and conservation. Priority giving to assess and develop opportunity for communities to be benefited from ecosystem service provision at PAs and watershed forests.
8. **Enhancing the rights and capacity of local communities** so that they will actively participate in biodiversity conservation and protected area management; To do these, community awareness, livelihood improvement, legal framework development, operational mechanisms for communities to be participated and benefited from biodiversity conservation and development, particularly in PAs. Allowing local communities to traditionally use natural resources in PAs and practise their livelihoods based on consensus on planning, zoning and monitoring requirements.
9. Enhancing **management and gradual suspension of illegal wildlife trade**.
10. **Paying more attention to new species importation**. Production companies must strictly comply the examination procedures and regulations to oversee imported species before allowing to introduce for large scale production. Soon releasing solutions to **manage and destroy harmful invasive species**;
11. **Strengthening diversification and effective management of funding sources for conservation** through a/ increasing total investment from state budget for conservation, and b/ focusing on strategic investment to satisfy long-term conservation.

12. Maintaining more **foreign aids** for nature and biodiversity conservation; promoting effective cooperation with biodiversity-related international and regional organisations such as CBD Secretariat, GEF, UNDP, WWF, IUCN, etc.

Timeline for completion of key actions

(Insert timeline)

Action Plans for completing priority actions of the Programme of Work on Protected Areas

(Insert detailed action plans)

Action 1: (Describe action) *Soon releasing guiding documents for the implementation of the Biodiversity Law 2008*

Key steps	Timeline	Responsible parties	Indicative budget
Prepare the guiding document framework	2011	MONRE	
Assign tasks to relevant agencies for preparing guiding documents	2012	MONRE	
Prepare guiding documents of the Law on Biodiversity and submit for approval	2013	MONRE	
Implement approved guiding documents	2013	MONRE	

Action 2: (Describe action) *Raising public awareness in implementing the Biodiversity Law and improving capacity for state management agencies regarding to biodiversity at central and local levels*

Key steps	Timeline	Responsible parties	Indicative budget
Prepare the capacity building program	2012	MONRE	
Conduct capacity building program	2012	MONRE	

Action 3: (Describe action) *Promoting integration of biodiversity conservation* in national, ministerial, and local plans, programmes and projects; Priorities should be given to a/ regional biodiversity planning, b/ strict implementation of EIA for infrastructure construction projects and strict follow-up, c/

development of user-payment policies for commercial exploitation of biodiversity and ecological services.

Key steps	Timeline	Responsible parties	Indicative budget
Develop the national biodiversity conservation master plan	2013	MONRE	
Guide provinces to develop provincial biodiversity conservation master plan	2013	MONRE	
Implement the biodiversity conservation master plan	2014	MONRE, ministries, sectors, provinces	

(Insert more as needed)

Key assessment results

Ecological gap assessment (insert summary findings if available)

Management effectiveness assessment (Insert summary findings if available)

Sustainable finance assessment (Insert summary findings if available)

Capacity needs assessment (Insert summary findings if available)

Policy environment assessment (Insert summary findings if available)

Protected area integration and mainstreaming assessment (Insert summary findings if available)

Protected area valuation assessment (Insert summary findings if available)

Climate change resilience and adaptation assessment (Insert summary findings if available)

(Insert other assessment results if available)