

POLICY BRIEF

Integrating Conservation and Development through Participatory Resource Use Planning



The landscape outside Ba Be National Park

Is there an irreconcilable conflict between conservation and development?

Forest areas in Viet Nam are commonly used by local communities for grazing livestock and as land reserved for cultivation. They also provide many products, such as firewood, timber, wild animals and plants for food and medicine. When forests are declared protected areas, local users are generally unable to relocate their resource use activities to other locations and, in the absence of alternative income opportunities, have to continue using the forest illegally or face declining household incomes. Protected areas in Viet Nam are usually in remote areas, close to marginalised communities with higher than average levels of poverty. The establishment of a protected area can further exacerbate their situation.

Protected area authorities in Viet Nam have usually relied heavily on technically-oriented planning and conservation approaches to identify optimal land use and conservation options, determine protection levels and use restrictions, and to designate land use and conservation zones. Local communities living in and around the protected areas are largely left out of this planning process and so are their needs, concerns, and knowledge.

Sometimes, protected area authorities allocate a large proportion of protected area staff and resources to usually ineffective guard posts and patrolling systems in order to keep trespassers out of the forest. In so doing, few resources are left for effective conservation management and biodiversity research.

In other cases, local authorities and protected area managers are lenient about enforcing resource use restrictions, thus compromising the conservation of natural resources for the temporary benefit of local people.

Local communities cannot be expected to accept resource use restrictions and contribute to the protection of areas they are not allowed to use. International experience suggests that for protected areas to be sustainable, local communities need to benefit from them and have a say in how they are managed.

PARC Project has piloted field activities to integrate biodiversity conservation and community development needs across a landscape that goes beyond protected area boundaries. One component of the project's approach analyses on-going natural resource use in relation to biodiversity conservation objectives, and attempts to find a consensus among stakeholders for the management of natural resources. This policy brief describes that Participatory Resource Use Planning (PRUP) approach of PARC Project.



Who are responsible for protected area and buffer zone management?

The majority of decreed protected areas in Viet Nam are defined as Special-use Forests and classified into three categories: national parks, natural conservation areas (also known as nature reserves) and landscape protected areas or historical-cultural-environmental areas. Most of these protected areas in Viet Nam have now been decentralized and are managed by provincial authorities, such as Departments of Agriculture and Rural Development, Departments of Natural Resources and Environment, and Forest Protection Departments. Provincial People's Committees have overall authority over decentralised protected areas, and they have the jurisdiction to enlarge or reduce these protected areas, and to approve or disapprove management practices. Day-to-day management decisions are taken by management boards that have authority only within the protected area. In the absence of a management board, the provincial Forest Protection Department is responsible. In the protected area buffer zone, planning and management decisions are made by local authorities, namely the District and Commune People's Committees, without a formal linkage with the management board.

The landscape in and around a protected area often has a range of stakeholders, each with differing responsibilities and planning objectives that may overlap and conflict with one another. Land and forests surrounding protected areas are often managed by state forest enterprises, agricultural cooperatives, the military, industrial and tourism installations, or by provincial authorities. Additionally, in recent years many private households have been granted land-use certificates for agricultural land in the buffer zone, and protection contracts for forest land within

the protected area. The latter allow them to manage land for forestry development whilst securing benefits from them.

Participatory Resource Use Planning - An effective approach to integrating conservation and development interests

Participatory Resource Use Planning (PRUP) aims to reconcile sectoral planning efforts and on-going natural resource use in the landscapes where target protected areas are situated. Furthermore, it specifically attempts to integrate biodiversity conservation and socio-economic development interests, by finding a consensus between local stakeholders and involving them in the planning process. During the process the stakeholders become informed about PRUP objectives, procedures and implications and are given ample opportunity to contribute to the planning results and to defend their interests. PRUP brings together information from the village and district levels and takes into consideration the capacities and priorities of stakeholder groups to participate and contribute to planning, negotiation, and implementation. Results from the planning process can help decision-makers to jointly set priorities and make well-informed decisions. Furthermore PRUP builds on regulations already set for the management of Special-use Forests¹, and the government policy of decentralized decision-making and strengthening the role of local communities².

¹ Decision 08/2001/QĐ-TTg, on the promulgation of regulation on management of special-use forest, protection forest and production forest.

² Decision 29, 1998 on strengthening grass-roots democracy at the commune and village level.

PRUP Outputs

The PRUP planning process leads to a range of direct outputs, including the following:

1. **Compilation and reconciliation of information** on conservation needs, resource use practices, socio-economic conditions, and biodiversity and human use trends in the protected area and its buffer zones.
2. **Assessment of local resource use practices** in view of:
 - (a) threats to biodiversity conservation;
 - (b) socio-economic development issues and potentials;
 - (c) understanding the economic, social, political, and institutional factors determining local resource use; and,
 - (d) identification of conflicts between biodiversity conservation and socio-economic development objectives.
3. **Identification of stakeholders** directly or indirectly involved in conservation and development activities, and their capacities and priorities to carry out such activities.
4. **Clarification of the development and conservation effects** resulting from sector policies, programs, and projects carried out by government agencies, state-owned and private enterprises and other organizations using resources in the protected areas and buffer zones.
5. A **negotiation process** between stakeholders leading to:
 - (a) the identification of practical measures to support socio-economic development, mitigate threats to biodiversity, and resolve conflicts;
 - (b) documented stakeholder agreements on how biodiversity conservation will be ensured and natural resources will be used within protected areas and buffer zones;

i.e. how the landscape will be sustainably managed; and,

- (c) guided investment plans for biodiversity conservation and buffer zone development from concerned government agencies and local communities.

In addition, the PRUP process is designed to raise awareness among local communities, government agencies, and decision-makers on biodiversity and development issues and their respective linkages, and on the need to address these issues through cross-sectoral participatory planning efforts. Moreover, it is likely that participation in the PRUP process will increase the willingness of decision-makers and sector agencies to follow recommendations of the process and to incorporate results in future sectoral and socio-economic planning.



Agricultural activities supported by PARC Project in the buffer zone of Yok Don National Park.

PRUP in the PARC landscapes

PARC used Participatory Resource Use Planning to seek consensus on strategies to manage natural resources at Ba Be National Park, Na Hang Nature Reserve, Yok Don National Park and their respective buffer zones. The project introduced the PRUP concept to district land-use planning agencies and local communities, and then facilitated the process in target areas.

Once target PRUP areas were identified, stakeholder communities and government authorities shared the task of identifying current resource use within the landscape, and in subsequently defining the preferred use of spatial resources and required actions to ensure progress towards conservation and development objectives. Involving local government authorities in the process ensured their acknowledgement of proposed resource use changes, and provided necessary training for involved officials to conduct future PRUP exercises. In so doing, it also helped institutionalise a participatory approach for pragmatic land-use planning based on the use of biophysical resources within the landscape.

PRUP was crucial in defining the boundaries of two new protected areas, which lie in the broader landscape of Ba Be National Park and Na Hang Nature Reserve. These two areas correspond to forested habitat extensions to Na Hang Nature Reserve, which had previously been identified through PARC Project surveys as having high biodiversity values.

PRUP was initiated and steered by the PARC Project team and implemented by the target local communities. In each case, ten village representatives from the target village management board, including members of the Women's Union, Farmer's Union and Youth Union, would carry out field activities with PARC facilitators and members of the commune and district land-use planning authorities. The function of the commune and district authorities was to steer the process in the hope of its future adoption within their own planning procedures. Thus, the PRUP process includes the collection of all village socio-economic data that is required as part of routine government planning.



Rice fields in the buffer zone of Na Hang Nature Reserve

PRUP Process

The PRUP process developed by PARC is typically carried out in three stages, once the foundations have been laid through a stakeholder analysis and biodiversity assessment. The first stage constitutes a complete village PRUP process that considers the conservation needs in the landscape, and identifies mitigation and development measures suitable to the local conditions. The second stage defines measures needed to mitigate adverse impacts to biodiversity conservation and to carry out community development activities. This stage also includes the formulation of stakeholder resource use agreements, and drafting of village resource use plans. The third PRUP stage involves implementing, monitoring and re-planning prescribed PRUP activities. Depending upon the resource use planning objectives and circumstances, an Initial Resource Use Assessment (IRUA) is carried out prior to the main PRUP process to pinpoint the main stakeholders who have a negative impact upon biodiversity.

Preparation

General Stakeholder Analysis

Identifying stakeholder groups helps to define the different actors involved in biodiversity conservation, resource use, and socio-economic development in the target area. Different stakeholders have different roles, responsibilities, interests, and capacities in relation to conservation and development objectives. Therefore the stakeholder analysis exercise helps describe all relevant stakeholder groups from the local level (villages, ethnic and gender groups, resource user groups) to the more centralized levels (district, provincial, national). Once relevant stakeholders have been identified, the analysis helps specify the respective roles of stakeholders with regards to conservation and development activities.

Based on results of the stakeholder analysis, commitments can be obtained from key organizations regarding their collaboration and contributions in the PRUP process, such as finance, staff, information, equipment, and logistics. This should be done prior to subsequent steps in the PRUP process, since these arrangements will influence planning and how procedures are carried out. During a general stakeholder workshop, the role of PRUP in relation to sectoral planning activities should be discussed to reach an agreement on the need to integrate sectoral planning and PRUP into a comprehensive Buffer Zone Resource Use and Biodiversity Conservation (RUBICON) Plan.

Biodiversity Assessment and Conservation Planning

If the biodiversity status of a target location has not already been carried out, it should be conducted in parallel with, or immediately after, a natural resource inventory is conducted. Through this assessment, biodiversity surveys, targeting different species and study areas across the landscape, lead to the identification and prioritization of landscape units and habitats for biodiversity conservation. The process may lead to identifying areas of conservation importance that are currently without protection status. This 'hotspot analysis' is described in the *PARC Policy Brief: "Biodiversity Conservation using Landscape Ecology: The PARC approach"*.

Biodiversity assessments and resource inventories provide the basis for biodiversity conservation planning. A landscape ecology approach, where biodiversity and biophysical factors are related with socio-economic variables obtained through the stakeholder analysis, is used to define areas to support further biodiversity conservation. During this process, the landscape is defined in terms of present and potential resource use, for both conservation and development. For example, following identification of an important area for biodiversity in

Ban Thi and Xuan Lac Communes in Bac Kan Province, PRUP provided the basis for establishing the South Xuan Lac Species and Habitat Conservation Area. In particular PRUP helped define protected area boundaries in recognition of current resource use by local communities. A similar process has been followed in preparing the groundwork to establish the Francois' Langur Species and Habitat Conservation Area, which is anticipated to be gazetted in early 2005.

Results from the initial biodiversity conservation planning help advance field verification and stakeholder participation during the resource use planning process aimed at determining precise land-use zones. For example, PRUP served as a conflict-resolution tool to help settle boundary disputes between local communities and protected area authorities in the northern boundary areas of Ba Be National Park. In Na Hang Nature Reserve, PRUP was used to identify and demarcate the internal reserve boundaries between land under strict protection and land currently used for agricultural development by local communities. In both cases local communities also gained additional knowledge of the protected area regulations and restrictions during the process. Moreover, the protected area authorities learned and helped define the location and extent of permitted agricultural activities within the protected area.

Initial Resource Use Assessment

An Initial Resource Use Assessment (IRUA) is conducted in less detail than PRUP to rapidly identify which stakeholders practice resource use activities with negative impacts on biodiversity. In so doing, IRUAs can give a general indication of the severity of impacts to biodiversity from the activities of local communities and enterprises, and the economic importance of those activities on a broader scale. IRUAs also help the process of identifying stakeholder

groups that may be targeted during the PRUP process, because of their more intense resource usage.

In general, IRUAs describe the range of resources originating from the landscape and the stakeholders who use them. For each resource, the quality and quantity used, its economic value and its origin are specified. The IRUA also provides a description of the users being assessed, listing their main characteristics, such as personnel, operational budget, and range of economic activities. IRUAs should be carried out in all villages, organizations and enterprises where resource use activities might affect a protected area. In general, they can be restricted to the buffer zone and the protected area, unless there is suspicion that users outside of these two areas may also make use of resources originating from the protected area.

Village IRUAs comprise interviews with representatives of villages, the main ethnic groups, wealth groups, and households with strong and weak natural resource dependencies. Topographic or sketch maps are used to show the boundaries of the village area, including areas located within the territories of other villages or the protected area. Areas used for grazing animals, hunting, extraction of timber, firewood and non-timber forest products are indicated on maps and labelled with local names. A three dimensional land or resource-use model can complement the IRUA process and was used as a tool by PARC for conducting an IRUA in Drang Phok Village, Yok Don National Park. At present, this village is the only settlement inside the national park, and the community has regular access to resources within the protected area and thereby has a direct impact on its biodiversity. The map depicted all resource use types and locations around Drang Phok and enabled both national park authorities and villagers to clearly visualise the extent of village resource use within the national park.

IRUA should also be applied to any enterprises and organisations involved in the management or use of land in a protected area or buffer zone. A clear example of the need to carry out IRUA for other than villages is for the mining companies within the buffer zone of the South Xuan Lac Species and Habitat Conservation Area, where mining and activities of the miners affect protected area resources.

Village-level Participatory Resource Use Planning

PRUP at the village level should focus on those communities prioritised during the the IRUA and biodiversity conservation planning process, and identified as having the most threatening practices to biodiversity. Building on from the results obtained during the earlier planning steps, the village PRUP attempts to clarify further the following issues:

1. Resource use, and biophysical and socio-economic conditions in the village;
2. Location of boundaries and village territories, resource use areas, conservation zones, protection and production forest areas;
3. Conservation conflicts caused by local resource use, their economic importance and possible mitigation measures;
4. Socio-economic development potentials, constraints and possible solutions;
5. Identification of areas for forest land allocation and protection contracts (if applicable);
6. Regulations for zones with resource use restrictions and means for monitoring;
7. Capacities of local stakeholders to carry out conservation and development activities; and,
8. Formulation and agreement of complementary conservation and development

objectives and priorities to mitigate the adverse impact of development activities on biodiversity.

Implementing PRUP

Stage 1: Resource Use Assessment

When carrying out a resource use assessment, most PRUP teams are unlikely to have the required information on all technical, organizational, political, financial and logistical aspects at their disposition. They will therefore not yet be in a position to negotiate agreements on resource use restrictions nor to formulate conservation and development objectives and priorities in collaboration with the local populations. In most cases, it is appropriate to limit the initial village PRUP exercise to clarifying the first four issues listed above, and identifying priorities for conservation measures to mitigate adverse impacts to biodiversity. The resource use assessment would also identify priority development activities based on villager felt needs.

The resource use assessment should result in a detailed assessment of resource use in the village, complemented with key resource use data, detailed maps, proposed mitigation measures, and prescribed development activities prioritized according to the preferences of local resource users.

Where buffer zone villages have been identified prior to the start of PRUP activities, or where PRUP is conducted in all villages of a commune, it is neither necessary nor appropriate to separate IRUA and the first stage of village PRUP. In these circumstances the two procedures can be combined into a single planning step.

Stage 2: Village Resource Use Plan

Results of the village resource use assessment are submitted to a PRUP consultative group, which will then:

- o decide whether to carry out more detailed studies by specialists to develop appropriate technical and organisational solutions;

- o supervise these studies and discuss their findings and applications;
- o consider sectoral priorities as expressed in district and provincial plans and programs, and strike a balance between conservation needs, sectoral interests and community/enterprise priorities;
- o select mitigation measures and development activities which appear feasible, correspond to sectoral priorities, and answer the needs of the local populations;
- o prioritize villages according to their need for mitigation measures and development support; and,
- o engage stakeholders in the PRUP process, assessing their capacities and obtaining their commitments to implement suitable activities.

The PRUP consultative process then generates a list of interventions and resource use arrangements for each village. These results would already have been accepted by the stakeholders and concerned authorities, and therefore be ready for implementation with the available resources.

Village resource use plans provide guidelines for carrying out conservation and development activities with minimal conflict. They contain socio-economic and biophysical baseline data, summaries of the resource use situation, and detailed maps of the village area with resource use zones. Regulations of usage are specified for zones with agreed use restrictions, together with sanctions for infractions and means for monitoring them. The plans also list prescribed priorities for different stakeholder organizations and the local community to achieve agreed conservation and development objectives.

Resource Use and Biodiversity Conservation Plan for protected areas and their buffer zones

Combining findings and agreements of individual village PRUPs and IRUAs that cover entire communes can lead to the formulation of a comprehensive Resource Use and Biodiversity Conservation (RUBICON) Plan. These plans are thus suited for the protected area and its buffer zone. They describe resource use and socio-economic trends, summarize conservation and resource use priorities, document resource use and conservation commitments made by local communities and government agencies, and define zones with resource use restrictions and document the agreed restrictions.

Comprehensive RUBICON plans contain conservation and development objectives and proposed investment programs, or the cost of proposed investment, for all concerned villages and stakeholders. They should provide a legal basis for village-level PRUP agreements and create a legally binding document for collaboration between government agencies in the protected area buffer zone. RUBICON plans should be prepared for all communes in the buffer zone of protected areas and, combined, could constitute a comprehensive buffer zone plan. The integration of village resource use plans into a commune, or buffer zone RUBICON plan is an important step to ensure that bottom-up resource use planning is put on a legal platform that can be used as an official planning reference. Although PARC Project did not develop a full RUBICON plan, the basis for such a plan was laid during the establishment of the South Xuan Lac Species and Habitat Conservation Area, particularly as a comprehensive resource-use management analysis was conducted for the entire landscape encompassing the protected area and its buffer zone.

Stage Three: Implementation, Monitoring, and Replanning

Annual Action and Investment Plans

Annual action and investment plans for villages (and possibly enterprises) are needed to operationalize conservation and development priorities, as defined in village PRUPs, into feasible annual work plans. On the basis of village PRUPs, investment plans should be prepared for each village, and should contain resource allocations and time tables for resource usage. Such plans were prepared through PARC Project for all target PRUP villages in Ba Be and Na Hang Districts. The benefit of developing investment plans based on PRUP is that land-use authorities will then have a sound basis to propose budgets for funding development activities. These annual plans should be signed and approved by relevant stakeholders at the village, commune, and district levels, based on activities agreed upon in the village PRUP. Once approved, these plans should help ensure that the development of infrastructure and services in the buffer zone are linked to the results of village PRUP, and that biodiversity conservation and socio-economic development initiatives are integrated into a comprehensive resource use program for the landscape. For practical purposes, the annual plans for a

set of villages in a commune may be combined into a commune plan, as long as all of the activities are agreed with and listed for individual villages.

Monitoring of implementation and agreements, re-planning

As with all long-term plans and agreements, there is a need for regular monitoring to ensure that the regulations and agreed commitments are complied to by all parties. Although village management boards have the responsibility to manage and monitor village investment planning and implementation, the protected area and district authorities should organize annual evaluations and re-planning meetings at the commune level, where the communities and stakeholders can meet and carry out a self-evaluation of the PRUP implementation progress. On this occasion, agreements made should be reviewed and key indicators for progress and impact should be monitored jointly. These evaluations and re-planning meetings provide an opportunity for all parties to learn of successes and problems together and to discuss possible modifications to the resource use regulations and priority activities that were previously agreed upon. This evaluation and deliberation is then followed by the formulation of a new implementation plan for the following year.

**Land use planning map to 2010
Tri A Village, Krong Na Commune**

An example of a land use planning map resulting from the PRUP process in the buffer zone of Yok Don National Park



- Forest land
- Annual crop land
- Wet rice land
- Construction area
- Graveyard
- Residential areas

Conclusion: Need for negotiation, participation and integration

With the interests of many at hand, management decisions affecting the resource use options of different stakeholders need to be based on a constructive negotiation process, where diverging interests are balanced and mitigation measures are agreed upon to avoid negative impacts that can further marginalise the weaker actors. However, in the pecking order of competing conservation and development interests this usually means that development projects are favoured over conservation needs, and use restrictions imposed by protected area administrations overrule interests and traditional use rights of local people.

Current socio-economic and sectoral planning practices are based on achieving growth targets. As such they lack the local-level consultations and sound environmental and social impact assessments promoted through PRUP. Consequently, they often fail to pay sufficient attention to the interests of local communities and the conservation needs of protected areas. This system contradicts government policies regarding the protection of natural resources and the environment, poverty alleviation, and strengthening grass-roots democracy and decision-making at local levels. More importantly, top-down planning decisions and insufficient negotiation of competing interests in local resources endanger the natural resource base, and adversely affect the poor, and often ethnic minority, communities in and around protected areas.

Participatory resource use planning at local level can play an important role in reconciling competing interests for local resources, while providing sufficient room for the resource use needs of local communities and the conservation requirements of protected areas. The

process of carrying out PRUP also meets government requirements for socio-economic data collection and complements current land-use planning processes. Promoting and mainstreaming participatory resource use planning can thus contribute to the conservation of Viet Nam's forests and support the national policy goal of sustainable economic development. ■

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Other related reports:

Available from PARC Project:
www.undp.org.vn/projects/parc

Resource Use Plan for Krong Na Commune

Designation and collaborative management of the South Xuan Lac Species and Habitat Conservation Area

Development of the Francois' Langur Species and Habitat Conservation Area


Available from the Tam Dao National Park and Buffer Zone Management Project: please contact gtz-tdmp@hn.vnn.vn or Tel/Fax +84-211-853011

Resource Use Planning for integrated buffer zone development and nature conservation in Tam Dao National Park

Resource Use Planning - A Guide Book for Practitioners

PARC Project Sites

in
Viet Nam



Ba Be National Park

Ba Be National Park was originally gazetted in 1977, then established as a national park in 1992. It covers an area of 7,611 ha including the 500 ha Ba Be Lake, the largest natural lake in Viet Nam. The national park was administered by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development before being transferred to Bac Kan Province in 2002.

A network of rivers and streams connect the lake to evergreen forests that cover adjacent ranges of limestone karst mountains, giving the park a spectacular landscape. There is a high diversity of flora and fauna, in particular there are over 300 species of butterfly and about 80 species of freshwater fish. The national park is noteworthy for its small resident population of endangered Francois' Langurs.

Na Hang Nature Reserve

Na Hang Nature Reserve covers an area of 41,930 ha, comprised of limestone mountains under tropical moist forest, with smaller areas of mixed lowland evergreen and semi-evergreen broadleaf and bamboo forest.

The nature reserve has global biodiversity significance as the only known protected area with extant populations of the critically endangered and endemic Tonkin Snub-nosed Monkey. This species, once thought extinct, was rediscovered in 1992, which led to the forests of Na Hang being designated a nature reserve in 1994. It is managed by Tuyen Quang Province.

Yok Don National Park

Established in 1991, Yok Don National Park lies in Dak Lak Province in the Central Highlands of Viet Nam, next to the border with Cambodia. It is managed by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. In 2002, the park was expanded to cover a core zone of 115,545 ha (twice its original area) and a buffer zone of 133,890 ha. Most of this area was formerly managed as production forests.

The park occupies a relatively flat area with two small mountains to the south of the Srepok River. It is mainly under natural forest and includes the only protected area of dipterocarp forest in Viet Nam, as well as evergreen hill forests and riverine forests. The national park is an important site for the conservation of large mammals and regarded as one of the most important areas in the country for birds.

PARC Project

Creating Protected Areas for Resource Conservation using Landscape Ecology

PARC is an Integrated Conservation and Development Project of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam. From 1999 to 2004, the project has piloted a landscape ecology approach for conserving Viet Nam's diverse biological heritage. This approach integrates conservation and development by using resource use planning as a basis for project activities at three sites: Yok Don National Park, Ba Be National Park and Na Hang Nature Reserve.

The project is co-financed by the Global Environmental Facility and the United Nations Development Programme. It is implemented by the Forest Protection Department of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development and the United Office for Project Services. IUCN - The World Conservation Union provides technical assistance at the national level and Scott Wilson Asia - Pacific Ltd. provides technical assistance at the site level.

PARC Project policy briefs

This series of policy briefs describes the planning approaches taken by PARC Project as part of its framework of integrating biodiversity conservation and socio-economic development. As such, the series should serve to strengthen policy for protected area management in Viet Nam by sharing the experiences gained from the project. This policy brief is one of four that have been published so far:

1. Covering the costs of Viet Nam's protected areas
2. Biodiversity conservation through landscape ecology
3. **Integrating conservation and development through participatory resource use planning**
4. Management planning for protected areas in Viet Nam
5. Conservation and development modelling within the landscape

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Design: Paul Insua-Cao
Produced by: Haki