

# THE LINKAGES

Supporting community environmental protection initiatives

Internal Newsletter of the Sida Environmental Fund in Vietnam



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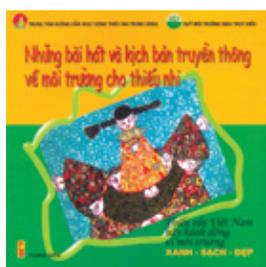
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# Message from the Chairwoman

## New Orientation for SEF Strategy in 2006 – 2007



The Sida Environmental Fund (SEF) is a small funding scheme under the official support of the Swedish Government for Vietnam through the Swedish International Development Co-operation Agency (Sida) and the Swedish Embassy in Hanoi. SEF was established in 1997 and started in the same year its operation to respond to local initiatives on environmental protection and sustainable use of natural resources. After 8 years of its operation, SEF has actively contributed to the environmental protection on a local level and strengthening the role of civil society organizations in Vietnam.

In the period of 2006 – 2007, SEF decided to allocate a larger portion of its funding to support projects proposed by civil society organizations in order to facilitate their involvement in promoting environmentally sustainable development in Vietnam.

As a result of this decision, SEF has gone through significant changes in its management and operation. The Advisory Group (AG) office had four new members. These AG members were invited by the Swedish Embassy to serve in the board on voluntary basis. They represent different areas of the society, including government agencies, non-government organizations, academic institutions, and media agencies in different regions. AG members provides overall guidance, strategic planning for the fund, establishes project eligibility criteria, screens and selects project proposals to submit to Sida for approval. In addition, AG members also monitor and evaluate funded projects from different geographical areas throughout the country.

The composition of SEF grantees has been also expanded and more diverse. Target groups include community-based organizations, non-governmental organizations, and other civil society organizations such as natural resources user groups, interest groups, clubs, small agricultural co-operatives, village communities. Priority for project beneficiaries is given to poor and ethnic minority groups, who have the less opportunity and capacity to access funding sources from the outside. Moreover, the size of project funding increases to a higher level. Within the funding duration of 12 months, grants for community organizations are up to USD 7.000 - 10.000 and grants for non-governmental organizations are up to USD 10.000 - 15.000 (maximum budget size of projects in the previous period was USD 6,000).

Many funded projects in this period focus significant efforts on supporting the establishment and organisational development of community groups and local organisations. Supported activities include providing participation opportunities for different interest groups, training and capacity building on organizational development and management, and helping raise the voice of communities in environmental issues. A large number of projects focus on helping small groups at village and commune levels to organise themselves. In addition, SEF supports networking activities and facilitates exchange of information and experiences among groups, organizations and interested individuals. SEF also plays the supporting role in advocacy process at grass-root level through building partnership and promoting dialogues between different stakeholder groups.

We really hope that through supporting these local initiatives, SEF can help raise environmental awareness and knowledge, as well as improve capacity of community groups and organizations. Consequently, the small grants can be effectively translated into solutions for environmental problems at local levels. Results of these projects and changes made at the very grass-root can then gather momentum for us in the next period.

*Mrs. Hoang Thanh Tam, M.Sc., SEF Chairwoman*

# FEATURES

## Looking back on 2005: More small fires lighted

*By Mrs. Hoang Thanh Tam, M.Sc, SEF Chairwoman*

In the last sixth months of 2005, with approval from Sida, 20 new projects were screened and approved for funding. Many of them have had significant results and brought new perspectives to SEF activities.

In order to obtain practical experience, replicate good models in a sustainability and increase impact, some successful projects such as SEF/10/05 in Tam Dao, SEF/12/05 in Thai Binh, SEF/14/05 in Hung Nguyen, Nghe An and SEF/18/05 in Ca Mau have been repeatedly supported by SEF. 11 Clubs for Women and Environment of SEF/10/05 in 4 communes of the Tam Dao district were developed based on the results of SEF/02/99 in Ho Son commune with the born and action efficiency of the one. These Clubs become an interesting and useful playground for ethnic women groups. There is room for discussion and teamwork by exchanging experiences on how to improve the environment and develop a sustainable buffer zone for Tam Dao National Park. In Thai Binh, where the Community Learning Movement has developed quickly with the support from SEF from the

SEF/06/03 to SEF/12/05, the capacity of environmental education of the Communities Learning Centers in the entire province has been integrated and improved. Community Learning Centers are the informal education centers organized for and by the community intended for its development. The Community Learning Centers provide additional essential knowledge for people at grass-roots level. This is very useful for local people to extend the development of environmental protection. The replication of good pilot models in other communes of the provinces strengthens the capacity of the Community Learning Centers for environmental education as well as for the improvement of the living standard and the environmental sanitation. Three journals, broadcasting in Nghe An Radio, television and workshop project SEF/13/05 summarized some interesting experiences from the successful SEF projects in the central area on the strengthening of the management capacity, the environmental protection and the sustainable development of the communities in the rural area of Nghe An province.



Depending on the local initiatives, some projects apply the experience drawn from the AG trip to Sweden in 2004 in those cases that the experience can be merged with Vietnamese conditions. These projects have such contents as capacity support to developing from Agenda 21 at central and provincial level with the assistance of Swedish Government to Agenda 21 at district level of project SEF/9/05 in Ninh Binh that may be developed toward communal level in the future. Project SEF/19/05 in Dong Anh, Ha Noi which contains a model that applies organic cultivation in clean vegetable production with eco-labeling, has brought initiated efficiency in the economy and the environment and it was accepted by the consumers. Even more, the issue on food safety and hygiene, especially the services on sanitation and safety of street foods at 8 selected wards of Hanoi were considered interesting by the authorities, the functioning bodies and the services on food safety and hygiene by street food through project SEF/05/05.

Some projects including SEF/01/05, SEF/02/05, SEF/03/05, SEF/04/05, SEF/06/05, SEF/15/05, SEF/14/05, and SEF/20/05 have contributed to developing networks and increasing the capacity of organizations through such activities as training, forum, dialogue, compiling and publishing environmental books for the communities, and environmen-





tal education for children. By Especially paying attention to projects such as: SEF/01/05 with the topic on "Urban Environment" of publication Green Forest magazine No. 22, readers, mainly school children throughout the country were provided with an overview of the pressing urban environmental issues. SEF/02/05 compiled and publicized 2 communication books about games, songs and screenplays for children. These guide-books are a toolkit for the supporting of the Culture House of Pioneers which works on environmental education activities. For sustainable maintenance and the development of a conservation education model in the form of Natural Camp, SEF/15/05, the capacity has not only been built for the members of Thua Thien Hue sub-Association of Natural Conservation but also for the newborns of the Nature Camp Network in Secondary Schools of 4 districts of Thua Thien Hue. Moreover, SEF/03/05 has been trying to enhance the communications skills of the members of the Network of environmental communicators and provide them with the tools to push up environmental communication and the relevant references on environmental communication by using the manual "Environmental communication". SEF/04/05 improved the skills for propaganda and writing on the environment by reporters from Science and Life Newspaper and other newspapers through seminars and

field visits. Additionally, opening a new Column; "The Community and Environment" and launching the writing contest on this topic by Science and Life Newspaper attracted the interests of readers as well as the response of professional and unprofessional writers from all over the nation.

Some hot environmental issues were supported by SEF, e.g. SEF/07/05 through a National Workshop, with the participation of 130 participants throughout the country and international environmental experts. The workshop spent much time on the discussion and the suggestion of recommendations to be submitted to the government, concerned ministries and sectors on "The role of mangrove and coral reef ecosystem in mitigating oceanic impacts on the environment". When the 5 coastal districts of the 3 provinces of Thai Binh, Nam Dinh and Ninh Binh were recognized by UNESCO as the inter-provincial Mangrove Biosphere Reserve of the Red River Delta, the training course on "the role of mangroves and biosphere reserves toward coastal communities" was held for leaders and teachers of primary and secondary schools in 5 coastal districts by project SEF/08/05. It is therefore essential to develop education and propaganda programs for leaders of all levels, teachers, students and local communities, to raise awareness on mangrove protection and the significance of biosphere reserves. It can be seen that teachers of primary and secondary schools are the most targeted as teachers and students are a close link between families and societies.

Furthermore, while implementing project SEF/11/05 and SEF/17/05, ethnic people such as Hmong in Lao Cai and Ede in Tay Nguyen, had the opportunity to raise awareness and improve environmental hygiene that is suitable with their conditions and customs. Through SEF/16/05, local communities in Van Hung, Van Ninh, Khanh Hoa, particularly women and poor fishermen had the chance to discuss exchange and execute the services of eco-tourism in different groups, aiming at development of community-based eco-tourism as an alternative sustainable livelihood. By operating the pilot model the local community, engaged in a participatory process of "co-management" of coastal resources based on strengthening the cooperation among relating entities was also supported.



# FEATURES

## New Direction for Looking for Solutions

*By Mrs. Hoang Thanh Tam, M.Sc, SEF Chairwoman*



In response to the request of SEF for small project from January 2006 to June 2007, 43 projects, out of the 131 examined proposals have been approved throughout the country. These projects contain rather new initiatives that contribute to the democracy at grass-root level and the socialization of environmental protection and natural resource management in Vietnam.

### Organisational Development for Civil Society Organisations

During this period, SEF saw a large number of projects allocating significant efforts in supporting the establishment and the organisational development of community groups and local organisations. The support is very much various, diversified and depends on the condition, interests and initiative of each project. Supported activities include providing participation opportunities for different interest groups, training and capacity building on organisational development and management and the helping of raising the voices of communities in environmental issues. Many projects focus on helping small groups at village and commune level to organise themselves.

### Promoting Voluntary Work and Networking

In recent years, Vietnam witnesses a new movement in environmental protection with newly established voluntary groups and organisations that gather young volunteers and students to solve environmental problems. In reality, their voluntary activity has been supported by the community as well as by the mass media agency, the relating body and the local authority. The Hoi An Conservation Club and the Da Nang Green Ocean Group are 2 distinctive examples of organizations that SEF currently supports through project funding of SEF/33/06 and SEF/32/06. These organisations will be strengthened to carry out environmental clean up campaigns and build capacity for developing and maintaining their activities. For People and Nature Reconciliation (Pan-Nature) with SEF/14/06, they have committed to provide technical support and networking for environmental youth volunteer groups to seek and carry out environmental solutions.

### Tackling Challenging Environmental Issues

At present, food safety and hygiene is a hot issue in which the society has taken an interest. While the growing food consumption requires an increasing of quantity and quality, the environmental pollution situation has been giving the big issues to solve. Manufacturers, processors and businesses on food do not have enough basic knowledge or responsibility towards the consumer concerning the quality and food safety hygiene. And on the other hand the consumer often lacks the knowledge and information about food safety or the knowledge on where to buy safe food. This situation has not only damaged the consumer but also the food provider. Therefore, the idea to establish a scientific and technical network for distributing information about food safety to business, producers and consumers in Vinh city and surroundings, proposed by Centre for Environment and Development, is highly appreciated in SEF/08/06. This model contains the combination of "4 sectors" including scientists, managers, manufacturers and businesses as the measure to ensure that food in markets reaches the safety standard. And this is of course for the benefit of the consumers, the communities' health and for the sustainable development.

Even though the positive change in the economy due to the rapid development of industrial and manufacturers zones in Vietnam, there weren't any less negative effects that have a serious impact on the environment as well as on the health and livelihood of communities in these areas. Consequently, there has emerged a conflict of interest between the industrial sector and the local communities who are impacted by the environmental pollution from the industrial activities. These conflicts haven't been solved but have on the contrary been leading to the emerging of more and more potential conflicts that could prevent the development process of social, economical and environ-

mental aspects of a certain region. Therefore, it is likely nobody has been paid attention to the voice of the communities. SEF/15/06, with a study on affected communities by environmental pollution to evaluate socio-environmental impact of industrial zone in Ho Chi Minh, Dong Nai, Ba Ria-Vung Tau, is carried out by young experts of the Centre for Environmental Economy and Sustainable Development. This study will analyze the communities' view on environmental pollution and serve as a way form the communities to express their needs.

## Supporting the Communities' Voice

Environmental degradation and loss of natural resources are directly affecting the lives of local people in many areas throughout Vietnam. SEF helps raise the voice of the affected communities through supporting activities that provide opportunities to involve local people in dialogues. During these meetings they can express their concerns and broadcast them on local radio programmes and thereby facilitate their voice in being heard. This was presented in different ways. For example:

- SEF/10/06, local people had a dialogue with the commune authority on developing and carrying out the rules and make sure that they are aware of their need to protect their health and build a cultural society and a good life standard.
- SEF/11/06, a model on handing over forestlands and natural forest to individual households so they can reach the economic effectiveness and contribute to the prevention of illegal exploring of forest and wildlife animal. This problem will be placed on the agenda among project managers, the village club of forestry extension as well as the district and province leaders so they can seek better solutions.
- SEF/31/06, project activities consist of the effort that can be

made by the local authority to come closer to the people so their voices can be heard and to receive as well as agree on the environmental protection regulation of the village.

- SEF/32/06, the voice of young people for a cleaner environment in the coastal areas toward local authority will be strengthened.
- SEF/34/06, the communities' initiative and local expectation for a green-clean-beautiful environment that meets the development of tourist service was discussed and agreed on by the commune authority.

## Promoting Rights-based Approach

A new approach by a model of management, protection and development of sustainable natural forests based on people rights is being piloted in Phu Mau Village by Nature Care, a local NGO in Hue - SEF/11/06. This project helps inform local people about their rights and supports them to use these rights in the managing, protecting and developing of their forests. In addition to improve knowledge of local people in term of state laws and policies related to forests, Nature Care also assists communities to maintain and utilise traditional knowledge in land use, forest management and forest protection.

## Involving Local Communities in Decision Making

To improve the quality of environmental protection and biodiversity conservation in the buffer zone of Dakrong Natural Reserve (Quang Tri), the Centre for Natural Resources and Environmental Studies has proposed an overall communication solution in SEF/30/06. This project promotes active participation of communities, especially the Van Kieu ethnic minority, in the process of decision making, implementing, monitoring and evaluating so they can create a communication strategy and action plan on environmental protection. It helps encourage local people to participate in the process of decision making on issues related to their life.

A part from that there are many projects throughout the country receiving the support from SEF in order to develop and build a capacity for group activities, involving communities in environmental protection and natural conservation. SEF hopes these projects will bring a new way of looking, a new approach to reality. It means that SEF empowers local people and organisations by giving them the opportunity to manage and carry out their own projects.



## Memories of the late Prof. Le Quy An

*By Vo Dinh Thanh, Former AG Member*

In mid 1997, I had the honour of working with the late Prof. Dr. Le Quy An as a member of the Advisory Group (AG) of Sida Environmental Fund at the invitation of the Swedish Embassy. When I started my work at SEF I was what you can call a 'newcomer' in the field of environment. For me, working with the Professor was both great pride and anxiety as at that time I was a young man. Professor Le Quy An had been the Vice Minister in charge of environment and was 40 years older than me. However, in our working sessions, my anxieties disappeared. He chaired the AG meetings and regarded me as a full member. All comments on the work and policy-making activities by the Fund were respected and seriously discussed. During my time of employment, my participation was encouraged by the Professor and I and the AG office were delegated for implementation. Thanks to that I was enabled to participate in activities and to build the capacity of obtaining a general view of the work, generalizing and analytical capacity related to social phenomena and policies. The Professor used to remind me that 'community support is not only important for a particular community

but also significant for reflection and policy making, but it requires a methodology, capacity and a dedicated heart.'

At the first AG session, the Professor spoke to everyone in a straightforward way that 'When I retired, I had a lot of work to do, but I agreed to help the Swedish Embassy establish and manage the SEF as this is the only Fund in Vietnam directly supporting people off villages in remote areas by helping them raise their voice as well as manage all activities and expenses and to become beneficiaries from those activities. Given the Fund's essence, all AG members are very experienced in community support activity, and I hope all of you will make your contribution to the Fund's activities.'

In my 7 years of working with the Professor until the time I went to study abroad, Prof. An was always busy with hundreds of workshops and studies by Government policy-making agencies and international organizations. When the Prof. felt sick or in the 5 months before his demise he still received an invitation from an organization to chair



an Asian regional conference. However activities of the Fund always remained the top priority in the Professor's working schedule. The SEF under the instruction of the Professor had always adjusted and completed its activities with a vision to create a Fund 'for the sake of people'. The SEF was able to maintain this vision with special attention for capacity building and empowerment for the people and communities at village level, where projects funded by SEF were carried out.

The Professor used to remind the AG of the principle 'for the sake of people' in their activities by asking questions like (i) is the activity pragmatic and appropriate? (ii) is the transferred technology suitable for the local people and their culture? (iii) is the document used comprehensible and is it helpful for the local people? Etc... The Professor sometimes visited a couple of projects in different areas. During his visits he talked and worked with local people in a very easy-going and comprehensible manner. It is still lively in my memory, the visit to the end-of-school year ceremony of Dak Lak Boarding School on implementation of SEF project related to

# Chat Room: 'Natural association' with SEF

By Trinh Le Nguyen, AG Member

environment education for the students where the Professor surprised everyone. In stead of delivering a speech, he stood in front of hundreds of students asking them loudly if they had ever left litter on the street, kept the running tap unlocked, picked the green leaves and broken the branch of the trees, etc. The young students altogether replied him by answering 'Yes' or 'No', resulting in a strong impress of everyone on his working style. AG members often talked to each other about how to work like the Professor who was always active, flexible and sensible in his work and his life.

Prof. Le Quy An was also a great example of restlessly studying and working. Being a provincial expert, I was interested in reading books. Because there are not many books on my expertise, I really pay attention to access information related to my profession. Prof. An was one of my information sources who provided me with guidance in my expertise. Before each session, I normally had to fly to Hanoi to go to the AG office. Every time I got there, the Professor spent minutes discussing with me the issues related to expertise on and management of natural resources in the region and the world. Because he was a leading expert in the Asian region and as a high positioned national leader, his professional discussions were so helpful to me in orientating my later career and studies.

Despite being a State high-ranking official for a long time, he and his family (including his wife, son and daughter-in-law) lived together in a tight 3-room apartment. The living room was also his working room, thus he had to put aside his papers and machines whenever guests came to see him. Coming back to Vietnam, I went to commemorate him at the altar in his old apartment where he used to host us. He is still there like a great example of a simple, dignified and ambitious person. Prof. Le Quy An was truly a talented scientist and leader with a kind heart for the sake of the country and its people.

We had a chance to talk with Mr. Vo Dinh Thanh – one of the first advisors of Sida Environmental Fund. Although he is currently not in Vietnam and is no longer directly working as an advisor for SEF, Mr. Vo Dinh Thanh has many 'natural association' with SEF and is concerned about the Fund's activities.



**Hello Mr. Vo Dinh Thanh! We are so glad to have an 'across the ocean' talk with you. Could you please briefly introduce your current work?**

At the moment I am a postgraduate, majoring in natural resources and environmental policies at the University of Environmental Science and Forestry in the state of New York in the US. What I'm mainly doing is working on my thesis. It contains the study of the interaction between communities and coastal wetlands in light of the global climate changes. Besides that I am also participating in teaching a course on Cultural Ecology. This handles on the relations among ecological system, cultures and political system in the history of human life. The course is a fundamental and compulsory subject for the University's students.

I am currently joining some other social work organizations like the development of Hue Nature Care Organization. I'm also designing some programs and materials, voluntarily working for SEF, attending some international conferences, writing articles and criticizing science reports and... teaching Aikido martial art in the neighboring university.

**Did the time you worked as an advisor for SEF help you learn anything more?**

Wow, a too 'easy' question! It must be said Many... many...many things!

The first 'many' is that I obtained a lot of knowledge and experience from working with communities, working on international cooperation, management and development. I got to know a lot of regions and areas in the country and other regional countries.

The second is that I could learn from many teachers. I had the chance to meet with many dedicated and talented people. I realized that so many people, the aged and the young, the peasants and the intellectuals, urban and rural people, are trying their best to join activities related to environmental protection and community development in their homeland. The most precious is a 'dedicated heart' for the sake of the environment and the future of those with whom I had chance to work together during my working time in SEF.

The third is 'many' things more to learn. The more I traveled and met with people, the more I felt inexperienced and lacking knowledge. It can be regarded as 'full of ignorance'. These 3 things led to my current study here.



# SEF PEOPLE



Could you please tell us one of your funny stories from when you were working for SEF?

My funny stories? I had many! Let me tell you a funny story from when I started working for SEF. When I was invited to join the composition of the consultant group, I was cordially 'awarded' ten 'years' by the program officers. I was 26 at the time but it read 37 on the list of the group members. I asked the Swedish Embassy to correct it. Then the first meeting took place in a quite solemn atmosphere with the participation of the Ambassador, some official from the Embassy and the consulting group. After the meeting we went out to wait for the bus to pick us up.

Ms. Thuy (SEF officer) 'caught' me immediately and asked 'Sorry Thanh, are you 37 years old? How young you are!' I burst into laughter 'Of course! Ms. Thuy got more surprised with her eyes open wide. 'Of course I am young' I continued 'Because I'm only 26 and a half years old. I have asked them to correct it, but I don't know why I am still awarded 10 years!!!

Apart from the funny stories from time you were working with the advisory group, you also participated in various community activities. What do you think about the participation of the community in environmental protection over the past years?

It's a bit difficult for me to talk about this as I haven't been living or working in Vietnam in the past few years. However, through my work with local organizations, newspapers and especially through my field trips, I will make a little of my personal assessment on this issue.

Environmental issues are closely linked to the life of local people. They are faced with environmental deterioration on a daily bases and face the risk of natural resource depletion. When our competent agencies perform insufficient in various aspects, the work of environmental management and protection mostly dependents on the people. Moreover, there are several issues which will soon go out of reach for the people if we do not timely take measures. It can be seen from expe-

rience of the developed countries that to settle such problems is very complicated and costly especially when they exceed the capability of the people. In many cases, both the Government and the scientists failed to tackle with these challenges. Generally speaking, 'it's already recognized but nothing could be done.'

During my working visit last summer, I had the opportunity to meet and talk with several communities in the Mekong Delta and central provinces. There seemed to lack a movement and continuity. I pick up on a feeling of urgent needs, wonders of many people mixed with their incoherence and confusion in many communities. I found the statement of Professor Tran Quoc Vuong quite true, which can be mainly understood that our people are very good at improvising, but their bad practice is fulfilling only 'half' of the work. They are lazy in using lessons and experience to create a tool for future use. I found that people everywhere are facing environmental issues. If we have a well-organized social network and a good approach towards it, improvisation will be a strong advantage. I mean the real community organizations, not the 'cooperatives' and 'movements', 'organizations for the sake of the community which usually boast about benefiting the community, but in fact do not know who to work with, how to start and how to benefit the community.



I think perhaps the approach to participatory environment management should be adjusted. Besides awareness enhancement and piloting of models, lessons and experience should be drawn from aggregation. But more important is supporting the establishment of community organizations and community networks working on environmental protection so communities can realize these ideas better. Then this experience should be transferred to community organizations. Concurrently the people should participate in this activity through organizations, unions and associations. In the coming time we will have laws on associations.

A voluntary society is where social belief and linkage will be built, and in which this is the 'social capital' of each member and the whole society. Natural resource and environment share the same characteristic of the society's 'shared asset' from which everyone can benefit. However it's difficult for us to divide such asset and attribute responsibility to each individual or organization. Therefore it has resulted in the situation of 'everybody's business is nobody's business'. Protecting this shared asset requires the creation of social meanings. Participation of people should also come from this departure point. Voluntary social organizations, communities and activities for the sake of the environment play a special role in generating social meanings, social beliefs and social

capital. Thus their role is extremely important for management and sensible use of natural resources.

Furthermore, I can see that the state is making its best efforts in the development and management of resources. Nevertheless, people's participation in the discussion on controversial issues by the National Assembly and Government is very limited. It is noted that their participation in the National Assembly's Forum on natural resources and environment is mainly related to housing and land, while other issues on the environment are rarely mentioned. Are those crucial people related issues such as environmental sanitation, destruction of coastal resources, rural clean water and environment sanitation and that entry of exotic varieties and agricultural ecology through trade is latently destroying the livelihood and life quality of over 70% of the Vietnamese population not 'hot' enough?

### Why aren't these 'hot' issues?

Our economy is forcefully integrating into the world's economy. Our natural resources, the root of 70% of the national population's livelihood, will be affected enormously by this integration trend. According to the experience of many countries, participation of people in control and protection of natural resources should be prepared from the beginning with a legal system and a legal base. Therefore the people should be provided with more knowledge, particularly legal knowledge, their role and the role of other parties in that legal system especially by the National Assembly network. A law-governed society, in my opinion, is a society in which the people are aware of and understand that legal system and have the chance to use it. The law is there to adjust social attitude and to make social activities less complicated and wasteful. I think that in the future this aspect should be noted when people participate in environmental protection activities.

### In your opinion, what are the lessons that can be drawn from SEF's efforts so far?

SEF regards people as the base and local environment as the destination. Initially SEF was very special in this regard, and also successful thanks to this mandate. Also we have witnessed 10 years of struggling we still believe these 2 points are obviously very necessary.

We should respect reality and be dynamic, but still keep consistent. SEF's difficulty lies in community support and solving urgent issues. It requires SEF to be very dynamic. However it's very consistent in the approach and budget allocation for activities. For example, management work is carried out by the people and it's the people who benefit from it. In each project education, operation of models and technology transfer should be acknowledged. The transferred technology should satisfy the needs for issue solving in line with socio-economic, cultural and social conditions, etc.

### What are your desires for SEF's future?

I wish SEF would continue its contribution to the national and regional responsibilities concerning the environment. SEF has attracted people of dedicated heart, vision and talent to help local communities get access to resources (including financing, knowledge, skills and support by various sides, etc.), so they can realize their ideas in their localities. SEF will become a place for promoting and enhancing resources to help communities, organizations and individuals deploy their ideas and desires for the sake of nature, environment and development of their families and localities. That is the very base of national sustainable development.



## Chat Room: Mr. Nguyen Van Long, SEF AG Member for the Northern Central region

By Trinh Le Nguyen, AG Member



had worked in 3 different agencies but there were many similarities in the jobs. They are science, technology and environment.

**When did you join SEF?  
Can you tell a little about how you started to serve as an advisor to SEF?**

I started working for SEF in late 2003. Earlier (in 2001), I was invited, however, as I was following my post-graduate study, I could not accept.

**Why did you accept the offer to be an advisor to SEF?**

As I am closely familiar with the life of communities living in Nghe An province, I understand clearly their demands. It can be said that there have been many changes for the better recently. However, these achievements were attained at the sacrifice of so many things, and most visibly, environmental degradation. It should be asserted that all levels of leadership and communities have full understanding of this issue, however its settlement is a problem beyond the capacity of localities (particularly, at commune level). I earnestly favour the saying 'to be or not to be'. To say or to do anything good, first of all the most immediate thing is the 'survival'. Under the current circumstances, many people know that they are eating into the assets of future generations. However, it is easier said than done. In the past, environmental issues were only pressing in urban areas. Today, they are knocking

on every door, even in the very secluded area, and touching upon every aspect (garbage and sewage ...). Something should be done about these issues. Are all these issues beyond the capacity of the community? Is it a problem that people can solve by themselves with an appropriate influence in the right place? Based on this permanent thought, I was so happy to receive an offer to be part of the Fund's advisors group. I hoped, and it has come true, that my participation in the Fund would make a small contribution to settling this problem in some locality.

**During your time as an advisor to the SEF, which project has made impression on you?**

During my time working on the project, quite a few projects have left me with unforgettable impressions and memories:



**Hello Mr. Long. Thank you for talking with us. Could you please introduce yourself a little bit?**

I majored in natural science. I passed the entry exam for the university in 1980 when socialist countries were in a strong position, so I was sent to study in Russia. At that time only the state could decide our studies abroad. During my 6 years in Moscow, I studied at MADU University. After graduation I came back to work in my homeland as I loved Vinh city very much. (Until now this love stays unchanged but becomes mature.) 6 years of working in the field of transport provided me with certain knowledge on the life of communities in provinces south of Nghe An. In 1995 as required by authorities, I was sent to work in Nghe An provincial committee in charge of monitoring activities related to science, technology and environment. In 2005 I changed my job once again and went back to work in the educational field at provincial Politics School. I was responsible for the management of science activities, information and libraries. In short, during my 17 working years I

For example the unexpectedly successful project: The projects on environmental improvement in Binh Thuan parish, Nghi Thuan commune, Nghi Loc district, Nghe An province. There are many things about this project. I will start from the statement of some housewives: 'we ask the village chief to thank you, SEF, for emancipating us from the torture of cooking for the family and saving us from a losing crop'. There two successes there :

- First, the approach: Although the biogas cellar building model (each cellar receives VND 1,000,000 as a supporting grant) in the district has been deployed, there have been difficulties in implementation as people do not have any information about the issue. In places with difficult economic conditions, people are completely uninterested as it requires an additional amount of VND 1,500,000 to complete building a biogas cellar (a very large amount while they do not know its concrete effect). But SEF' approach has made it. First of all, the project held a meeting of households to show the advantages and disadvantages and requested all eligible households to register.

- Second, the way to implement: In order to reassure these households in their equities, SEF advisors and the management board contacted an expert to conduct a pilot scheme. All the funds are provided by the project. If it is efficient, the household shall return VND 1,500,000 to the project and VND 1,250,000 is the Fund's support. The first model had yielded fruitful results, thus the rest of registering households immediately practised it. A greater success is that the whole area under the funds of the provincial project has been registered for implementation in the area under the project after the completion of 6 models. In just 4 months, 3 villages practising the SEF model have built 16 biogas cellars, basically settling the problem of animal feces scattering in the environment. This initial success has encouraged all other activities included or excluded in the project on the environment to be under way in the locality. Until now the clean water issue has been basically settled, sanitation in the village has become a habit... Neighbouring areas are now learning to exercise it. It is truly an encouraging victory that an investment of just over 70 million dong can settle so many problems as mentioned. Any SEF advisor making a sudden visit to the place will be granted a heartfelt welcome by local people. .

On the other hand there is the project that was regarded as a failure: The project at a junior high school in Trang Son commune, Do Luong. 2 years after the end of the project, on one working visit, I dropped by to meet the school managing board. Due to personal change, the new school managing board had no idea about the project. In fact, there had been no clue about the pres-

ence of SEF here. I did not want to and was not in a position to find out about the reasons, however, on account of my unease on this issue, I finally knew. The project was carried out by a person without any knowledge on the reality of the school, all activities had been "handed down from the top", which were almost unrelated to the school reality. The biggest concern of the project management board was to complete all activities with an aim of using up all the funds, finalizing a report and completing all necessary procedures.

Can you tell a memory you have about your experience with SEF?

I did not work directly with the SEF staff and we even seldom met. Nevertheless, all the staff in the group have left me with quite special impressions. Each has a distinctive personality and way of thinking. Interestingly, the gathered group can develop the strengths of its members. There has been not much conflict. All personalities have been more or less supplementary to perfection. I have an unforgettable experience with Mr. Le Quy An during my working days in Sweden. I can not imagine a man with such a talent and health that could have such a passion for SEF activities. When getting off in Stockholm from Kant-sat, he was close to exhausted and had to rely on us to walk. Still he devoted his great attention to all working sessions. It can be said that we have not fully developed our capabilities.



## Keeping Thu Bon River Clean

By Nguyen Huy Hien, AG Member

A youngster from Thanh Hoa province, Vu Thi Trang, 3rd year student of Da Nang University of Foreign Languages and the group 'Green Ocean', were so excited to mention the Thu Bon River. The place was neither their homeland nor the call of a poem under the name of the river. They came to the place to protect the environment at the invitation of a dedicated Hoi An person, a young boss who prefers environment protection to business.

Managing 2 big restaurants in main streets with 30 staff and spending over 30 million VND on site leasing and staff's salary per month, he should have been dedicated to business but the young boss Dinh Van Hai, 36 years old, who was born and grew up in the old street pays little attention to his business. He smiled in a drawl that 'My friends make profit of billions. But I just do little business and feel satisfied with small profit. I wonder how to do sustainable business.' And he turned to speak in a serious way 'It's impossible to survive if you only care about business and leave the river and roads dirty.' Slowly sipping his cup of spirits, he continued to explain the sustainable development in the sound of soft music.

What Mr. Hai explained made his friend call him 'a crazy man'; 'While foreign tourists are flocking to the old street, you don't focus on busi-



ness but dredging rivers, cleaning up rubbish, training boatmen, you will be penniless soon. The river will stay dirty for generations, and surely get polluted again even if you spare no efforts.'

He ignored what his friend had said but kept dissatisfied. He sometimes walks along the river bank with pride reflecting in his eyes. Illustrating the Thu Bon River on paper, he presented his passion as if he had inherited the river from his grandparents and parents, and he kept on caring about it and maintaining it for his new born son. He said; 'Hoi An will look different from its former state without the rivers of Hoai, Thu Bon. They are, like the silks illuminating the beauty of Hoi An. What will the town look like if the rivers are black, dirty and smelling? If it comes true, the old streets and villages along the rivers will become tasteless and deserted.'

He analyzed so thoughtfully and thoroughly. Hoi An is famous for its old houses, traditional careers and village culture. Thanks to it, nearly 1,000 enterprises in service of tourists have been formed. If one day the silky rivers in Hoi An suddenly change and no tourist would come, life will get afflicted. Why don't we learn from the valuable lesson of beaches in Thailand?

Day by day, he kept on wondering, raised questions and answered himself. Looking at the river flowing across the market, his face could not get sadder. Unable to try alone, he went to the towns' authorities and partners to talk about cleaning up the river. But he only got the answer that; 'We wouldn't spend money on such helpless work'.

He did not give up. Together with his friends of interest groups, he tried his best to calculate and complete projects calling for overseas sponsors. The patience of the group had brought about 5,000 USD, and then 10,000 USD. But obtaining the money was just the first step. He then overcame countless difficulties to organize campaigns on dredging and collecting the rubbish in the river. Despite tiredness, he felt happy to see the rivers of Hoai and Thu Bon return to their original look after 3 campaigns. A feeling of relief came to him every time a ton of rubbish was collected.

So admiring the action of the 'crazy man' named Hai, the group 'Green Ocean' including Trang spared no efforts to join him following his invitation. They both share a modest dream that 'If everyone in Hoi Street obtains better awareness and stays more responsible, the future development will be much more sustainable.'

# A San Diu “Environmental Lady”

*By Bui Thi Thanh Thuy, AG Member*

She is Lang Thi Leo, Vice Chairwoman of Woman Association in Ho Son commune, Tam Dao district, Vinh Phuc province. She told me the place she was living in used to be dense woods. When the tigers arrived, the local people had to stay on the roofs of buffalo sheds. In 1962, people from different areas came and destroyed the forest for cultivation. The forest disappeared and now only bald hills are left.

Ho Son is a mountainous commune where 50% of the population belongs to the San Diu ethnic group. This is a poor commune in the district with little field area and most of families' income is from husbandry. They used to live in the forest but now the woods have been turned in to a national park. Poverty leads to ignorance, so life could not be improved. Lacking knowledge, local people could not do business, improve their life or protect the environment. Adults and children left villages to seek jobs or returned to the forest to chop down trees and exploit forest products.

She and the Commune's Woman association reached an agreement that they should work out measures on enhancing people's knowledge and bringing about scientific and daily life knowledge to every family. For this, associates can use local resources effectively and protect the environment to keep the villages and fields in good condition. Their desire and determination was further encouraged by the assistance of Sida Environmental Fund in 1999. The project assisted the op-



eration only 1 year, and afterwards empowered the people to continue implementation and handle issues themselves. The project focused on raising awareness on environmental protection through such activities as what trees should be grown to benefit the environment and life. They proactively organized training courses and invited experts to provide knowledge on environmental protection and recovery, encouraging the voluntary participation of people. Training courses on building the production model of VACR were attended by a large number of women. They could learn forest-agricultural production techniques benefiting their families, ensuring sustainable development. Moreover, training courses were also held for teachers of elementary and secondary schools in the commune. Environment education was combined with syllabi in order to raise awareness to the young generation who, according to Ms. Leo will take over the work of the elderly and develop this area further.

In anticipation of promoting the movement, they have issued over 500 pictures and books for dissemination to families. At the demonstrations for the movement on environment recovery, clean villages and fields there were 500 attendants including 400 women. The Commune Women's Club has been established with meetings in every mid-month. The club provides science and technical knowledge, mostly in terms of agriculture and environment, organizes performances, etc. The club is also the place where associates express their ideas, desires and share experience. Besides, through the club, the project has allocated an amount for assisting 32 households in husbandry, planting, raising fish following the model of capital turnover. Those who actively join the club and environment activities will select which one will be assisted first. Such activities have a very positive effect in a mountain commune.

Currently, with enhanced awareness on environment the associates have obtained fundamental knowledge of agricultural-forestry-fishery production leading to positive effects on the shift of plants and domestic animals. Thousands of trees are planted every year on the hills including local plants and fruit trees to cover the bald hills. Monthly sanitization of village roads and alleys has become a common practice, through which many elderly people have set good examples for their children. Some of the aged even collected bottles of pesticide and let them evaporate in fear that the scattered bottles would do harm to plants and people's health. The model of capital turnover is maintained and scaled-up to 120 attendances. Ms. Leo said "We, San Diu ethnic people are aware that unless the environment is well protected, we and our children will have to face the consequences." "Our ancestors didn't bequeath any fairy tales or legends of this land, but I believe that our future generations will replace us to write new legends of our homeland".

## The Son of Villages along Truong Son Mountains

*By Nguyen Van Long – AG member*

In the second review of Sida Environmental Fund in June, 2006, among the 21 selected projects, 4 projects were highly appreciated by the group members. One of those rare projects was the RDPR – a project funded by the Fund for Rural Development and Poverty Reduction in Quang Ninh district, Quang Binh province. The convincingness of the project can be attributed to many factors such as its beneficiaries who are people of ethnic minorities, project activities are pragmatic, creative and scientific of calculated expense. Reading about such wholeheartedly developed project makes us confident in its efficiency.



Our first impression of the RDPR director was his youthfulness, openness, sincerity and dedication to the work he was in charge of. Although the project office was supervised and supported by the Quang Ninh district People's Committee, its facilities remained very modest. However, the equipment was paid due to supervision, the most important was a very limited number of staff (including directors, accountant and cashier) sitting at the office, as the rest were working at sites where the project is deployed. After a 70km trip on forest road, we managed to reach Truong Son commune (whose area accounted for nearly half of the district on Truong Son mountain chain). The RDPR director guided me to work with villages where the project was about to be deployed. Not until then did I understand why the project was that convincing. All the people here regarded this young man as their family member. Their eyes reflected the hope for something new that this person would bring to them. They granted us a simple but very heartfelt welcome. During his inspection he told me about the customs and practices, cultivating methods of Van Kieu people as well as the life of most families. He pointed out inappropriateness and difficulties in life and particularly the way to enable gradual support for local people to change their thinking and working style and thereby lift them out of poverty. It can be said that this is valuable as quite a few officers have come, worked, even made considerable investment in this difficult area, but few can understand so thoroughly and get so beloved by the local people. Joining the visit to the village under the project was a very young program officer. He devoted almost his entire time to locality (spending only one week a month in the centre). He understood quite well the circumstances of each family and their reasons. It has been said he's the model officer of '3 withs' lingering on from the past who eats, stays and works with local people. By then we have a firmer belief in his position as a

Director. He has transferred his passion and knowledge to youngsters, a majority of whom are reluctant to come to such remote areas even for tourist purpose.

After inspection of the whole area intended for the project and a brief meeting to correct some requirements of the Fund, we started to talk about what he had done previously.

After his graduation from Business School of Hue Economic University, Pham Mau Tai worked for 5 year at Mulberry and Silk Company in Lam Dong province. In 1998 he moved to work at the Rural Development Service Center (RDSC), one of the first non-governmental organizations in Vietnam established in 1995 in

Hanoi. Between 1998 and 2001, he was a project officer in charge of RDSC project office in Quang Binh. From 2002 to June, 2004, he was the chief regional representative of RDSC in Quang Binh, managing the project in Quang Binh. After the end of the RDSC project (in late 2003), People's Committee of Quang Ninh district issued a Decision to form Rural Development and Poverty Fund (RDPR). All assets and personnel of the RDSC representative office in Quang Binh had been transferred to RDPR. Mr. Tai took the position of the Center Director. After the project formation and successful completion of the 1 year operation of the poverty reduction program for Van Kieu people, RDPR has received an acceptance from ICCO, the Netherlands funding to extend the program for many following years. RDPR project's activities aim at poverty reduction for the Van Kieu ethnic people through produc-

tion capacity enhancement so they can generate incomes and opportunities for the poor to get access to agricultural extension services.

A great success of RDPR in 2004 was its establishment of a Training Center for the community in Truong Son commune on an area of almost 2 hectares, an office system used for community training, a house on stilt for preservation and national cultural life activities for Van Kieu ethnic people with a total construction investment of nearly 500 million VND.

Participatory approach is applied by RDPR throughout the project. It is a strong point of RDPR to form community organizations or interest group of farmers to share information and this is the approach applied by RDPR to create success on its project.

Throughout the project implementation, after 2 field inspection, I have reinforced my initial impressions. Although this was a small project among those implemented by the center, he had paid due attention. With an aim to achieve the project objectives he, along with program officers had organized many training and communication courses for the community with regard to raising awareness on environmental protection and natural resources. The project had also practised models applying sustainable cultivating methods to improve the soil and to ensure income for the community like peanut growing, banana growing and weed for husbandry models and models of cattle cages in combination with composting rotting manure. Moreover, the project aimed at increasing production, efficient land using and reducing deforestation for cultivation by Van Kieu ethnic people. The practice of the model in villages had formed interest groups who share information on production and environmental protection of villages and households.

After 7 months of project implementation, 4 training courses had been held to raise people's awareness on environmental protection and natural resources. There were 51 models of agricultural production and husbandry that had been carried out. 3 interest groups were formulated for monthly information exchange with a total number of 360 attendances from 3 villages of the Van Kieu ethnic people.

In the beginning, the project was very difficult due to limited awareness of the people. However the project could go on more smoothly later as its dissemination work through training courses, radio broadcasting and sharing information among interest groups in villages had helped to gradually change people's awareness. The project had exerted good initial impacts on community's awareness on environment protection. In fact, the models had been correctly applied by the community and developed well; cattle sheds were cleaned up and manure composted for plant fertilizer. Talks on the environment by interest groups have been maintained monthly, villages frequently clean up leading to airy and clear surroundings.

To clearly illustrate this youngster, I would like to conclude with my memory of our last mission. It was in September 2006 when he and I were riding a motorbike on a 70km road which was too muddy for any 4-wheel vehicle to drive on, except the specialized automobiles for wood transportation. In the pouring rain in the West Truong Son area, we were still warmly welcome by the local people. I had the chance to witness the first outcomes of the project including auto-running water system, growing banana gardens, harvesting elephant grass fields, and hygienic sheds with appropriate temperature in both winter and summer. The most important was that we could see confidence by the difficult Van Kieu people here. On our way back to the office, we totally got stuck in the previous path and had to take risks riding on the West Truong Son road used in the American war in the past – a 150km road which was always on the edge of land slides. The sun was still shining when we came back to the plain.

That was my most memorable mission which was however conducted regularly by him and other officers at the Center.



## “Uncle Environment”

By Bui Thi Thanh Thuy, AG Member



In a report by SEF/36/06 project submitted to SEF office, Mr. Vu Huynh Uyen Bao – project owner, attached two meeting invitations from local organizations and added some words to ‘boast’ that ‘Since the project was deployed by the project owner, I have been called ‘Uncle Environment’ everywhere I go, and I usually participated in meetings to talk about environmental protection. That’s the pleasure and desire of the project owner although I sometimes feel exhausted and my spouse holds it against me as the work is too time-consuming.’

We burst into laughter while reading through the text but felt so moved by the sincere, simple and a bit proud words of the Chairman of VAC Club, Loc Phat ward (Bao Loc district, Lam Dong province.)

Being a project owner is tiring as he has to make numerous efforts and spend much time with a view on the best results of the activities.

Right from the beginning of the project, his inexperience prevented him from seeking the support from authorities at levels despite his enthusiasm. Therefore initially he faced some challenges. In terms of training, although he had conducted surveys on the educational level of the local people to compile appropriate training materials, he discovered that materials should have been handed out to them in advance so they could make better contribution to the discussion. Regarding technical training, due to insufficient consultation, some of the trainees were too impatient to follow technical procedures, leading to unnecessary use of pesticide for tea plants. He was also worried that at the establishment of the group, the expected outputs were so idealized that the group members seemed disappointed when the target had not been hit. Fortunately, he found out the problem and timely encouraged them to be patient and together work out the cause and

measures of the settlement and he simplified and shortened the targets to start from small targets to more important ones later.

He now is very happy with initial outcomes of the project, which really amazed and gratified officials of Loc Phat ward. The project was then vigorously supported by all the people in the ward. It could be seen in the ward’s public dissemination into which environmental protection information was integrated. Residents’ awareness in protecting the environment has been improved remarkably. They have contributed to the movement of environmental protection by writing articles to disseminate this activity. Impacts by the project have been highly appreciated by local mass organizations and regarded as a chance for authorities and mass organizations in dissemination of civilized life style. There have been some positive changes in residents’ habits as preventing the dust of grinding cof-

fee from polluting the air by using dust-catching bags, seriously treating waste from animal husbandry and using pesticide.

After technical transfer of growing tea, construction, maintenance and use of biogas cellar, households were so delighted to realize that environmental protection is not something abstract but so simple. They understand that strict compliance of learned processes will benefit them in both long and short terms. They also see that what they used to think was harmless in fact negatively affected the environment and their own health.

He proudly told that people affected by environmental pollution related activities are now also aware of the danger and start to raise their voice requesting to live in a clean environment. He wrote to us that *“As a project owner, I have a feeling that the project is successful in terms of social participation as we have grasped the role of member groups and relied on other social organizations in the ward. We especially appreciate the role of people in their good implementation of project's ideas, and from the bottom of my heart I always feel that the very people who have helped us fulfill the role of environmental protection in the best way”*.

For several years, Sida Environmental Fund has funded many projects at localities and so many project owners have expressed their feelings like him in various ways. This makes us understand the dedication of those who spare no efforts for a clean environment not only for themselves but for their families and the whole community.

Changes in people's awareness and habits in daily life and production of the whole community can not be realized overnight, and it does require such enthusiastic and dedicated persons like Mr. Vu Huynh Uyen Bao.

## Many a Little Makes a Mickle

*By Vu Hoang Phuong (Tram Tau district, Yen Bai province)*



*Projects sponsored by SEF for organisations and groups in the community are of small scale and have a limited budget. However, attributed to the right approach and passion of participants in the Project Management Board, the achievements, albeit small, are being multiplied. Practical methods, models and approach for improving the living environment are certain to receive support and follow-up from local people. Project SEF/01/06 implemented in Hat Luu commune (Yen Bai province) is such an example.*

In the mild autumn sunshine laminating the field with a dark yellow, the wind brings the pervasive smell of ripe rice paddies throughout the village, promising a bumper crop for local farmers in Hat Luu.

During this time, every house in the village of Hat Luu is busy with preparing for the harvest. Although they are full of activity, it was not difficult to mobilize people in launching the large movement of cleaning the surroundings. 415 persons had devoted hundreds of working days to collect 75 m<sup>3</sup> of garbage, dredge sewerage and at the same time to repair 1.8 km people-made roads for convenient travel.

During a visit to 20 households as beneficiaries of the SEF projects to move animal facilities far away from their houses, premise planning has been tidier everywhere. Cages and sties have been completed for consolidation far away from the family residence. In response to our question, every family that has moved the cages away agreed to this activity. Many visiting people also have the intention of doing it at their own house. Therefore, such a small project has gradually changed a long-lasting behaviour consistent with Thai ethnic peoples' tradition in Hat Luu.

For many years the development of family economy intended for poverty reduction has been a top priority in programs and plans of various levels. However, the environmental issues should not be neglected, because the environment will directly affect human beings, their health and the general cultural scene. When we understand that economical development must go hand in hand with care about social issues and environmental protection, development will be sustainable. At this moment such a small action can clean our surroundings, but it will also have to take care of the future life and the firm development.

## The New Vinh Loc Commune

By Nguyen Kien (Vinh Loc commune, Can Loc district, Ha Tinh province)



Vinh Loc is a rural area in Can Loc district, Ha Tinh province about 8kms west of the districts' center. The commune is purely agricultural with many ponds, lakes and rivers. The market of Nhe is famous in this region as a commercial hub for the people in and outside the district. During the war, many evacuated offices were located there, including pesticide stocks. Chemical residues, waste from Nhe market water fern and the weeds in the ponds have affected the environment considerably, causing diseases among the people.

After being away from home for 2 Tet holidays I dropped by Vinh Loc

## Phu Mau Environment: One Year in Retrospect

By Le Quang Minh  
(Phu Mau commune, Phu Vang district, Thua Thien – Hue province)

Since June 2006 the Agricultural Cooperative Phu Mau 2 of Phu Mau commune, Phu Vang district, Thua Thien Hue has been funded by Sida Environmental Fund (Sweden) to carry out SEF/31/06 project titled "Enhancing the capacity of the protection and overcoming of the environmental situation in connection with sustainable development for local people and members of Agricultural Cooperative Phu Mau 2". After one year in operation, the project has brought about good results and the environment has been gradually improved. The project has gradually changed the behaviour and awareness in life and production among a section of the population.

In the spirit and responsibility of the project management, thanks to the support of local authority, active participation of local farmers the project's activities have yielded very encouraging results. Activities sponsored by the project have a widespread participation and exert an impact on a large number of people, for example training courses on enhancing environmental awareness, convention signing ceremonies and a commitment to environmental protection. Vibrant posters are put in crowded places and crossroads between villages. There is a library with more than 200 book titles among which many are re-



lated to farming, animal husbandry or healthcare for local people's reference and reading. Their awareness on environmental protection has improved with every passing day. Garbage in the residential areas has been reduced substantially, there have been increased limitations on pesticide use and people are now using more bio-products which do less harm to the consumers and the surroundings. The safe vegetable

during my working visit. My first feelings are of a clean and clear environment in the village embedded with mud, narrow alleys and disorderly grown trees. Toilets used to be temporary, animal feces were scattered everywhere, flies were grown and reproduced in great number, ponds and lakes stagnated, sewerage didn't get drained and households used to use water from short-lived water-wells. But like a magic that scene has disappeared to give way to the thriving scene of a renewed village. The market, once full of garbage now has tidy stands and clean premises without any rubbish, the village road has been repaired and some sections have even been concretized. The pathways for families in the villages have been widened and cleared, toilets have been built to the right specifications and animal feces and garbage are no longer scattered. On my request, I came to understand that my home commune has been

receiving the support of Sida Environmental Fund project for the Poor People Centre (PPC). The project's objective is to protect the environment by implementing a component to use garbage as micro-bio manure. And by this two birds are killed with one stone. Many people have said it is good to have this project because people have been trained to extend their knowledge on environmental protecting and are supported with the enzyme and are supported with the enzyme for micro-bio manure. Thanks to that, people's awareness has been markedly raised which resulted into the actively collecting of garbage by households and individuals, the draining of sewerage, the growing of green trees in public places and the more responsible way of using pesticides. People are being mobilized to build clean water networks. There have been 3 projects who strived for this, consisting of 637 participations in training in which 196 tons of micro-bio manure was

collected and manufactured for agricultural production and in which 203 households including 93 poor ones took part, thus creating a great campaign to improve and protect the environment.

As I was bidding my farewells and enjoying the clean and clear atmosphere there, I wished that everyone on the planet was well aware of environmental protection as a common responsibility and joined efforts in protecting our clean and beautiful house.



growing model in the Cooperative has been successful and multiplied.

Bamboo growing activities to prevent erosion at river banks have been conducted according to plan and assisted people, living or producing in the area to stabilize their life and production. However, after some time some bamboo trees have died due to drought, lack of watering by Cooperative members

and rubbing by buffaloes and cows. Some bamboo trees have died due to alum infected alluvial ground. The number of dead bamboo trees shall be replaced by new ones thanks to the Cooperative's public benefit funds used by the Management Board after the food season.

By the project's fund as well as by contributions from the community, the Project Management Board along with villages and inhabitation clusters has established 4 groups and equipped 4 specialized vehicles to collect and transport garbage as well as sufficient protective clothing. However, this activity is now facing many obstacles as it is new to the rural areas in the overall district, particularly in Phu Mau. The project has been approved by many people in implementation meetings but the initial fee of VND5000/household has not satisfied the spending requirements for a working day of waste collection and the rental cost of city garbage vehicles for transportation to the garbage treatment

place. As stipulated by current guidelines, Phu Vang district shall conduct the work of waste collection in the countryside, thus this activity will be jointly carried out.

There have also been some contents of the project that have not been done in a synchronous way or that lack activism, such as garbage collection and treatment. Carrying out and abiding by the convention to protect the environment has been limited in many places and the awareness and sense of responsibility among local people has not been high. Sustaining post-project environmental protection activities is still a pressing issue to the Project Management Board as well as the people in Phu Mau 2.

With an aim to bring SEF/31/06 project into the lives of people in Phu Mau 2, the Project Management Board wishes that Cooperative members always hold high their sense of responsibility in environmental protection and contribute to building their homeland.

## Pac Bo Village: Organizing Local Community for Environmental Protection

By Dinh Ngoc Hai

(Cao Bang Association for Nature Conservation and Environmental Protection)

The Pac Bo cultural heritage site has a diverse and attractive ecological landscape. It consists of the upstream forest with an area of dozens of hectares, embracing many precious kinds of wood imbued with the identity of Cao Bang province like the *Excentrodendron tonkinensis*, the *Erythropholenm fordii*, the *Chukrasia tabularis* and the *Nephelium sp.* The Lenin stream originating from Coc Bo cave has swift flows all year round and some rough and zigzag sections forming small water falls circling around Pac Bo area. Natural fish flock with many different species which adds attraction to visitors.

Pac Bo village exists mainly of people from the Nung ethnic group with 79 households and 310 mouths. Local people's source of income depends largely on agricultural production. In recent years, more and more visitors come to Pac Bo and local people begin to have an additional income from tourism.

With an aim to ensure the increasingly clean Pac Bo, better Pac Bo fields, an improved environment in the villages Cao Bang province's Nature and the Environment Protection Association supported by resources of Sida Environmental Fund

established an association branch of Pac Bo Nature Preservation with 13 members headed by the Pac Bo village chief. The association branch has carried out many activities to enhance the capacity and awareness on the role played by local people in Pac Bo's environmental protection. The project's activities have contributed to the better protection of the everyday life of the community, the clean and clear village roads and alleys, the better hygienic conditions of the local people and their health. Village people are the direct protectors of the upstream forest and help the Lenin stream keep clean and clear and full of water even during dry season.

People in the village usually clean cattle facilities and compost rot manure with EM bio-products to deodorize bad smell before applying to plants on the field. With an aim to keep the fish stocks in the Lenin stream multiplying, village people have voluntarily abstained from fishing in any form.

The association branch of Bac Bo Nature and Environment Protection was formed under the professional guidance of the provincial Nature and Environment Protection Association. As a result of their efforts, the association branch's activities will prosper and make an active contribution to the Green, Clean, and Beautiful Pac Bo homeland and thereby deserving to be an attractive destination among visitors.





## Environmental Protection in Tan Loc Commune

*Red Cross Association of Tan Loc commune*

Tan Loc in Thoi Binh district, Ca Mau province have 9 hamlets, many interlacing rivers and canals, and as the population there is thinly spread along canal banks, everyday life activities such as discharging wastes, personal hygiene, animal husbandry are on the river or canal. Local people have made many efforts to protect their living environment, especially since 2006, Tan Loc commune has been supported by Sida Environmental Fund (Swedish) for a project to protect the environment and the Red Cross Association as the owner.

Since the operation of the project, the Red Cross Association has contributed ideas to the authority in its plan to mobilize people living in hamlets to be actively engaged in environmental protection, to sign convention, to coordinate with hamlet chiefs to run 04 training courses for 240 key officers, representatives of mass organisations, community organisations, young volunteers group, pioneering youth to learn about environmental protection.

More still the Association has organised many movement-launching activities and managed to clear more than 30 km of roads and thousands of square metres of wild weeds in public space around people's houses and collect over 15 tons of garbage and drain sewerage and thereby return to a clean and beautiful scene. What is more, the



project has provided support to dig 16 clean water wells for poor households. So far nearly 95% of households in the commune use clean water for everyday life. The project has provided 9 clean water vessels for 9 cultural houses where there is often a gathering of many people. Moreover, the project has built 10 public toilets, grown more than 300 bamboo hedges to prevent waves, erosion and landslide along over 3 km of river bank, grown 15000 trees of many kinds along over 15 km of village transport routes, mobilized people to grow more than 20,000 trees in their own home and launched the removal of more than 250 toilets and animal facilities by the river and canals. The project has been mobilizing people to be more aware of environmental protection by abstention from discharging wastes, dead animal bodies and feces by the river and canals.

The Red Cross Association of Tan Loc commune has grown and recovered 2000 m2 of traditional Vietnamese medicine gardens at 2 pagodas, i.e., Thien Ly Dan and Hung Loc Tu for the treatment of common diseases.

Environmental protection is the safeguard of our very lives. Local people in Tan Loc commune are conscious of this issue and thereby helping the environment become more clean and beautiful, roll back diseases like petechial fever, malaria, diarrhea and many other common diseases in early months of the rainy season.



## Vinh Phuc Animal Husbandry Association and Environmental Protection

By Phan Huy Thuy  
Vinh Phuc Animal Husbandry Association

In recent years, under the auspices of Sida Environmental Fund, MES Fund and Vinh Phuc people's committee, the provincial animal husbandry association has carried out some programs and sub-projects on knowledge enhancement and dissemination of knowledge on environmental protection and bio-product application in animal husbandry, contributing to environmental protection and sustainable agricultural development. These programs and sub-projects have recorded certain results.

### From theoretical and practical rationales

In animal husbandry the EM bio-product has many good effects such as preventing bad smells in the cages and the dirty water containers, reducing the population of flies and insects, increasing animal health, reducing stress agents and increasing immunity against diseases, promoting the quality of domestic animal products and increasing reproductive capacity as well as reducing the need for veterinary medicine and antibiotics.

EM use does not only have veterinary effects but also improves soil quality, increases plant's resistance to pestilent insects and increases the output of plants in the organic system, particularly in environmental terms. Moreover, EM will disintegrate wasted materials from sewerage and industrial wasted water. On the other hand, EM characters will prevent organic substances from being burned as it can be turned into fertilizers and be effectively recycled.

### To practice and implementation

The animal husbandry association has cooperated with 11 communes and wards on behalf of 8 districts in Vinh Phuc province to carry out this program.

At meetings for implementation and training, scientists and experts directly convey major contents on theoretical and practical foundation of applying bio-products, their effects in agricultural production, anti-pollution, animal husbandry development, prevention against bird flu and foot-and-mouth disease among cattle as well as some concrete things in Environmental Protection Law and related policies. Documents and reports on typical examples, answers to inquiries of local farmers and action plans with focuses on each period have been provided for delegates and learners.

Programs and sub-projects have conducted many diverse activities like holding conferences, IEC forms on the mass media of the province and radio broadcasting to every village, population groups, building self-governed population groups to protect the environment and supporting farmers to learn and apply advanced science into production. Furthermore, the association organised writing competitions on environmental protection. Many articles fulfilling the requirements have been posted on the provincial and central mass media and in the book titled 'Science, Technology, Environment and People of Vinh Phuc' which was published by the animal husbandry association.

### Results achieved

So far, programs and sub-projects have attracted the direct participation of 4000 farming households, among whom 1500 households have used bio-products. The secondary EM number provided is 13,000 litres used for a total of 26,640 pigs, 1,815 buffaloes and cows, and more than 45,000 domestic fowls. The vast area of cages and sties is 18,400 m<sup>2</sup> and over 12,000 m<sup>2</sup> consists of sewerage and stagnant ponds. In addition to use for animal husbandry, some places have been used for fruit trees, green vegetable, flowers, decorative plants,... yielding good results.



The above programs and sub-projects have contributed to enhancing awareness on environmental protection and generating concrete actions for the community to protect the environment like collecting garbage and cleaning village roads. In the training courses people have been well aware of environmental issues. Thus, they have created a sense of community responsibility in environmental protection through an action slogan: 'All people actively participate in environmental protection', 'Act for a green, clean, and beautiful environment', and 'Abiding by Environmental Protection Law is the communities' responsibility'.

The Green volunteering group with a majority of youth has built commune and ward-level operating regulations, is progressing towards making actions diverse and serves as a practical foundation for permanent operation.

The positive response from local farmers and communities in EM product application in production and life is a noteworthy result. From initial reality, the product has shown clear effects in limiting harmful bacteria, helping prevent diseases for cattle and poultry deodorize bad smell in animal facilities, sewerage and stagnant ponds, increasing organic substance disintegration and exerting good impact on the development of plants and domestic animal.

Through programs and sub-projects local people have a correct understanding of the role of the environment, thus holding high the responsibility to protect it and to build a sustainable development in the rural area. People in communes and wards practise a lifestyle of hygienic conditions, improve toilets and animal facilities to prevent environmental pollution, make good use of gardening land to increase income, repair drainage system and regularly clean the village and hamlet.



## Transforming the countryside for sustainable development – Experiments in Gia Sinh commune, Gia Vien, Ninh Binh

*By Dr. Dang Duc Tao (Chairman of Ninh Binh Union for Science and Technology Associations)*

Gia Sinh is a mountainous commune of Gia Vien district, Ninh Binh province in the buffer zone of Hoa Lu Culture-History-Environment specialized forest (Hoa Lu beautiful scenery reserve on the map of Vietnam Nature Reserve). The natural area of the commune is nearly 2050 hectares of which two thirds are hills and mountains. The communes' population is about 6000 people or over 1500 households. The commune is next to the Hoang Long River. As it is a flood diverging area, some villages along the river bank should be evacuated. People's life here is heavily affected by natural calamities and floods. Local people's major source of income is farming, animal husbandry, fishing in ponds and the river, cutting wood on the mountain and exploiting natural medicinal plants in the forest. There is no secondary job or handicraft. Income per capital of people in the commune is very low compared with that in the province (approximately 60%). About 22% of households are still poor.

According to survey statistics from the Institute of Forest Survey and Planning Hoa Lu's specialized forest has 577 species of plants, including 311 species usable for medicine and 10 species in the Vietnam Red Book. Sinh Duoc and Gia Sinh mountainous areas now still retain many precious medicinal plants such as *Stephania glabra*, *Gardenia jasminoides*, *Dioscorea persimlis*, *Fallopia multiflora*, *Homalomena affaromatica*, and *Hibicus sagittifolius*.

Gia Sinh commune belongs to the Trang An tourist complex and spiritual-cultural area (98 hectares), the Dam Thi lake area (107 hectares) and the Bai Dinh pagoda ecological-tourist area (180 hectares) with many marvelous caves and scenic beauties. Sinh Duoc cave is 2 km long and has wonderful stalactites. Bai Dinh pagoda is at the mid of the mountain with 4 words engraved above the cave; "Minh Dinh Danh Lam", which means keeping the scenic beauty forever.

Gia Sinh is a commune with potential in ecological tourism and is in reality becoming an attractive tourist destination, especially because of the caves and the precious medicinal plants in the region and the many cultural and historical sites. However, once tourism starts booming, local people will be affected both positively and negatively. Positively because tourist development can generate new jobs, such as tourist services for young workers. However, infrastructure and road building will narrow cultivating land transforming the habitat of animals and plants leading to the reduction of precious medicinal plants. Once there are tourism activities there will be more waste which may destroy the natural scenery and affect the ecosystem. Young people may have job opportunities at tourist companies while having little knowledge of foreign languages and tourism. As local people practise agricultural production, they have not gotten used to working in service and tourism. What is more, people older than 35 will lack employment upon their loss of cultivating land. Therefore, attention should be paid to new job trainings for growing Vietnamese traditional medicinal plants.

The above mentioned issues are related to economical, social and environmental fields. It has become a question put to leaders of various levels, from commune over district to province how to protect and improve natural resources, maintain social stability and raise people's living standard. It is necessary to build a sustainable development plan for the whole commune to solve all these problems properly. As for sustainable development, a hamlet or village alone can not make it. It requires the change in awareness and action of the whole commune. Among the issues that need resolving

in the sustainable development plan is the enhancement of the awareness and the capacity of environmental protection, natural resources management and science and technology application in life and production. It is up to the community to be self responsible and conscious of methods to solve their own problems. The project titled "Enhancing the awareness and capacity for the community on environmental protection, management of natural resources and support to build ecological village model of sustainable development in the buffer zone of Hoa Lu Culture-History-Environment specialized forest of Ninh Binh province" is sponsored by SEF for Ninh Binh province's Union of Science and Technology Associations and aims to help Gia Sinh commune's people to solve a part of the abovementioned problems.

The project has conducted information, education and communication (IEC) work on environmental protection and a sustainable development plan in the commune. The waste treatment technology applying model and the Vietnamese traditional medicinal plant growing models have been deployed in 3 villages; number 6, 9, and 10 of Gia Sinh commune. Through training courses, seminars and model implementation the community's awareness has been raised, they have been provided with teamwork skills and the collective intellect is mobilized to solve their own problems.

Villages chosen for the project are situated next to the spiritual and cultural tourist area. These villages have relatively favourable transport conditions and a particularly beautiful landscape, surrounded by lakes, ponds, river, caves and temples. Village 6, 9, and 10 have a population of 1800 people or about 475 house-



holds. If the sustainable development of an ecological village model is built, they will become an attractive tourist spot. Visitors can come to a green and clean Vietnamese village with traditional medicine products and mild, hospitable people imbued with Vietnamese cultural identities. Waste is collected, treated and recycled by applying such technologies like an energy-saving cooker. Local people can get access to clean water and the environmental conditions can be improved. The protection of natural resources and genes of precious medicinal plants involved an active participation from the community. Thus the natural landscape has been beautified, the villages have been cleaner and the medical remedy as a product will boost tourism. More visitors mean higher income. Along with building villages into ecological and cultural ones, we should improve local people's knowledge for their participation in tourist activities in the region. Enhanced life from service will ease pressure on the exploitation of natural resources and there will be less environmental destruction.

The construction planning of Bai Dinh Mountains' spiritual and cultural tourist area has been approved by relevant authorities and actively executed so works can be finish by 2010 to celebrate 1000th



anniversary of Thang Long – Hanoi. Nowadays, the tourist area starts receiving visitors to caves and temples. Thus, it is necessary to prepare knowledge on history, culture and cultural behaviours in the tourist service. The difficulty in building an ecological village rests with local people's knowledge on ecology and their own role in ecological tourist development. Village and commune officials lack skills in mobilizing people's intellect to solve problems posed to them like loss of cultivating land, underemployment and environmental pollution.

Besides these difficult problems, Giang Sinh commune also has some favourable conditions in building a sustainable development model. Cadres and people are very passionate and energetic. The Community learning centre of the commune is a place which organises activities of intellectual enhancement, job training, science and technology knowledge, studies on law and culture and performance activities for a better spiritual life of the community. Commune officials have learnt to raise their knowledge on sustainable development under the Agenda 21 of Ninh Binh province.

By October 2006, SEF's Project Management Board in coordination with leaders of localities organised a project meeting with 70 partici-

pants from Ninh Binh Department of Science and Technology, People's Committee of Gia Vine district, Party Committee, People's Committee and agencies, mass organisations in Gia Sinh commune and households under the projects. The project established a science and technology working group of 10 members, 1 IEC group on environment is composed of 15 members from Youth Union. There were 2 training courses on awareness enhancement on environmental protection, environmental pollution – related disease prevention, IEC skills, participatory approach and teamwork skills with a total of 64 participants. Moreover, the project has provided training on the energy-saving cooker technology for 14 households and builds support to other 8 households. So far, training participants have managed to build quality standard cookers. The project has organised a winter crop growing model with 2 main plants as DT96 and DT12 soybean and 1 hectare of chilly to draw experience for extension. There are other activities such as IEC posters on environmental protection and sustainable development, mobilizing households with medical practitioners to provide information on precious medicinal plants in the locality and choosing 10 households to build a medicine garden for the preservation and development of precious medicinal plants. Especially through local survey, project experts local people had discovered

many *Dalbergia tonkinensis* trees wildly grown on the Than mountain area where local people used to exploit firewood. The project management board had warned local authority these precious trees are being exhaustively exploited and are in danger of extinction and request preservation. The project provided funding for local households to collect seedlings and cultivate saplings and bring to Bai Dinh pagoda area for preservation of 250 trees. The commune's farmers association had mobilized 2 association branches with 125 members to participate voluntarily in transporting and growing 250 trees and assigned members from village 6 to manage and take care of these trees.

It can be said that SEF/06/06 project sponsored by Sida Environmental Fund and carried out by Ninh Binh province's Union of Science and Technology Associations in coordination with mass organisations and local people of Gia Sinh commune has been truly a motivational force for the momentum of Gia Sinh commune's people in its transformation from a purely agricultural commune to a promising ecological tourist commune.

## Developing Community Groups and Promoting Environmental Protection Movements

*By the Board of Project Management of Project SEF/02/06*



For SEF/02/06 project in Quang Chu commune (Cho Moi district, Bac Kan province) as well as for other community supporting SEF projects an important activity with decisive meaning on the project's sustainability is to form community groups (interest groups). After the end of the project, these community groups are the core forces to continue developing project's contents. Hence, right from the start of the operation the project management board in coordination with local authorities established community groups. Up until now, under the support of experts 4 community groups have been formed with regulations and action plans, including a biogas group, a micro-bio manure group, a clean tea group and a clean vegetable group. At the same time with these group formations, the project held 1 training course of 3 days for community group leadership to enhance management, operation and accounting capacity. The training course provided knowledge on group start-up and development, action planning, management, accounting, reporting ... for the leaders of the 4 groups. All groups have been formed and put into operation efficiently. Each group with its own criteria and action plans has mobilized local people in the commune for positive changes in environmental protection in life and production.

Moreover, 16 representative leaders from 4 community groups also participated in a training course on technology transfer of micro-bio organic fertilizers and biogas with an aim to train them as trainers for local people in the commune. The Leaders of 4 community groups have grasped knowledge and have been able to spread the knowledge to other people in the commune.

The establishment of 4 community group has attracted participation from many people of the same interest, helping members in agricultural development. Group leaders are very active in group activities and have basic knowledge of management and maintenance of an efficient operation. Despite being strange to the method of interest groups, every member has made efforts and been passionate about group development. Groups hold regular monthly meetings to exchange, discuss and draw experience on things done well and not well. Group activities have helped people to be more united and join efforts for agricultural development in the commune to raise the living standard and the community development.

The formation and operation of 4 community groups has received positive response and high appreciation from authorities and people. However, out of 4 groups, only 2 (biogas and micro-bio organic fertilizer group) have been provided with technical training, development direction and a good base for development. Therefore, training for the other two groups (clean tea and clean vegetable group) on technical issues and development direction is necessary. The project management board and groups should make more efforts to self mobilize and develop group activities.

Moreover, voluntary movements on environmental protection are also exciting activities bringing note-worthy social and environmental effects from the project. An environmental protection volunteering youth group comprising of 30 outstanding youngsters

from all villages of the commune was established to develop the pioneering role of youth in environmental protection. This volunteering youth group has been equipped with uniforms and trained in Public Relations skills and IEC skills. With these skills, members have deployed IEC work to every person of every village in the commune on good environmental conditions and production. During village meetings, the volunteering youth group has conducted IEC on environment cleaning for young participants. At the same time, every week, group units come to each village, reminding people to clean the environment well, to report regularly to the project management board on environmental issues to resolve and typical examples to give them timely incentives.

"Environment cleaning campaign" was launched for an objective of environmental protection and sustainable development movement. This is a large activity with full participation of 500 people of Quang Chu commune and representatives of related organisations like gardeners associations, authorities and mass organisations of various levels. Although Quang Chu commune has a long terrain and difficult transport conditions and some villages had started cultivating their crops all villages participated in the launching ceremony. After the ceremony, all participants together cleaned the public places. The ceremony has created a new impetus for "Environment IEC" activities and a movement for a green, clean and beautiful environment, improving markedly local people's awareness of environmental conditions maintenance. As a result, village roads

and houses have been more clean and beautiful. This is a practical activity that had not been practised regularly in the past. It is hoped that from now on this activity will retain its momentum and continuity with positive and self-conscious response from local people.

Large slogans and posters have been put up in visible positions for IEC on environmental protection and sustainable agricultural development. 3000 leaflets delivered to village people have conveyed messages of the environment's role, local pressing environmental issues and what to do to protect the environment and enhance life quality.

The IEC radio broadcasting programs to mobilize and promote the community's participation in environmental conditions maintenance and sustainable agricultural development are made in coordination with the commune's culture board. For about 15 minutes per program/week, articles written by environmental protection young volunteers as well as the commune's other boards on "good example, good deed" in the environment-cleaning campaign will be broadcast in time to encourage the community. The radio broadcasting programs have made substantial contribution to awareness change of the village communities on environment and environmental protection activities in life and production.

"Enhancing awareness on environment and sustainable development" is the theme of the first training course for 182 people as representatives of commune's households, which have disseminated knowledge on the environment, its significance to life and production, environmental pollution agents and solutions to overcome. Learners fully participated and enthusiastically discussed local environmental issues, experiences and solutions to protect the local traditional environment. The knowledge touched upon in the training courses consist of simple things in the everyday living environment but played down by the people they forget that it has tremendous impacts on human health. After the training course, people pay more attention to the living environment, their drink-

ing water source, the air and everyday food to ensure a healthier life.

Environmental protection and sustainable development, dissemination and application of simple technologies in Quang Chu community have been conducted in the form of both technology transfer and pilot model building in the commune by the project.

The transfer of household-scale micro-bio organic fertilizer producing technology from agricultural wastes has been applied in rural areas and yielded high socio-economic and environmental efficiency. "Micro-bio organic fertilizer production" training has been welcomed and positively responded by local people as the production process is very simple and inexpensive and at the same time it can treat the agricultural waste safely. There have been 32 village participants in the commune and they have grasped knowledge on proper manure use in agricultural production and technology of household-scale micro-bio organic fertilizer production from agricultural waste. In the past, people in Quang Chu never got access to micro-bio organic fertilizers in agricultural production under technology transfer, they mainly used chemical fertilizers and partly home-made muck (quality not guaranteed). The project also supported the construction of 40 micro-bio organic fertilizers in agricultural production models under technology transfer to keep people "seeing is believing" and following the model. This technology has been highly appreciated by the locality and is believed to be multiplied in the entire commune for environmental protection through extensive use of agricultural waste, the reduction of chemical fertilizers and the creation of a low-cost high-quality micro-bio organic fertilizer to increase local people's income.

"Improved VACVINA biogas cellar building technology" prioritizes the participation of 12 builders so that they can master basic biogas techniques for local model development. Local people appreciate the strengths and applicability of this model in comparison with other models. This is a very suitable technology for rural people as it protects the environment through safe treatment

of waste from human beings and cattle and generates fuel for life activities, thus reducing deforestation. Technical staff have been skillfully trained to master theories on biogas technology, the ability to design and complete the construction of an improved VACVINA biogas cellar by themselves with the supporting programs of the project and simultaneously designing the construction for other households in need within Quang Chu and adjacent communes.

During the training learners practised the production of the model. Biogas and micro-bio organic fertilizer production has been shown both in teaching classes and practice, therefore learners understood more promptly and thoroughly these techniques. Trainees can apply learnt knowledge into practice, thus having a quick grasp of unclear matters in teaching classes, and at the same time drawing points irrelevant to the local realities to seek ways to overcome.

Local people and authorities highly appreciate positive impacts brought about by the project. As Quang Chu is a difficult mountainous commune, people just take care of their daily needs, environment has not been paid due attention, the community still follow traditional practice of treatment of life activities and agricultural wastes, paying not much attention to the environment. The environment project carried out by Community Development Research Centre and sponsored by Sida Environmental Fund in Quang Chu has effected great changes towards the local environmental situation. Through training courses and environmental protection activities run by the project, people are more aware of the role of their living environment, the necessity of environmental sanitation conditions towards the community, and their consciousness in keeping the village clean and avoiding environmental pollution due to agricultural production has been raised. At the same time, the community is also able to know about sustainable agricultural development. Hence, local people are eager to participate in the project's activities, making great contribution to its success.

# REFLECTION

Vietnam is now undergoing dramatic changes in every aspects of life. Changes happen daily in all corner of the country. The rapid economic development and stable growth in recent years have helped improve quality of life of the people and renovate the living conditions of rural areas. However, along with good signals from economic development, we are and will be facing many environmental issues and degradation of natural resources. In the long run, if we don't have measures to control and overcome them, the consequences will certainly exert to reversed impacts and hinder the socio-economic development, decrease the quality of life and pull back the sustainable development goals of the country.

With around 73% of the population living in the countryside, increasing consumption rate, and more intensive cultivation, we have been confronting many environmental issues such as pollution in handicraft villages, lack of clean water, pollution from sewage and domestic animal feces, the habit of keeping cattle below or next to the houses, and increasing wastes (particularly solid wastes and plastic bags).

Over-use of chemicals in agricultural production and animal husbandry is posing a threat to consumers' health and exerting negative impacts on the competitive capacity in the world market of exported agricultural products. It is difficult for us to reach a clean agriculture if we can not change the behaviours in use of pesticide and chemicals in farming production.

Forest resources are still becoming exhausted by over-exploitation in many places. Although the afforestation area has increased, it is a great challenge to protect the remaining area of primary forests. In many mountainous areas, forests are still being encroached for expanding the area of production land and extensive farming. We have been witnessed the consequences of forest loss during recent years with increasing natural disasters like sweeping floods, landslide, and drought.

The community's awareness on protecting their own living environment is still low in many places. Many people are not well aware of the consequences of their destructive actions towards the environment and the consequences they may suffer. However, in other cases, people are still willing to sacrifice the benefit of the environment to their immediate benefit despite of their well-informed awareness.

As the environment is a common capital of the communities and society, its improvement and protection need people's participation and contribution. For mobilizing more and more people to participate, grassroots mass organisations play an important role. However, in reality, capacity of local organizations in many places is not yet adequate to get local people and communities involved. In addition, lack of resources and technical support also contribute to the silence or inactiveness of environmental movements in those places.

To help Vietnam reach its sustainable development future, it is vital to have responsible participation and contribution among people, businesses and organisations. There are still many more things to be done. Through providing small grants and technical assistance to community projects, SEF is actively trying to continue making its contribution to the improvement and protection of Vietnam's environment.

## More to be done!

*By Trinh Le Nguyen, AG Member*





## SEF Projects in the Central: Diverse and Practical Thinking and Methods

*By Nguyen Huy Hien, AG Member*

Nearly 43,000 US dollars. It is not either a large or small amount. It was just very useful in supporting 7 projects in the Centre in 2006. That timely funding from SEF has considerably changed the thinking, awareness, and method in environmental protection and natural resources among the community. After one year in operation, these projects have placed new belief in the future of linking environment and sustainable development.

### Creating vitality along the river and the sea

Gia Do in the downstream of Thach Han (Quang Tri) is a poor land. The said advantage of 'water and river proximity' is partly correct here. Traveling conditions are difficult. It is purely agricultural with two crops of rice and cassava and maize. It seems food in Gia Do in general and in Trieu Do commune in particular is an uneasy problem.

In 2005, fishing project brought good signals to Trieu Do. Growing vegetable is gradually imported. Thus people's living standard has been improved. Mr. Tran Duc Nien, Vice Chairman of the commune People's Committee who has taken me to visit the place for many times is concerned with many socio-economic development plans. However, he is in high spirits and unceasingly says that SEF sponsorship has helped the commune have a long vision. He argues that rice, vegetable, and fish can help lift Trieu Do out of poverty, however, the target is very far away or easily missed without taking into account environmental factors. In order to have wealth and savings, there should be a reduction in pesticide, incurable diseases in life activities; and fish raising should be done in the correct process and planning to reduce disease carriers and risk of bankruptcy. SEF has inspired the awareness as well as changed it for that positive direction.

SEF positive impact in Gia Do is completely similar to that in Phu Mau commune at the downstream of Huong river, or in Hoi An at the end of Thu Bon river, or in Tho Quang (Da Nang) alongside Son Tra sea, or in Tam Dai commune (Quang Nam) close to Phu Ninh reservoir. It is easily seen that the water environment in the project area has decisive influence over the community's socio-economic and cultural development. With SEF as an "additive", a vegetable bundle or a paddy grain made by members of Phu Mau Co-operative has more credibility in terms of food safety. Training knowledge has been spread out to every vegetable garden and paddy field. After having ravaged by Xangse storm, Tho Quang has returned to young vitality and dynamism which characterizes "For the Blue Sea" group. Phu Ninh lake ecological tourism has become more attractive when "green Tam Dai village" has clean roads, moving away 32 dirty cages and sties along the only path. Especially Thu Bon river which makes special cultural identities of Hoi An has been clearer by means of "Great cleaning movement" initiated by project owner Dinh Van Hai. This has set foundation for sustainable coastal management and maintenance of annual river cleaning for the tourist strengths of Hoi An town.



Each place in the Centre has a range of environmental protection and natural resources activities in different ways sponsored by SEF. The common thing is to create a pervasive awareness, attitude, and behaviour on environmental protection and natural resources. Old habits have been changed for a disciplined and civilized style. The project owner has his voice heard. People as beneficiaries have supported and agreed to follow.

## Keeping the “green lung”

Natural and economic forests are strengths of Quang Tri mountainous area, Thu Thien and Quang Nam. They can be compared to “the green lung” for the eastern narrow river delta strip. They include Dakrong Nature Reserve (Quang Tri). The Nature Reserve is facing challenges of illegal hunting of wild animals and illegal logging. Therefore, many projects have reached the place. With SEF, 9000 US dollars have brought hope of a new way through a series of training courses to enhance people’s awareness in 4 communes under the buffer zone, providing support for moving away animal facilities, and building a network of IEC workers,... and especially the agreed strategy on protection and sustainable development after 3 times of corrections and amendments.

As for Mau Phu village (Huong Phu commune, Nam Dong, Thua Thien Hue), nearly 100 households have regarded forest land as “land of gold”. 30 members of Agricultural and forest extension club have been better aware by means of Nature Care (NC) support and SEF funding. Thus, forest land ownership, forest protection initiative, and plant change have turned 30 hectares of very remote forest into rattan growing area which can bring good economic efficiency. Hence, after “white gold” rubber, ethnic people can place much hope in rattan as a tree to lift them out of poverty.

## ‘People’s voice’ project area

It can be said that 5 out of 7 SEF projects in the Centre have identified new ways, that is, the convergence of common voice from people for an objective of environmental protection and natural resources. For only a short morning, the project management board of Phu Mau cooperative (TT-Hue) has become a ‘bridge’ between people and local authority. People have expressed urgent matters of pollution and made a series of recommendations on measures in Thanh Tien, Tien Non,... Leaders have listened, explained and directed the settlement. The final expectation has been met when 150 people in that meeting hall were promised by the commune to bring these issues to higher level discussion and settlement.

A perspective from the dialogue in Phu Mau cooperative or people’s meeting to discuss village convention on environmental protection in Gia Do, comments and contribution to build a strategy in Dakrong... and the coming workshops in Tho Quang ward (Da Nang), Phu Mau village (Nam Dong – TT Hue) shows more belief that pressing issues on the environment and natural resources protection put forth by local people will be heard, understood, and turned by all level authorities into concrete action plan. Because, the environment today is no longer a past story. It is hot on agenda even outside the village or inside the minds of micro- and macro-development policy-makers.

## Challenges and value of SEF

The Centre does not enjoy favourable conditions for socio-economic development as the North and the South do. Visible objective obstacles are severe climate and repeated natural calamities. Subjective obstacles are people’s intellectual level, level of human resources and a low starting point. All these have deprived the Centre of the investment attractiveness. Despite unceasing efforts and maybe 10 years of accumulative internal strength, it is possible to suffer a dead loss due to a storm or a flood just overnight. That is a great challenge for every determination to protect the environment and natural resources. Vice versa, it is an opportunity to give birth to various initiative in protecting the environment and natural resources.

Besides SEF support, the Centre has been receiving a lot of funding sources to promote precious experiences and initiatives. Even in case of loss due to natural disasters, those experiences and initiatives’s values remain untouched. Therefore, the maintenance, duplication and timely application of these experiences and initiatives represent a problem that needs attention to solve.



# Role of Local Communities in Environmental Protection

By Ly Hoa Khuong, AG Member



In recent years under food pressure to feed the increasing population and on account of export of agricultural, forestry, and seafood products, just many localities have attached importance to improving material zones for export. Thus, unreasonable exploitation of natural resources for immediate benefits has exerted a great impacts on the environment. This has brought about consequences as the nature 'retaliates' the human during the free exploitation of natural resources and leaves imprints of serious depletion of the environment that people have to suffer.

Faced with the above reality, on 3/12/2003, the Prime Minister issued Decision No. 256/2003/QĐ-TTg, approving National Strategy on Environmental protection in 2010 and orientations by 2020, in which local community's role in protecting the environment has been highlighted with an aim to making important contribution to local environmental protection, promoting the awareness on environmental protection among the community.

In the national history of development, the communities of Vietnamese ethnic groups have a long-lasting tradition of living in harmony with the nature, protecting the environment, both preserving the nature and exploiting it sensibly. Regarding forest protection and sustainable use of resources, the community has many experiences and creative methods including the regulation of village convention to protect the forest, to exploit the forest resources to go hand in hand with maintenance of bio-diversity for the current living generation and future generations. For example, Mong people in Bat xat district, Dao people in Bao Yen district, Lao Cai province participated in the regulation of preservation of wild life; Ede people, Gia Lai, the highlands and Khmer people in An Giang, Soc Trang province showed their role in forest management and protection.

Besides, local communities are very flexible in exploiting and using capital resources for environmental protection. This is a practical measure

which directly generates capital resources and raises people's awareness. Some models include public interest activities in collection, transporting, and treating waste. Capital resources are used by the community as capital turnover and partly support environmental protection activities. Capital turnover contributes to social justice and improved solidarity in the community. SEF has also participated in funding hundreds of community-based projects, among which dozens of projects have applied effectively capital turnover.

During the country's development, environmental protection activities of the community take place everywhere as public awareness on the environment has been increasingly raised. Volunteering movement is also a grassroots community activities. There are many widespread movements of large social organisations and small movements in village, commune or ward, or even individual volunteers silently devote themselves to environmental protection ranging from growing green trees, protecting biodiversity to campaigns to overcome consequences of natural disasters.

In order to mobilize community participation, education and knowledge enhancement on environment is very important. Education here embraces both school education and society education. School education on the environment has been underway under the direction of the Government in its plan from now until 2010. Society education on the environment is very diverse and is practised in many lively forms, including education organised by mass organisations, associations, community, and IEC activities on the mass media... With regard to making it, the building and finishing of a legal framework on bringing broad social participation in environmental protection is an urgent need. Local community will gradually play a key role in environmental protection.

## A Review of Four Contests on Improving the Use and Protection of Water Resources

*By Nguyen Nhu Mai, Science and Life Newspaper*

An annual award from the Stockholm Water Foundation is given to scientists working to protect international water resources. Since 1994, there have been prizes awarded to students in secondary schools, but only Swedish students could apply. However, since 1997 the prize has been opened up to the participation of students from around the world.

In 2003, a contest was organized in Vietnam called "Improving the use and protection of water resources for the students of secondary and vocational schools" was funded by Sida through SEF. It was a great honor for the Science and Life Newspaper to be responsible for hosting such a contest. The Ministry of Education and Training (MOET), the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MONRE), and the Vietnam Association for Conservation of Nature and Environment (VACNE) were members of the organizing committee.

With the participation of MOET and MONRE as members of the central organizing committee, the contest was introduced in upper secondary and vocational schools around the country, through provincial Education and Training and National Resources and Environment departments.

In the first contest, there were 183 student participants from twenty five provinces and cities. After the primary examination, thirty four projects were selected for the final examination. Trieu Tien Chuan, from the Grade 11 TN3 class at Nguyen Hue Lower Secondary School in Ha Tay province wrote about the pond in his home town and recommend-

ed the use of weed plants to clean the pond and promote a healthy ecosystem, as well as to propose other comprehensive solutions. Through this project, Chuan won first national prize and was selected for the international contest in Stockholm, where twenty six representatives from other countries also participated.

Since the second contest in 2003-2004, the quality of projects has dramatically improved. The organizing committee and examiners board selected the ten best projects out of 1,993 entrants. The writers and instructors were invited to Ha Noi to present their projects. Nguyen Thi Thu Trang from the Grade 10 advanced biology class at the Hanoi - Amsterdam secondary school won first national prize with the project titled, "Using clay and paper fiber to treat waste water in the Bay Mau Lake of the Lenin Park, Ha Noi." It was a great honor for her to present her project to Vietnamese students, and to participate in the international contest in Stockholm, Sweden. After coming back from Stockholm, Nguyen Thi Thu Trang continued to

perfect her project for a contest of scientific research held in Taiwan, and again she won first prize.

According to the evaluation of the Examiners Board, the quality of projects in the third Stockholm contest in 2005-2006 has been significantly improved with a total of 855 projects. Due to the quality of the projects, the organizing committee agreed to increase the number of projects to be chosen for the final examination to twenty five projects. Nguyen Tuyet Trinh, Nguyen Dang Thinh, and Nguyen Dang Phuc Long, Class 12 B2, Biology high school at Hanoi National Science University submitted their project, "Using filtration, biological and chemical processes in water treatment for households in the rural area" won first national prize. Their project helped to improve the quality of water for families in Vietnam.

The Science and Life Newspaper and the Center for Community Awareness (Department on Environmental Protection, MONRE) launched the contest and mobilized students to participate in the contest in many



localities. After field trips to various localities, the schools were encouraged to get more students involved in the contest. The organizing committee received 1,221 projects from students in twenty two provinces and cities. The quality of the projects was still better than the previous ones, especially the team projects. This caused difficulties for the organizing committee in choosing the best projects. The Examiners Board selected the nine best projects, and they were invited to Ha Noi for interviews in order to identify the winners. Tran Trung Hoang, Phan Phuoc Duy, and Vo Phi Thoan from the An Lac Thon upper secondary school in Soc Trang province, submitted the project, "Using local natural materials to clean oil spills on rivers in the Mekong delta." They were selected to present their project to Vietnamese students and to participate in the annual contest in Sweden.

The contest, "Improving the use and protection of water resources," has become an annual event drawing more and more attention from students. At the same time, it has contributed to a movement of scientific study in Vietnamese schools. The contest has been going for four years and has achieved good results.

This is a new and difficult kind of contest for students. Many contests for students focus on knowledge and comprehension, while this contest requires creativity and problem solving related to social and scien-

tific issues. It is difficult because students must spend much time studying and conducting experiments.

However, through past contests, students have become familiar with the requirements of such a competition and participation improves from year to year. Advantages and disadvantages are noted in order to improve future contests.

Preparation for each contest is complicated and difficult as this is an international contest. The guidelines for the contest must be clearly identified and translated for the students who wish to participate. The organizing committee should include representatives from different agencies to help with these tasks.

The Science and Life Newspaper and the Vietnam Association for Conservation of Nature and Environment (VACNE) were active in mobilizing students' and in monitoring the Examination Board. The two organizations have had the chance to disseminate the contest results and to invite consultants and experts to appraise the projects. The both groups have organized field trips to local schools in order to launch the contest, and to suggest how students can participate. In addition, the Science and Life Newspaper and VACNE mobilized the local Science, Technology Associations and members of VACNE to consult with students who had applied for the contest in Ha Tinh, Tay Nguyen and Soc Trang provinces. In the localities where such activities were carried out, the participation of students was very high and the quality of the projects was quite good. Evaluating and marking the projects was done carefully and as objectively as possible.

The subject of the contest was water resources which is under the management of MONRE. Increasing understanding and awareness of the protection of water resources, especially among younger generations is of great concern to MONRE. So, it is needed an investment activity to foster deeper involvement of



functional departments of MONRE at the grassroots level. As a result, MONRE has assigned the Center for Community Awareness Raising to be directly involved in the organization of the contest. The purpose of this contest is not only to raise the awareness of the younger generations, but also to inspire good scientific research and to discover outstanding students to be trained in this field. In the long term, MONRE should consider incorporating the contest into its annual activities.

The target of the contest is students in secondary schools under the management of MOTE. According to the regulations of the contest projects must be initiated by students themselves, although guidance from their teachers or experts is needed. Results of recent contests show that schools who promote participation have a high number of students involved in the contest as well as an increase in the quality of their projects. Examples of this are Chu Van An, Nguyen Hue, and An Lac Thon schools in Thai Nguyen, Hue, and Soc Trang respectively who have won prizes nearly every year. When meeting with schools, we saw that many leaders of schools did not pay much attention to the contest because they consider the primary duty of their students to be learning. In addition, there many contests and they did not receive any direction from the provincial Department on Education and Training related to this particular contest. Therefore, it is requested that MOET



disseminate information related to the contest to schools nationwide. From my point of view, MOET should reward all students who participate in the contest in addition to the exceptional students who go on to the international competition.

In comparison with other contests it has not been organized on a large scale, but quality of projects is most important in order to be selected for the international contest. The organizing committee of the contest has set up two goals. First, it is expected that there will be a high number of students in the contest that will contribute to raising the awareness of their communities, and in particular the younger generations about the important issue of water resources. Therefore, the organizing committee will provide a collective prize for schools with a large number of students participating, even if their projects did not win any awards.

On the other hand, in order to participate in the international contest it is necessary to choose the highest quality projects. Through the past four contests, the criteria have been known as, "choosing the best in the sheaf of chopsticks," in order to select the best projects the contest held in Sweden. Vietnamese projects submitted at the contest in Sweden were praised by the International Examiners Board, however it was clear that the competition for first prize was stiff. From my point of view, the evaluation of the Examiners' Board was exactly correct. The quality of



projects has increased each year, but it is still difficult to find outstanding projects. The disadvantages of the projects were the weakness of our students. Or in other words, the weakness of the Vietnamese education system. Vietnamese students are in no way inferior to students from the other countries, but they are faced with a lack of opportunity to practice and promote creativity or dynamism in the classroom. Besides this, we observed that the projects of our international friends were a large time investment and approached methodically. At the same time, the projects of our students were usually prepared hastily. As a result, many projects were limited to ideologies or theories and did not provide practical or scientifically proven solutions. The vice versa was also present. There were

also projects that provided specific solutions but had not been carried out and applied them in order to test the consequences. From my point of view, some of last year's projects had good ideas but did not win the highest prizes. If these projects

could be continuously carried out, they could be entered again the next year.

Water is a diverse natural resource with its own characteristics. Students suggested many interesting subjects and solutions. Students in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City feel restricted on the subject rather than students in other localities. This should be noted in order to mobilize students in both rural and urban areas. At the same time, it is necessary to orient students to technical and technological solutions rather than issues related to general awareness. If so, it is likely that Vietnamese students could win the top international prizes.

Four years have passed since we faced embarrassment at the first competition, but now we can catch up to the standards of the international contest. This contest has great significance for the future, and should be continued on an even larger scale. In the beginning, the contest was supported by Sida, but that was just the start. From now on, the competition, and especially the achievements of the students, will go faster and farther. This competition provides the needed fuel to propel future generations of scientific study.





# UNEP Tunza International Children's Conference for the Environment

*By Ta Cam Van (Student of Class 6A, Hanoi-Amsterdam Middle School)*

30 km away from Kuala Lumpur capital of Malaysia, in the beautiful city of Putrajaya, from 26 to 30 August 2006, Tunza International Children's Conference organised by UN Environmental Programme (UNEP) was held. Invitees to the Conference are more than 250 children aged between 10 and 14 throughout the world who love the nature and have special achievements and contribution to environmental protection. It was my luck and pleasure to be invited by the UNEP to the Conference as an official and only delegate from Vietnam and I was more than happy to know that this was the first time that Vietnam had a delegate to the Conference.

Here, I and other 'Environment Ambassadors in young age' had participated in various useful and interesting activities on different environmental subjects. Four official working days had 4 names on different subjects like Forest Day, Conservation Day, Recycle Day,... with a number of talks delivered by well-known professors interposed with project presentations of the children as well as group discussions, excursions in accordance with the subject of each day. After each working day, we gathered in groups to summarize and share with group members on things learned from activities during the day. I am highly interested in one activity, that is, to join the Ecological Journalist Group alongside Heidi from Norway. Under her guidance, we had written some articles and small reports illustrated by pictures on activities during the day for daily bulletins during the time of the Conference. I had learned a lot from my friends in how to present confidently projects on the forum, how to approach information, to search for support to carry out environmental protection projects...

During the Conference, along with thousands of children in Kuala Lumpur, we had a great honour to receive Her Majesty the Queen of Malaysia at the solemn and impressive opening ceremony at Putrajaya International Convention Centre. Afterwards, we had come to know friends from Malaysia, express our ideas and exchange experiences when we together participate in many seminars on the environment held in the International Convention Centre. At the plant-growing ceremony in Putrajaya Wetland, each of us had devoted a small meaningful gift, that is, the green sapling full of vitality grown by ourselves to Putrajaya city. According to the schedule, we had participated in many other useful activities like a visit to the swamp museum, botanic garden, the famous twin towers...

On the last day which no one would like finally came. The farewell-bidding session was very moving with mixed feelings and tear drops. How fast five days had passed, it was such a wonderful time for every child like me participating in the Conference. The Conference had ended, but the knowledge, experiences and friendship that we had during the Conference will go on forever. We pledged to grow more green trees, continue to support each other in environmental protection activities, and join efforts in mobilizing people worldwide to act for a green earth.

## Eco-tourism and local communities

By Nguyen Trung Dung,  
Environmental Club of Ho Chi Minh City

When an ecological area has been brought into tourism, there will be interactions towards the local community. This issue should be within the knowledge of planners and resolved to the best. As for diverse activities of tourism, the local community is a substantial human resources. Naturally, local tour guides should be trained and they will win visitors' confidence owing to their local knowledge and they are considered as a subject of interest from visitors. Other activities like restaurant, accommodation, souvenirs... also attract substantial human resources from local community. These are their employment opportunities, helping them improve the economic structure and stabilize life. They will be the key force directly participating in protecting the environment and ecological resources. This has brought into play, households have participated in supplying services at visiting sites and they contribute to the good cleaning of the surroundings.

In Thailand, community's role is highly regarded in researching and preparing ecological tourist area planning and in reality, they have contributed many precious initiatives. In each ecological area, the relationship between the community and natural resources has been established for a long time. Local people have been using natural resources as a livelihood. More than anyone else, they have gained knowledge from practical experiences, thus they can contribute to the planning, participate in the making of strategic development policies for local ecological tourist development.

In order that the community well develops its participating role, other stakeholders like the Government, tourism administration, local authori-



ties, the agency in charge, and the ecological tourist company shall have to resolve obstacles in the community's participation. First of all, there should be a macro incentive policy to the local people's life. It can be a tax break or a privileged economic form. Local authorities' responsibility to the community is as much important as the awareness and local intellectual standard go, thus there should be a proper organising method to develop people's strengths and encourage the community to effectively participate in tourism. At the moment, in some localities in the South, local authorities has taken the issue seriously, arranged their work properly to generate an income balance. Preserving people's heritages should necessarily require State budget support or local tourist companies, and they should be advised on preservation solutions. There should be a good plan to deal with industry shift in demand as ecological tourist development can not ignore the financial support. The State also has to formulate education programs on enhancing awareness so that people well understand their local

cultural identities as their precious natural resources, providing them with information on regular basis, giving them timely supplement on skills in tourism and preservation.

In order to encourage local community to participate in investment for tourism and preservation, the State and authorities of tourism units need to make initial investment in infrastructure, typical structures enclosed with directions and guidance.

Another important issue is that in reality there is a basic conflict between the community and tourism and natural reserve administration in benefit sharing. It is impossible to require active participation from local community in tourist activities, particularly in preservation without sharing satisfactory benefits from tourism with them. This can not be handled in an arbitrary way, and there should be a clear mechanism to have an agency monitoring agreed commitments.

Let's study about an ecological-cultural tourist route in the highlands in Don village. Going along National Road 14 to visit grandiose Draysap waterfall, coming to Don village, staying in the long house with Mnong people's typical architecture. Tourists can visit the grave of elephant king, passing through the famous 240 m long suspension bridge made of bamboo and rattan across Serepok river with a force resistance from a 100 year old tree. In the evening, there are camp-fire activities, ethnic people's stories on marriage life, customs and practices of Mnong people. Here, visitors can enjoy wine drunk out of jar through pipes and roasted meat. Leaving Don village for Buon Me Thuot to visit the museum of ethnology. Then departing for Nha Trang to continue the journey.

Therefore, local community's role in ecological tourism is of critical importance and should be held in high regards. Failure or success of an ecological tourist program can not dispense with this important element.

# Expanding and developing environmental awareness activities for ethnic women in buffer zone communes of Tam Dao National Park

By Bui Thi Thanh Thuy, AG Member

Tam Dao National Park was established in 1986 with area of 19,000 hectares and has been proposed for an expansion of up to 36,838 hectares. Tam Dao National Park has a buffer zone of 1000 hectares which has both high potential of tourism and high threats of illegal hunting and logging.

Like many other Vietnam's National Park, Tam Dao National Park is also confronting a lot of difficulties from the buffer zone. These are the rapid increase in population, shortage of agricultural land for cultivation, and people's life in the buffer zone highly depends on animal hunting in the forest, logging, bamboo sprout and wood-cutting, and widespread deforestation; the serious destruction of upstream forest has led to the increased area of forest chopped down and bare hills. That is also because awareness on preservation and protection of the environment in the buffer zone of the National Park is still very low.

In Tam Dao district, women are a very important group, accounting for a quite large proportion of the district population. This is a force playing a critical role in ecological and environmental protection in the district. With an aim to preserving and developing in a sustainable way the ecological environment in the buffer zone and Tam Dao National Park, developing results from SEF project in 1999 within 3 villages of Ho Son commune, activities should be kept with momentum and developed to a new height on a permanent and sustainable scale. Tam Dao district's Women Association has proposed and been

sponsored for the project '**Multiplification of the model on environmental protection awareness enhancement and improvement of women's living standard in buffer zone communes of Tam Dao National Park**' - SEF/10/2005.

After one year in operation, the project has deployed many efficient activities like training and document provision on environmental protection for nearly 200 representatives of mass organizations and 500 ethnic women in villages of such communes as Minh Quang, Hop Chau, Ho Son, Tam Quan a long side the forest. The training



contents and documents introduce values and importance of forest to each individual and family, reasons and realities of the environment in the buffer zone of Tam Dao National Park, community's role in environmental protection, realities and solutions for developing the ecological system model of Garden-Pond-Sty (VAC model). To link it to the reality, women had been taken to visit a practical model for drawing experiences for developing the model of growing chayote to raise the income and bring about high economic efficiency, participating in regular cleaning of the village roads and alleys, and collecting garbage. In addition, the project has supported the establishment and

organised the opening ceremony for 11 cultural, performance, and environmental clubs. Each club has 40-70 members who have become passionate IEC workers on environmental protection for every people. Joining the activities of clubs, women have an opportunity of cultural exchange, drama performance, wall-newspaper writing, exchange of experiences on production and life in close association with the ecological environment. In particular, the project has provided technical training for building

and installing the improved furnace cooker and capital support for building 300 wood-saving cooker for women which has received women's strong support. The mobilization of people to build non-smoke and energy-saving cookers has helped limit people's log-

ging in the forest.

Noteworthy environmental protection activities has created a network of environment-loving women to make contribution to controlling forest destructive behaviours for fields or firewood, disorderly discharge of wastes, hunting of wildlife, beehive burning, and carrying of inflammable materials in the forest. However, for a better environmental protection, it is to raise the living standard of local people so that they will less depend on the forest resources. The protected environment and natural resources will generate many opportunities for robust development of tourist services, contributing to local economic development.



## Success from a village-level project sponsored by SEF

*By Bui Thi Thanh Thuy, Vo Thi Lang, Tran Vo Hung Son, Le Trieu Nam*

In the process of resolving rural environmental issues, many local communities have initiatives based on knowledge on local climate and terrain conditions, and traditional experiences and knowledge. Most of these initiatives can mobilize active participation from the community. Between December 2002 and December 2003, Sida Environmental Fund supported a project on enhancing awareness on environmental protection for people in Thanh Loi hamlet, Tan Phu Thanh commune, Chau Thanh A district, Hau Giang province in a hope that concrete results will lead to sustainable development, which is not only based on regulations and laws but also relies mainly on voluntary basis, awareness and participation from the people. These are inexhaustible, important and sustainable resources.

Thanh Loi hamlet is among the poorest ones of Tan Phu Thanh commune, Chau Thanh A district, Hau Giang province. In terms of economic life, more than 80% of the population live on agricultural production (mainly rice cultivation), 13% are breeding households, and the rest live on services and handicraft. The hamlet is a remote rural area where people's intellectual standard is low, awareness on environmental issues is poor. Major source of living water is Ba Lang river, however, the quality of water from Ba Lang river surface have been degraded due to pollution from factories processing aquatic food, animal feeds, agricultural production and animal husbandry activities, garbage,... In the past, the number of households having a hygienic toilet is 25 (accounting for 6.88%); number of households using clean water: 52 (14.32%); number of households using biogas bag: 5 (13.9%) (data in 2002).

Since the project's operation, local people's awareness have changed gradually. The change has been indicated from awareness to concrete actions: participation in training course, building village convention and voluntary practice; receiving IEC through diverse forms like leaflets to every family, posters put up in public places, photo gallery, news broadcasting loudspeakers in the village.... By so doing, people understand harmful effects of unhygienic life or environmental destructive actions, the need of using well-cooked food and boiled water, keeping the inner house clean, abstaining from discharging wastes to the river... Some women have done according to what they have learned, spending money building a toilet and bathroom that earlier they did not want to do in fear of high costs without foreseen benefits. In the past, women used to bath in the river. However, since their participation in training courses and implementing a model of water well and toilet combined with bathroom, they no longer bath in the river and gynaecological diseases have been reduced markedly. Hamlet people have known about bad effects of environmental pollution in the commune. A typical example is the problem caused by pollution from industrial manufacturing factories in the commune. People have been discontented and expressed themselves although these factories do create employment for people in the commune. A typical change in hygienic lifestyle in the hamlet can be seen in Van My Tu pagoda. The pagoda have destroyed an unhygienic toilet on the pond, building 4 hygienic toilets and 4 spacious bathrooms next to the side of the pagoda, cleared wild plants and weeds and beautified the landscape before the pagoda yard and mobilized believers to follow.

Besides, the green volunteering group with 20 members of the hamlet was established and have been operating effectively, being a core force and catalyst in mobilizing and carrying out activities that have people's positive response and

participation like clearing ditches and irrigational canals, clearing wild plants and weeds for 7000 m long to facilitate smooth travel by motorized junks and boats by 300 working days and 5 million dong; rural roads have been upgraded for 4 km long, building black sand barrel with a total cost of 50 million dong and 200 working days; building 2 new concretized bridges with a total cost of 15 million dong contributed by local people.

Not only conducting IEC for people to change behaviours and awareness on environmental protection, models with support for building toilets, drilling water wells, growing fruit trees are openly and fairly chosen on who does first and does later, who needs support in capital turnover. For example, as Rach Soi area badly needs water, it will be given priority over other areas and was supported with 10 water wells, each costs 1,800,000 dong with ensured good quality according to set standard. Local people support the selection on the basis of difficult conditions of households. The project has also built 10 toilets of which each costs 800,000 dong for each household under the model of Health Department. The project also provided non-refundable assistance of 60% to grow 1000 high quality fruit trees worth 8,500,000 dong.

As the project has social characteristics, initially the project management board were confused about how to implement, and had to learn by practising. However, thanks to transparency and democracy, and information to local authorities, mass organisations, and religious dignities ( in the hamlet, there is Cao Dai temple and pagoda) and all people in the hamlet are well aware. As every hamlet has participating representatives, people actively and crowdedly participate and change their lifestyle for the better. However, the project can not meet all aspirations to build models from local people, but has to mobilize people's contribution. For example, each SEF toilet is supported with 800,000 dong and people have to make more contribution to build bathroom combined and the upper structures over the toilet.

SEF project is the beginning for a new life in the hamlet. Although the project's operation was only one year, contents on environmental issues are still incorporated into life activities of people and mass organisations in the hamlet after three years have passed. The green volunteering group is very enthusiastic and always maintains activities to mobilize hamlet people to dismantle unhygienic toilets on the canal or before the house and to build ru-

ral roads. The model of toilet combined with water well is the most suitable for their pressing needs. Plant growing model has yielded good results, generating income for growers. Households committed to capital return in one year. The capital is managed by the hamlet farmers association and monitored by local people. The scenery is clean, the countryside's face has changed, the roads have been better, new bridges facilitate easy travel for farmers in both dry and rainy seasons. Wild plants and weeds have been cleared, wastes have been cleaned up, buried or burned. The village relations have been strengthened, people live in harmony and have more responsibility.

Thanks to the project, the hamlet authority has mobilized local people to demolish unhygienic toilets on canals and before the house, improving environmental and sanitation conditions in the hamlet. Can Tho province's urban works company has contacted and coordinated with the project owner to mobilize people alongside the national road in market places, factories, and offices to put up dust bins, rubbish baskets so that everyday a vehicle will come to collect to one concentration place and this has been strongly supported by local people.

The project in Thanh Loi hamlet is among 35 projects on rural environmental protection based on awareness enhancement under participatory approach that is supported by Sida Environmental Fund and have been implemented in Mekong River delta area for the past 9 years. Operation of projects sponsored by the Fund have targeted the right subjects in the remote areas, to inspire people's awareness, managing to build concrete models directed at the objective of environmental protection, especially sustainable agricultural rural development in Mekong River delta area.



## The Role of Community Organizations in Environmental Protection and Nature Conservation

By Nguyen Van Long, AG Member

### Introduction

Recently, an environmental issue has knocked at every family's door, every community group, the whole society and it become an urgent issue. Because of this reason all concerning people pay special attention to this issue. However, it can be said that there is still a big gap between such an attention which reflected in thinking, opinion exchange, in workshops, conferences, in documents of governments at all levels and the investment of material and human resources in order to solve this issue in the reality. This difference leads to a consequence before one's eyes: habitat of all people's communities degrades more and more.

### The Solutions

A question which is often given is in order to solve this problem what should we do?

- Wait for an investment through programs, projects of the state?
- Wait for donations/grants of international environment organizations?
- Wait for any miracle to happen???

There are reasons behind such hopes, waits. Maybe because of severely difficult lives of the majority of people do not allow them to realize their hope. Maybe because the issue is beyond the capacity to solve the problem of a community group, a locality or even a nation.

And for a long time in our thought of subsidized economy there have always been a psychology to wait for someone to give a hand to help solve a problem that have direct impacts on our lives day by day?

However, if we just wait, will the problem we are facing be solved by itself? Whereas its consequences being life degradation which nobody else but we, our families, our children have to burden are very tough.

Remember an infamous saying of General Party Secretary Nguyen Van Linh "save ourselves before God save us". Action by efforts of ourselves, our families and community. Because the only efforts of ourselves, our families and community can solve this problem in the short term and in a certain level and such the efforts shall contribute great to the entire society.

### Mass organizations in the context of environment protection

We all know that: addressing environmental issue can hardly be done by single individual effort but it is necessary to pool the strength of the entire community. However, there is an objective reality: for a long time we are constraint, subsidized even in our thinking and action (this subsidy is derived from a period of subsidy economy comprehensively). Almost social activities of the community are mainly initiated by those social organizations and unions and each individual implement in passive manner, although those activities are in close relation with their lives in the community. It is to allow us to affirm that: the role of social organizations and unions in solving social issues is significant, even decisive. From the common practical situation, it is necessary to assess, analyze the role of such an organization or union in solving environment issues.





## Positive Impacts

**First:** Once those organizations pay their special attention, have strong leadership and close instruction, initiate operational methods and contents practically, encourage and motivate timely their members the efficiency and effectiveness of solving the environment issue shall be huge. This has been affirmed through practical situation of many localities. Through SEF activities over the past many typical cases undertaken by the mass organizations obtained remarkable achievements in environmental problem solving. For example, a project in Son Kim Commune, Huong Son district, Ha Tinh province – implemented by the Women Union and spilt over to the Farmers' Union, teenagers' union and other unions. Even some unions by self-consciousness gathered their members to participate actively in solving this issue. By efforts of the unions and local governments the environment protection becomes their self-consciousness. It is not necessary to have investment of higher level. Another example is in Nghi Lien commune, Nghi Loc District, Nghe An province, the Women Union initiated the movement and its sub branch at village level and other associations responds the movement positively. This

movement now becomes self-disciplinary. People are self aware of specific activities, contribute their assets to invest in construction of common welfare work for environment protection. The people's consciousness of environment protection improved remarkably.

**Secondly:** Environment protection cannot be done in one shut, month of action should be conducted repeatedly and frequently. Because of this reason, it is necessary to cooperate and collaborate comprehensively from all organization's members and the most important thing is the efforts of the executive manager. The biggest difficulty is not only in giving an idea but also to maintain the activities permanently. From actions initially in a movement to create self awareness. In order to achieve this requirement, the leader and core members of the union should be patient, passion and in many cases know how to die their individual benefit for the common goal. Because we can see clearly the negative impacts of pollutions, but due to difficult economic life many people will chose economic benefit for themselves. Not only that, in our psychology and habit and awareness environment is not highly aware and put in a proper position.

**Thirdly:** Socio-political organizations are present at all localities and systematically from central to local level therefore if they have proper encouragement and motivation people to have idea, and acting to protect the environment

## Limitations

**Firstly:** Awareness of this issue does not meet our wishes.

**Secondly:** As the system was influenced by many levels and individuals, red tape is an issue.

**Thirdly:** Resources invested in associations solving environmental issues is basically zero.





## Some thoughts on environmental protection in the upcoming period

After a long time supporting the community in solving environmental issues, SEF has oriented their priorities on community initiatives that emphasize on building volunteer communities that join together to protect the environment on their own areas. We can call this the very first steps to promote the development of civil society organizations. The support to volunteer groups is to help overcoming shortcomings when it was entrusted on earlier socio-political organizations. However, the activities of these groups still meet with difficulties. Specifically:

**First:** Some local areas are not familiar with the new organization method and therefore have administrative intervention in the activities of the group. Because of the deep interventions, the group lost its autonomy and gradually commits the shortcomings like those that were ahead of them.

**Secondly:** These groups still have to gain support and guidance from organizations, from the grass root authority and therefore, their ideas were “distorted” and easily follow the route of being “association”.

**Thirdly:** The capacity of the group leaders are often limited, being too familiar with the old ways of con-

ducting work while to find the real expert to help them plan and organize and actual directing in a professional manner is not easy. This is non-existent in many local areas because if they use experienced staff, they would certainly use their old experiences and re-organize their association to become “fully dependent” on some certain socio-political organizations.

**Fourthly:** Groups are very confused in seeking the content of their tasks because if it is based on only the environmental content, it would be very poor in their group activities and do not create excitement. If other contents are introduced, they may be overlapping with those existing associations in the area.

Through analyses of the strengths and weaknesses of the socio-political organizations, through the piloting process to support com-

munity group with their difficulties and problems as above, and especially through the experiences and initial outcomes of some projects in the North Central region, we would like to make a few proposals:

**First:** It is necessary to inherit from some socio-political group. Inheritance character is shown in the use of the leader, members and method of operation and on that basis, to bring environmental issue in combination with activities of these organizations in a practical manner. This is evidenced by the results from the investment for these organizations in solving environmental issues have created big impacts. To do this, it is necessary to have the top-down impact. From macro policy planning by the State, the impact of environmental organizations, from ministries, departments and industries.

**Secondly:** Based on the combination of the contents and human resources utilization in solving environmental issues, an issue arose: Environmental issues are becoming a pressing issue, a big ratio in the activities and its uniqueness will become more independent and will certainly pose a request that itself will become an independent voice. It will “automatically separate” and become an independent organization. To speed up this process, there needs special attention



from the organizations. Through some projects, this trend appears and is becoming more defined. This is the very early form of civil society organizations in environmental protection. The most vivid example is the Vinh Quang – Vinh Linh – Quang Tri project. At first, the technical group was run by the Women Union in the commune, after the project end, the team has operated very independently and the social effects were recognized by the people and secured a stable position.

**Thirdly:** Due to high pressure of environmental issues, in some local areas, there will be initiative to form groups and autonomy organizations to serve the purpose of protecting their basic rights that are being invaded. Perhaps, the group of the communities that was impacted by industrial zones, factories...Those organizations were generally vulnerable in the beginning. Therefore, here, the role to identify and nurture them is very important. This is clearly shown in some local areas. The people voluntarily carry out environmental protection activities. However, the organization remains loose and easy to dissolve.

**Fourthly:** It is important to mobilize from the macro level to create mechanism, policies for these organizations to develop. However, one should not only bank on the upper leader but it should be a long-term struggle in the mind of the managers to adapt to a new trend: not all social organizations are created by the Party and State.

Above are the analyses from the practical point of view of observation in advisory for SEF projects and some initial proposals in creating a position for civil societies in environmental protection.

## SEF-funded Projects in 2006: Characteristics and Patterns

*By Hoang Thanh Tam SEF Chairwoman*

After one year of the implementation of 42 projects, many projects were and are going to be completed which have significant impacts in the localities. However, the implementation of some projects or the submission of progress reports to SEF has been delayed, such as SEF/14/06, SEF/15/06, SEF/19/06, SEF/20/06, SEF/23/06, SEF/32/06, SEF/33/06, SEF/37/06 and SEF/41/06.

With the support of SEF, capacity-building and institutional development for civil society organizations have been a main focus to promote participation and involvement in decision-making in all activities relating to the management and utilization of national resources and environmental protection in localities. The formulation and development of organizations and community groups are diverse, depending on the conditions, and initiatives of each project. For example, in Project SEF/01/06 in Tram Tau, Yen Bai province, 54 members were grouped into five, in accordance to their hamlet area. In Project SEF/02/06 in Quang Chu, Bac Kan province, four groups on biogas, micro organic

fertilizer production and clean tea and vegetable production were established. In Tam Dao, Vinh Phuc province, three favourite groups on sanitary pig raising, clean chayote growing and forest and hill garden improvement were set up under Project SEF/04/06. In Nga Son, Thanh Hoa province, three groups of poor, middle-class and well-to-do households were created to do intensive farming of sedge under Project SEF/07/06. With the support of the project, the new technology for up scaling fertilizer placement was applied, which not only decreased the input expenditures for the production, but also protected the environment. In addition, many kinds of clubs and teams made up of volunteer environmentalists were also formed and were able to strengthen their capacity, such as SEF/05/06, SEF/16/06, SEF/21/06, SEF/22/06, SEF/28/06, SEF/35/06, SEF/37/06, SEF/39/06 and SEF/41/06. Group members were close-knit and willing to share their knowledge and experiences and help each other to develop the economy and to protect the local environment.



# REFLECTION

▶▶ People supported and were actively involved in group work in all of the projects, from the Northern mountainous area to the Mekong River Delta. In many projects, such as SEF/01/06, SEF/02/06, SEF/03/06, SEF/10/06, SEF/12/06, SEF/25/06, SEF/26/06, SEF/34/06 and SEF/36/06, the people deeply understood the importance of group work. Therefore, they actively participated and became key members in communicating information about environmental protection in the community. This resulted in significantly changing public awareness and step by step drawing people's attention to environmental sanitation and protection. It became a regular and open activity of the people. In Project SEF/05/06 in Phuc Tho, Ha Tay province, 60 women of four voluntary groups collected rubbish in four hamlets. They mobilized 90% of households to participate in the village and hamlet cleansing campaigns every Sunday. Under Project SEF/30/06 in Dakrong, Quang Tri province, 38 environmental activists mobilized the community, especially Van Kieu ethnic minority groups in 16/23 hamlets of four communes, to dig holes for rubbish, and to move breeding facilities far from their houses. Thanks to the active work of 20 voluntary groups in Project SEF/34/06, 'green tourism' to Phu Ninh Lake became more and more attractive when "Tam Dai Green Village" was cleaned up and 32 dirty breeding facilities were moved far from the one-way roadside. It is a fact that many SEF project areas, hamlets and villages were cleaned up, there was no more litter and the atmosphere became fresher.

Apart from community groups, many groups and organizations made up of youths, students or volunteers also participated in activities on environmental protection. These groups/organizations are very active and have a lot of initiatives relating to environmental protection in their localities. In fact, their activities have received support from the community, concerned branches



and local authorities. For example, the "Green Ocean Group", with the support of Project SEF/32/06, focused on helping the people of Tho Quang ward, Da Nang to address the consequences of the Sangsane Storm; by organizing weekly campaigns named "Green Sunday"; and especially by conducting roundtable discussions between youth union members and people with enterprises and local authorities with the theme "For a fresher environment in your locality". Hoi An Conservation Club organized two campaigns on cleansing the urban environment and the Thu Bon River with the participation of people from five communes and eight wards, foreign tourists and 20 members of "the Green Ocean Group" through the support of Project SEF/33/06, in combination with other financial resources. Furthermore, the Club also conducted many environmental communication activities, such as a bicycle riding parade, training, drawing contests, hamlet meetings to disseminate knowledge on the environment, and a system of classification of rubbish at home with the implementation commitment of 513 representatives of households commune-wide. Due to some legal difficulties, the goal of the club's development has not been

fully achieved. However, up to now, 12 new members have been admitted. Two skills training courses and ten meetings were conducted. The Project SEF/14/06, implemented by the Center for Nature and People Reconciliation (PAN), assembled 13 voluntary groups on the environment with the participation of 1,820 youths and students. The Project also developed a manual; organized three training courses for volunteer environmentalists in three regions; and supported all groups to implement pilot activities. In addition, to facilitate communication, the Center established an e-mail list with the participation of 120 volunteer environmentalists and maintained the operation of the E&M online forum with 210 Vietnamese and foreign members. This shows that, nowadays, more and more youths are paying attention and have taken positive action for a cleaner environment. This is also an essential resource for the environmental protection movement in Vietnam.

Some hot environmental issues were also supported and addressed by SEF based on the partners' proposals. Under Project SEF/08/06, two TV reports and a number of handbooks titled "Food Safety Hygiene" were developed and pub-



lished, which provided necessary scientific and technical information for households and establishments in producing and trading safe foodstuffs in Vinh City and the surrounding areas. Furthermore, issues relating to the production of clean and environmentally friendly foodstuffs were addressed in many projects through technical training courses, pilots of mushroom growing in Project SEF/12/06, and safe vegetable production in Projects SEF/04/06, SEF/08/06, SEF/16/06, SEF/17/06, SEF/31/06 and SEF/39/06. Under Project SEF/15/06, research was conducted, in which the voices of the local people on the social and environmental impact of industrial processing zones were reflected. The research also provided some resolutions for the development of industrial processing zones and environmental protection in Ho Chi Minh City, Dong Nai and Ba Ria-Vung Tau provinces.

A rights-based approach was applied by Project SEF/11/06, implemented by the Thua Thien Hue Sub-association for Natural Conservation (NC) as a pilot. With the technical support of the NC, the operational capacity of the Forestry Extension Club of Phu Mau Hamlet, Nam Dong district, Thua Thien Hue, which included 30 members, was strengthened in order to be able to manage, protect and develop 30 ha of natural forest substantively. Their activities included skills training for group development, providing

technology to enrich the forest, and regular meetings. Particularly, two roundtable discussions on policies related to forest land allocation as well as resolutions to enrich the natural forest were conducted between members of the Club, the local authorities and functional agencies. Thanks to the practical activities as mentioned above, local people have the right to hope that poverty can be reduced and they can rely on forestry. It is also a significant contribution to the protection of the green heart of their community.

In addition, many projects brought together the common voices of the people with an aim of protecting the environment and the natural resources, such as SEF/03/06, SEF/10/06, SEF/11/06, SEF/30/06, SEF/31/06, SEF/32/06, SEF/34/06, SEF/37/06 and SEF/40/06. With SEF support, people had the opportunity to participate in community activities such as roundtable discussions, which served as dialogues where they could express their opinions on environmental issues at meetings or through local radio. In one short morning, the Project Management Board of Phu Mau 2 Cooperative became a "bridge" between the people and local authorities. Through the roundtable discussion, the responsibilities of the community, the agricultural-fishery processing establishments, the local authorities, the environmental management agencies and the media were made clear in addressing the

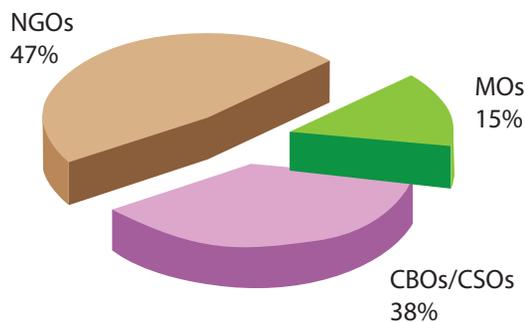
issue of environmental pollution in the Khmer ethnic minority group of Tai Van commune, Soc Trang province. Additionally, people had the chance to discuss their Village Regulations on environmental protection in Gia Do, Quang Tri province and Vinh Chan, Phu Tho province; to give comments on the process of the development of the Media Strategy and Action Plan on environmental protection in four communes of buffer zones of the Dakrong Natural Reservation Area; to participate in a roundtable discussion held in Tho Quang ward and a Pictures Exhibition about the Channel in Nhieu Loc, Thi Nghe as well as in a roundtable discussion on measures to improve the environment of the Thi Vai River, Ho Chi Minh City. It is believed that hot issues relating to the environment and national resources protection raised by the people will be heard by the authorities at all levels. Therefore, concrete action plans will be developed. Responsibility for protecting the environment is not only that of management agencies and local authorities, but also of the local people. This is not a hot issue within the village. It should be addressed by policy-makers at both micro and macro levels. Besides, more importantly, the people and their representing organizations will be empowered when SEF provides them with the opportunity to manage and implement relevant projects by themselves.

## Statistics of SEF-funded Projects

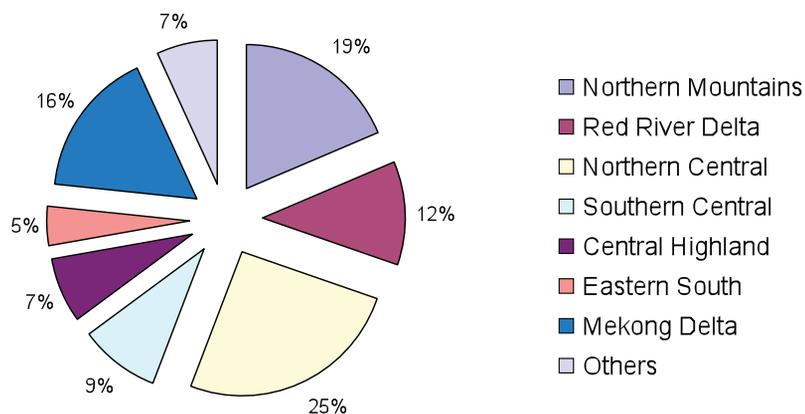
SEF reached its 10th year of contribution to the course of environmental protection and natural resource conservation in Vietnam by the period of 2006 – 2007. To cope up with new social changes, SEF has shifted its direction and focus during this period, which is reflected in the below statistics.

Total submitted applications: 144  
 Number of eligible applications: 131  
 Total projects approved: 43  
 Total funding budget: 302,900.00 US dollars equivalent  
 Smallest project budget: 2,200.00 US dollars  
 Biggest project budget: 15,000.00 US dollars

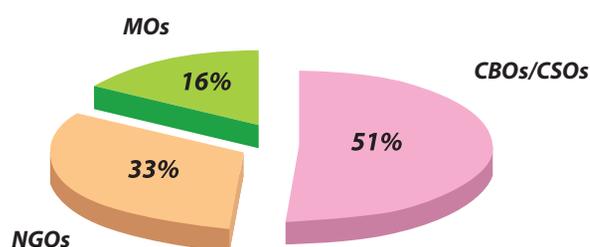
### Summary of submitted applications:



### Classification of SEF-funded projects by geographical distribution



### Classification of SEF-funded projects by types of organizations



# FUNDED PROJECT IN 2006 - 2007

Project Code	Grantee	Project Site	Project Title
<b>SEF/01/06</b>	Loc Mau La, Vice Chairman of Farmer Union in Tram Tau district, Yen Bai province	Hat Luu commune, Tram Tau district, Yen Bai province	Environmental protection and Thai ethnic's life improvement in Hat Luu commune, Tram Tau district, Yen Bai province
<b>SEF/02/06</b>	Pham Van Thanh, Director of Centre for Rural Communities Research & Development	Quang Chu commune, Cho Moi district, Bac Kan province	Enhancing capacity of environmental protection for communities in Quang Chu commune, Cho Moi district, Bac Kan province
<b>SEF/03/06</b>	Đuong Cong Hoan, Leader of Agricultural Extension Group in Vinh Chan commune, Ha Hoa district, Phu Tho province	Vinh Chan commune, Ha Hoa district, Phu Tho province	Improving the environment to raise living standard for communities in Vinh Chan commune.
<b>SEF/04/06</b>	Luu Thi Lan, Chairperson of Women and Environment Club in Minh Quang commune, Tam Dao district, Vinh Phuc province	Xa Huong village of Minh Quang commune, Tam Dao district, Vinh Phuc province	Strengthening the capacity and the activities for the Women and Environment Club.
<b>SEF/05/06</b>	Nguyen Thi Minh, Leader of women volunteer Group for rubbish collection.	Cam Dinh commune, Phuc Tho district, Ha Tay province	Raising environmental awareness through strengthening capacity and volunteer activities for groups in regard of rubbish collection in Cam Dinh commune, Phuc Tho district, Ha Tay province
<b>SEF/06/06</b>	Đang Đức Tao, Chairman of Science & Technology Union of Ninh Binh province	Gia Sinh commune, Gia Vien district, Ninh Binh province	Enhancing awareness and capacity of environmental protection and natural resource management for sustainable development in the buffer zone of special - use forest - Culture, History and Environment at Hoa Lu, Ninh Binh.
<b>SEF/07/06</b>	Bui Van Tuan, Head of village 3, Nga Tien commune, Nga Son district, Thanh Hoa province	Village 3, Nga Tien commune, Nga Son district, Thanh Hoa province	Applying improved model of Sedge intensive cultivation to reduce environmental pollution and increase income for the poor
<b>SEF/08/06</b>	Hoang Xuan Truong, Director of Centre for Environment & Development in Nghe an province	Vinh city and Hung Long commune, Hung Nguyen district, Nghe An province	Establish networks of scientific and technical information provided for business, manufacturers and consumers on safety foods in Vinh city and surroundings.

## FUNDED PROJECT IN 2006 - 2007

Project Code	Grantee	Project Site	Project Title
<b>SEF/10/06</b>	Nguyen Thi Ngoc Lien, Women's Union Branch of Gia Do hamlet, Trieu Do commune, Trieu Phong district, Quang Tri province	Trieu Do commune, Trieu Phong district, Quang Tri province	Training to raise environmental knowledge and create movement of environmental protection for communities.
<b>SEF/11/06</b>	Pham Ngoc Dung, Head of Sub-association for natural conservation in Thua Thien Hue	Phu Mau village, Huong Phu commune, Nam Dong district, Thua Thien Hue province	Building model of management, protection and sustainable developing natural forest based on peoples right.
<b>SEF/12/06</b>	Nguyen Tri, Member of Farmer Union in Cam Duc commune, Cam Ranh district, Khanh Hoa province	Cam Duc commune, Cam Ranh district, Khanh Hoa province	Enhancing awareness and capacity of environmental protection for community and building a model for agricultural waste treatment to reduce environmental pollution.
<b>SEF/13/06</b>	Ama Nhui, Chairman of CuM'gar Fatherland Front Committee	Kna B village, CuM'gar commune, CuM'gar district, Dak Lak province.	Applying E-De unwritten law in forest, water resource and land protection.
<b>SEF/14/06</b>	Nguyen Viet Dung, Vice - Director of Nature and People (PanNature).	Ha Noi, Da Nang and Ho Chi Minh City	Strengthening capacity and developing environmental volunteer groups oriented towards a civil society in Vietnam
<b>SEF/15/06</b>	Truong Đang Thuy, Centre for Environmental Economy and Sustainable development	Industrial zones in Ho Chi Minh City and Dong Nai, Baria-Vung Tau	Community voice about socio - environmental impact of the industrial zone.
<b>SEF/16/06</b>	Nguyen Thi Lam, Green Volunteer Group for community health of Binh Thanh commune, Thanh Phu district, Ben Tre province.	Binh Thanh commune, Thanh Phu district, Ben Tre province	Raising environmental awareness and strengthening capability and activities in water resource protection and rubbish treatment for community living along rivers.
<b>SEF/17/06</b>	Chau Ngoc Hong, Chairperson of Women Union in Phu Tan, My Tu district, Soc Trang province	Phu Tan commune, My Tu district, Soc Trang province	Raising awareness on environmental protection for Khmer ethnic women to develop a green community and the movement on organic fertilizer making and organic vegetables for household use.

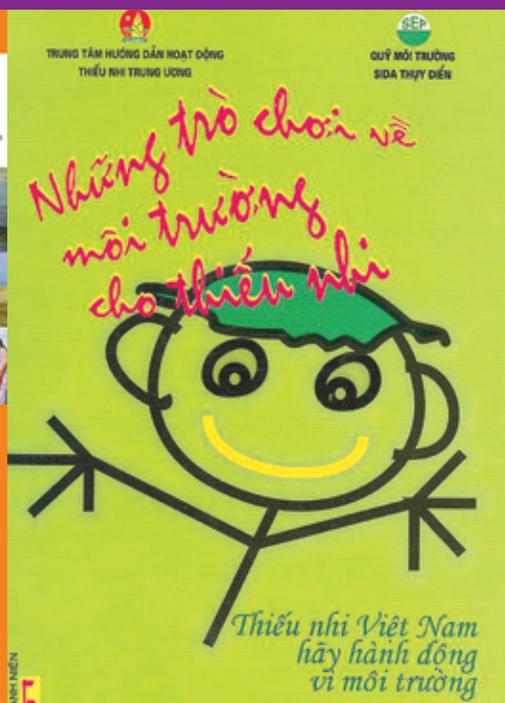
Project Code	Grantee	Project Site	Project Title
<b>SEF/18/06</b>	Lu Phi Thuong, Chairperson of Red Cross in Tan Loc commune, Thoi Binh district, Ca Mau province	Tan Loc commune, Thoi Binh district, Ca Mau province	Mobilizing the participation of Tan Loc religion community in environmental hygiene activities and improvement of the living standard
<b>SEF/19/06</b>	Bui Trong Thuy, Head of Cua Luy hamlet, Doan Ket commune, Yen Thuy district, Hoa Binh province	Cua Luy hamlet, Doan Ket commune, Yen Thuy district, Hoa Binh province	Improving environmental and living condition for the poor in Cua Luy hamlet, Doan Ket commune
<b>SEF/20/06</b>	Ly Thi Xuyen, Chairperson of Women Union of Ngoc Linh commune, Vi Xuyen district, Ha Giang province	Ngoc Linh commune, Vi Xuyen district, Ha Giang province	Environmental protection which aims at raising the living standard for the ethnic community of Ngoc Linh commune
<b>SEF/21/06</b>	Dinh Ngoc Hai, Vice - Chairman of Cao Bang Association for Conservation of Nature and Environment	Pac Bo hamlet, Truong Ha commune, Ha Quang district, Cao Bang province	Building Sub - Association for Conservation of Nature and Environment in Pac Bo hamlet
<b>SEF/22/06</b>	Nguyen Nguyen Cuong, Director of Centre for Education and Communication of Environment	Ban Vuoc commune, Bat Xat district, Lao Cai province	Enhancing awareness and capacity of environmental protection for Environmental Clubs and community groups in Ban Vuoc commune.
<b>SEF/23/06</b>	Hoang Van Hien, Director of Center for Rural and Mountainous Development Research	Ban Nang hamlet, Tan Doan commune, Van Quan district, Lang Son province	Raising management capacity of biological environment for communities in Ban Nang and Lung Pa hamlets
<b>SEF/24/06</b>	Nguyen Van Hoa, Head of Trang Sinh hamlet, Trong Quan commune, dong Hung district, Thai Binh province	Trang Sinh hamlet, Trong Quan commune, Dong Hung district, Thai Binh province	Raising awareness for the poor and creating the habit of using clean water, waste collection and treatment for the environmental protection and the communities' health.
<b>SEF/25/06</b>	Doan Dinh Chieu, Member of Farmer and Environment Club of Giao Ha commune, Giao Thuy district, Nam Dinh province	Son Chau and Son Ha hamlets, Giao Ha commune, Giao Thuy district, Nam Dinh province	Enhancing awareness and capacity of environmental protection for people in Giao Ha commune.

## FUNDED PROJECT IN 2006 - 2007

Project Code	Grantee	Project Site	Project Title
<b>SEF/26/06</b>	Vi Van Xum, Head of Elderly Sub-Association of Thanh Xuan hamlet, Xuan Cam commune, Thuong Xuan district, Thanh Hoa province	Thanh Xuan hamlet, Xuan Cam commune, Thuong Xuan district, Thanh Hoa province	Improving peoples living condition in the buffer zone of Xuan Lien Nature Reserve through raising awareness, transferring structure of cultivated plants and domestic animals to reduce deforestation due to poverty.
<b>SEF/27/06</b>	Lo Thi Tam, Group of Environmental Protection People of Hoa Binh town, Tuong Duong district, Nghe An province	Hoa Binh town, Tuong Duong district, Nghe An province	Connecting networks of volunteer groups on environmental propaganda, raising awareness and building a model of self - environmental management in Hoa Binh town.
<b>SEF/28/06</b>	Tu Thi Phuong Nga, Director of Pro - Poor Centre, Ha Tinh province	Vinh Loc commune, Can Loc district, Ha Tinh province	Model of biological fertilizer production in household by using agricultural waste.
<b>SEF/29/06</b>	Pham Mau Tai, Director of Quang Ninh Rural Development and Poverty Reduction Fund	Truong Son commune, Quang Ninh district, Quang Binh province	Strengthening capacity of natural resource management to improve living standard for Van Kieu community in Truong Son commune.
<b>SEF/30/06</b>	Tran Minh Phuong, Centre for Natural Resources and Environmental Studies (CRES)	4 communes Mo O, Dakrong, Ta Long, Huc Nghi, Dakrong district, Quang Tri province	Communication – Raising awareness - Promoting Van Kieu ethnic people participation in process of making decisions on environmental protection in the buffer zone of Dakrong Nature Reserve.
<b>SEF/31/06</b>	Ha Ut, Head of Agricultural cooperative Phu Mau 2, Vong Tri hamlet, Phu Mau commune, Phu Vang district, Thua Thien Hue province	Tien Non, Vong Tri, The Vinh, Thanh Tien hamlets, Phu Mau commune, Phu Vang district, Thua Thien Hue province	Enhancing capacity of protection and overcome environmental situation to connect with sustainable development for local people and members of the Agricultural Cooperative Phu Mau 2
<b>SEF/32/06</b>	Vu Thi Trang, Leader of Green Ocean Group, Da Nang University	Thanh Vinh1, Thanh Vinh 2, Man Quang, Loc Phuoc, Tho An blocks, Tho Quang ward, Son Tra ward Da Nang city.	Propaganda and raising awareness and action on environmental protection for the youth in Tho Quang ward.

Project Code	Grantee	Project Site	Project Title
<b>SEF/33/06</b>	Dinh Van Hai, Head of Hoi An Conservation Club, Quang Nam province	Hoi An - World Cultural Heritage	Strengthening capacity for Hoi An Conservation Club, contributing to improve environmental sanity in World Cultural Heritage Hoi An
<b>SEF/34/06</b>	Ho Ngoc Duong, Tam Dai commune, Phu Ninh district, Quang Nam province	Tam Dai commune, Phu Ninh district, Quang Nam province	Green Village
<b>SEF/35/06</b>	Nguyen Thi Thuan, Leader of Volunteer Team of Environment - Gender - Community Health of Dak Cam commune, Kon Tum town	Dak Cam commune, Kon Tum town	Raising awareness and capacity of environmental protection for local people and building some models to reduce environmental pollution and regression in Dak Cam commune.
<b>SEF/36/06</b>	Vu Huynh Uyen Bao, Head of VAC Club of Loc Phat ward, Bao Loc town, Lam Dong province	Loc Phat ward, Bao Loc town, Lam Dong province	Raising awareness and building model of environmental protection to create a green, clean and beautiful environment for local community in Loc Phat ward.
<b>SEF/37/06</b>	Nguyen Trung Dung, Vice - Chairman of Environmental Club, Sub - Association Asia Science Research, Ho Chi Minh city	Ho Chi Minh City	Increasing awareness and capacity of environmental protection for people in the suburbs of Ho Chi Minh city and disseminating knowledge and information about environment.
<b>SEF/38/06</b>	Truong Van Duc, Head of Agricultural Cooperative Hung Thanh, Can Tho City	Dinh Mon commune, Co Do district, Can Tho city	Diversifying environmental activities - raising capacity for local people and members of Agricultural Cooperative Hung Thanh, Dinh Mon commune.
<b>SEF/39/06</b>	Phan Van Thuc, IBM Club of Vinh Trung commune, Vi Thuy district, Hau Giang province	Vinh Trung commune, Vi Thuy district, Hau Giang province	Raising awareness on environmental protection and restore traditional trade in Vinh Trung commune.
<b>SEF/40/06</b>	Thach Sel, Vice – Head of Farmer Union of Tai Van commune, My Xuyen district, Soc Trang province	Tai Van commune, My Xuyen district, Soc Trang province	Increasing awareness of using sustainable natural resources and linkage with some solutions to overcome environmental pollution situation in Khmer ethnic region in Tai Van commune.
<b>SEF/41/06</b>	Thach Kien, Agricultural Extension Club of Vinh Hai commune, Vinh Chau district, Soc Trang province	Vinh Hai commune, Vinh Chau district, Soc Trang province	Solutions for reducing environmental pollution in region of Khmer ethnic in Vinh Hai commune.
<b>SEF/42/06</b>	Nguyen Ngoc Sinh, Chairman of Vietnam Association for conservation of nature and environment	Ha Noi, Ho Chi Minh city, Da Nang	Enhancing capacity for Vietnam Association for conservation of nature and environment and affiliated organizations on environmental protection activities at communities.
<b>SEF/43/06</b>	Tran Duy Phuong, Editor in Chief of Science and Life Newspaper	High schools and vocational education schools in nationwide	The Fourth Contest on “Improving the use and the protection of water resource” for high school student.

# SEF RESOURCES AND MATERIALS



By Nguyen Thi Viet Hoa, Secretary cum Accountant

During the past few years, several publications were produced by SEF to provide information and knowledge for the community in order to implement projects more effectively. We would like to introduce some publications that have been useful in the implementation of projects and follow-up activities, especially projects concerning the protection of the environment.

Throughout the process of industrialization in Vietnam, reducing environmental pollution from industrial processing zones and factories, as well as protecting the national environment in rural, agricultural areas has been essential. However, to effectively protect the environment, the first thing that should be addressed is the awareness of the people about environmental issues. The Handbook on Environmental Hygiene provides basic definitions and introduces ways for people to care about the environment in their daily life and work. In addition, the handbook also introduces cultivation methods from VAC (Garden – pond – cage) involving the use of fertilizer, managing waste, building latrines, and saving energy. With this handbook, farmers can learn how to utilize more environmentally friendly farming techniques and how to be creative with the natural resources available to them.

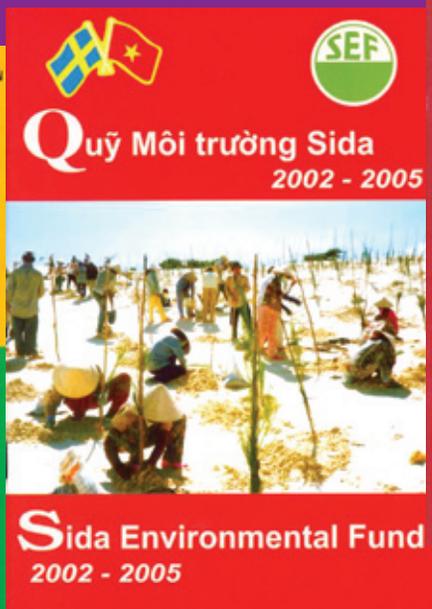
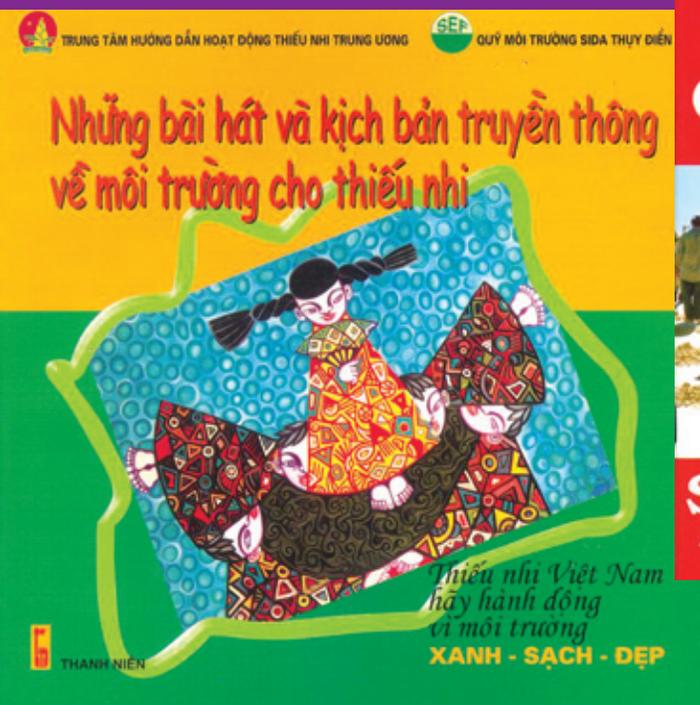
Information plays an important role in protecting the environment. Widespread communication about environmental issues not only educates the people, but also fosters collaboration efforts to improve the behaviour and attitudes towards the environment in the whole community. The Handbook on the Dissemination of Environmental Information is a good reference for environmentalists. The handbook not only provides general tips on how best to disseminate information, but also introduces effective forms of communication with specific guidelines that can be referred to and applied in rural areas.

Furthermore, two booklets titled , Environmental Songs and Stories for Children and Environment Games for Children are interesting publications designed specifically for children. The songs, games and stories help to raise the awareness of children about important environmental issues and how to care of their environment.

*“Our forest is from our great grand father  
Our forest is from our great grand mother  
We are grand daughters and sons  
We have to protect the forest  
To protect the mountains  
Must protect the land  
Must protect environmental resources  
Must keep water resources”.*

These admonitions from the village patriarchs and matriarchs from a long time ago are still valid. They have been passed down from generation to generation in the villages of the E-De minority ethnic group. However, particularly in Dak Lak and Tay Nguyen, natural resources have been seriously destroyed and nearly totally exhausted. In light of this situation, the E-De minority people have made a collection of traditional customary laws, and published them in both their E-De language and in Vietnamese in 2006. They are called the, “E-De Customary Laws on Protecting Forest, Land, and Water Resources.” This activity was under the Project SEF/13/06 completed between January 2006 and June 2007.

The book includes customary laws as well as some new ones collected from all villages of the E-De minority ethnic group in thirteen districts and cities around Buon Ma Thuot. It consists of six key laws, namely protecting the forests, natural resources, land, water resources and undomesticated animals. The book is not only a worthy documentation of the values and culture of the E-de people, but it also contains useful material for IEC activities on protecting the environment and for



developing village regulations on protecting natural resources.

Besides the E-De Customary Law book, there is another book published by SEF in collaboration with the Voice of Vietnam in 2000 called, "Health and Environmental Hygiene." In 2003 it was published in the languages of the E-De, H'mong and Khmer minority ethnic groups. With a simple message and vivid pictures, the book provides people from the minority ethnic groups with the knowledge of how to protect their natural resources, and it helps them to understand the consequences of destroying the environment. In addition, it also provides methods for preserving the environment with simple and effective hygiene.

Through these books, the minority ethnic groups are able to increase their knowledge related to the environment in their own languages, as well as have the advantages of conducting IEC activities on environmental protection in their own communities.

We would also like to introduce a collection of articles on the environment published in Vietnamese newspapers. A booklet called, "People Protecting the Environment"

was published by SEF in collaboration with the Hanoi Information Science and Technology Association in 2000. The booklet includes sixty articles about a variety of protective measures that were published in central and local newspapers, such as The People (Nhan Dan), People's Army, and Ha Noi Moi. The booklet introduces economic development and environmental protection. While it is not the most recent compilation, it is a useful reference for the whole community.

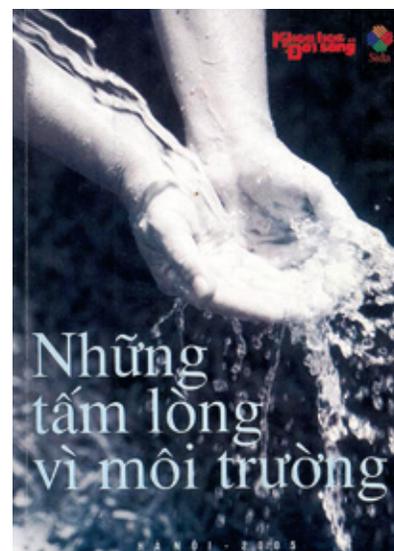
In addition, articles on environmental protection and criticism of environmental degradation were collected in the booklet, "Protecting the Environment for Sustainable Development". This booklet was published by SEF in collaboration with the Technical Service Section of the Vietnam Press Association in 2001 and includes eighty articles published in central and local newspapers.

The book, "Hearts for the Environment," is a collection of writings for a competition called, "Community and Environment" held in 2006 by the Science and Life Newspaper with the support of SEF. The book includes many writings on hot issues related to the environment in

which the writers expressed their feelings and shared their concerns about protecting the environment.

Along with these documents, the proceedings of workshops and documents for internal use published by SEF could be useful reference materials for interested individuals and organizations.

Sustainable development and care for the environment are a part of the eight Millennium Development Goals that Vietnam and other countries have committed. And thereby come the hope that these publications will be useful for the community in implementing environmental protection measures resulting in fresher air and a reduction in damage to our environment for future generations.



# ACTIVITIES OF THE ADVISORY GROUP

## AG Members and Office

The AG office had a significant change in its membership, with three new AG members. They are young and working closely to the community and representing different areas of the society, including NGOs, government agencies, and media agencies in different regions of the country. Besides the administrator a full-time secretary cum accountant was added to the AG Office in 2006 to help with the large amount of work.

## AG Meetings

In 18 months (1/06-6/07), there were six AG meetings, three in Ha Noi April 8- 9, May 6, 2006 and May 24, 2007, and three others in Hoi An July 27-28, in Vinh- Nghe An December 17-18, 2006, and in Phu Quoc - Kien Giang March 16-18, 2007.

### **The First and the Second Meeting:**

The AG screened and examined proposals and made recommendations to Sida concerning to 2 batches of approvals. In total 43 projects of which 18 projects for the first batch and 25 for the second one in 2006.

**The Third Meeting:** The AG reviewed progress of 2006 projects and the fund collective activities. In addition, the AG also developed an outline for the SEF proposal about strategy, organization form and operations in the next period.

**The Fourth Meeting:** AG members reported on the first implementation and liquidation progress of SEF projects. Moreover, the AG reviewed SEF activities during the 3rd and 4th quarter as well as discussed on the remaining content plan of this period,

especially about the SEF forum. At the same time, the AG visited project SEF/28/06 in Can Loc district, Ha Tinh province. In addition, the AG also discussed and agreed on the administrative procedures to manage project to ensure projects implementing effectively both on content and financial issues as well as the measures to ensure the projects results in content, progress and including the project report, the AG follow-up and the evaluation .

### **The meeting between Three Small Funds and the Swedish Embassy:**

on November 21, 2006, 2 AG-SEF representatives participated and presented a SEF report in the first 8 months of period 2006-2007 on the new objectives, the target group, the content as well as positive challenges and obstacles to contribute to the new voice for democracy process at a local level and the socialization of environmental protection and sustainable use of natural resources in Vietnam.

**The Fifth Meeting:** the AG reported about the progress of SEF projects and the AG office. The AG also reviewed the SEF activities during the 1st quarter and discussed on the plan of 2nd quarter, 2007.

**The Sixth Meeting:** The AG screened and examined proposals and made recommendations to Sida for approval, in total 32 projects in 2007. The AG also discussed on the SEF work plan from July 2007 to June 2008.

## Training course for project directors

In order to strengthen capacity for project directors by providing them knowledge, skills and experience in

mobilizing the communities in project's activities and management, 2 training workshops were organized for the year 2006's project directors (1&2 batch) from 7-8, May in Ha Noi and from 18 - 19, June in Nha Trang city, with 2 participants of each project. Contents of the training course are:

- General introduction of Sida and SEF
- Instruction for making a plan to implementing a project
- Instructions to carry out project activities (paid attention to skills of Group Development and integrate the guideline for policy dialogue between different groups)
- Instructions for supervising, examination and maintaining a project
- Instructions for managing projects, account documents and project reports.

## Information and Knowledge Dissemination

### **Internal Bulletin and Newsletter**

Internal bulletins that disseminated knowledge and experience on community and SEF activities were published quarterly (in Vietnamese) and SEF newsletter (in English) by the end of the year.

### **Other Materials**

The AG office compiled and published some other materials including, a collection of SEF 2004-2005 project reports, the booklet on SEF projects in 2002-2005, photographs of SEF project activities, the SEF brochure for 2006-2007 and etc. Moreover, project operation experience



such as SEF/18/04 - Tan Phu, Thoi Binh, Ca Mau and SEF/17/05 - Cu Mgar, Dak Lak was also published and showed on television.

Especially, SEF/13/06 - Cu Mgar, Dak Lak has published a bilingual handbook (in Vietnamese and Ede) "Applying Ede unwritten law in forest, water resource and land protection" to disseminate for Ede community in Central Highland.

Under Project SEF/08/06, two TV reports and a number of handbooks titled "Food Safety Hygiene" were developed and published, which provided necessary scientific and technical information for households and establishments in producing and trading safe foodstuffs in Vinh City and the surrounding areas.

More over, SEF/42/06 of VACNE has published 4 handbooks namely "Linkage of environmental protection with hunger elimination and poverty reduction", "Socialisation of the collection and treatment of

living solid waste", "Youth volunteer and Environmental protection", "Education on environmental communication".

SEF has co-supported to VUSTA (Vietnam Union of Science and Technology Association) with a component in Publication on "Collection of documents relating to voluntary organisations of people". That publication will contribute positively to disseminate the documents relating to the policy and regulation about the role, organisation structure, operation and management of voluntary organisations to associations, members and leaders of voluntary associations and state managed staffs at all level. This also contributes to promote effectively the self-control in activities of voluntary organisations and the management of state at all level under law framework.

These materials are summaries of practical and useful experiences from the reality that can be of help for SEF projects and good references for other local communities.

### SEF Website

The AG office had cooperated with the Vietnam Association for Conservation of Nature and Environment (VACNE) to update their website, [www.vacne.org.vn/sef](http://www.vacne.org.vn/sef) until the end of 2006. Since the 4th quarter of 2006 SEF new website [www.sef.org.vn](http://www.sef.org.vn) has been developed and updated regularly. The website is available for all concerned or interested individuals and organizations for reference in both Vietnamese and English.

### Networking

- SEF project network continues to expand for information and experience exchange in order to help one another maintain environmental protection activities in each local area through its contribution to bulletins, newsletters and materials of the AG office.
- SEF bulletins, newsletters and other materials were distributed regularly to organizations implementing SEF projects (including completed ones).





- SEF supported a Vietnamese student to attend the International Children's Environmental Conference organised by UNEP in Malaysia August 2006 as part of an activity supporting the environmental education network.
- 3 members of AG office attended an International Conference on "Building an Asia Pacific Community for Sustainable Development" of East West Centre-USA in cooperation with VUSTA held in Ha Noi, from 7-10 December 2006.

## Project Supervision, Evaluation and Administration

The AG office and its members made efforts in the supervision, the monitoring and the evaluation of project activities in order to speed up completion of these activities as well as reporting procedures, including financial reporting. However, some projects still do not complete as required.

With practical experience from the previous years, the AG and the administrator updated the "Guidance on SEF Project building", and the

"Guidance on SEF Project Management" that specified necessary procedures for this issue. The AG and its office also improved forms of reports and procedures for better financial management. The AG office also prepared the 2005 annual report, the work plan of the phase (1/2006 - 6/2007) and SEF mid-term 2006 report, SEF activities in the first 8 months and the 2006 annual report submitted to Sida.

In September 2006, the AG office met and worked with the auditing team of Ernst & Young for the period 2000-2005.



# SEF

The Sida Environmental Fund (SEF) was established by the Swedish Embassy in Hanoi, Vietnam and started operating in July 1997 aiming at promoting local initiatives in environmental protection and sustainable use of natural resources.

SEF is managed by Sida with assistance of a Vietnamese Advisory Group (AG). Based on the voluntary principle, eight AG members are the representatives of different organizations with responsibility to provide overall guidance and strategic directions for the fund, study and evaluate the applications, and monitor funded projects.

## SEF Advisory Group

### **Chairwoman**

Mrs. Hoang Thanh Tam

### **Members**

Mr. Trinh Le Nguyen

Mr. Nguyen Van Long

Mr. Nguyen Huy Hien

Mr. Ly Hoa Khuong

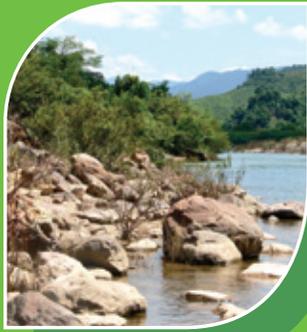
Mr. Tran Vo Hung Son

Mrs. Bui Thi Thanh Thuy

### **Secretary cum accountant**

Ms. Nguyen Thi Viet Hoa

**Designed by** Nghiem Hoang Anh



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