



Asia Regional Biodiversity Conservation Program

JULY 2009



Photo: Winrock International

Loss of biodiversity in the Greater Mekong Subregion is occurring faster than anywhere else in the world. The ARBCP develops and applies significant economic incentives-based approaches designed to reverse this trend.

BACKGROUND

The Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS), encompassing Burma, southern China, Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, and Vietnam, is an area of significant ecological importance. It is home to endangered and rare species including the Siamese crocodile, Javan rhino, Asian elephant, tiger, giant ibis, and the Asian golden cat. The GMS is also one of the fastest growing regions in the world with 2007 Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth averaging about 9% in Cambodia and China. As a consequence, the loss of biodiversity in the region is occurring faster than anywhere else in the world.

If the current pace of development continues, critical ecosystems and important areas for biodiversity conservation will be damaged further by the fragmentation of natural landscapes. Given the economic nature of the current threats to biodiversity and the development challenges faced by countries in the region, a system of incentives needs to be developed to preserve ecosystems. Without sufficient economic and supporting social and policy incentives, the region's globally significant populations of wildlife and their habitats are likely to disappear.

APPROACH

The goal of USAID's Asia Regional Biodiversity Conservation Program (ARBCP) is to improve the management of natural resources and biodiversity in Southeast Asia and neighboring China. ARBCP's activities support four key objectives: restoring and maintaining biodiversity corridors; promoting sustainable financing for biodiversity conservation; improving the livelihoods of the rural poor; and strengthening environmental regulation and institutions.

ARBCP has established a pilot site in the Dong Nai River Basin in southern Vietnam to demonstrate the above objectives at the local, district, provincial and national levels.

SIGNIFICANT ACHIEVEMENTS

The program's most significant achievement is the development of Vietnam's landmark Pilot Payment for Forest Environmental Services Policy (PES), the first of its kind in Southeast Asia. A PES policy provides local communities economic incentives to care for the land, forest, or water by compensating them for the services they supply when they act as environmental stewards.

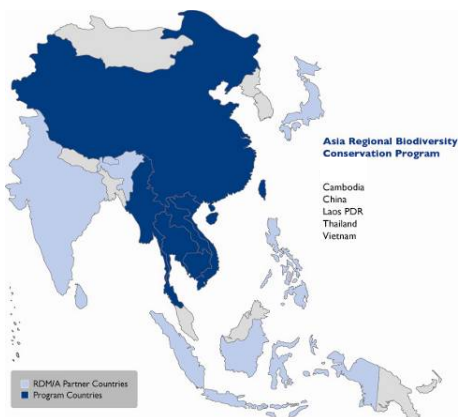




Photo: Winrock International

ARBCP supports conservation-friendly livelihoods activities, such as bamboo handicraft training, for the rural poor in the Da Te district of Lam Dong province.

The ARBCP is expected to generate annual revenues of over \$8 million from Vietnamese government and business sources that will support biodiversity conservation projects in Lam Dong and Son La Provinces in Vietnam. In recognition of the value of this effort, the Minister of Environment of Cambodia has requested support in the development of a similar PES policy in Cambodia.

With ARBCP support, Lam Dong Province improved biodiversity conservation planning and administration and tested them in the field. To date, ARBCP has improved the management of over 650,000 hectares (over 1.6 million acres) of biologically significant forests. Other achievements include the addition of key elephant and gaur (a species of wild cattle) habitat to improve ecosystem connectivity of 109,000 hectares (nearly 270,000 acres) of protected forest land. The program also helped Lam Dong avoid deforestation and habitat destruction in a second key wildlife corridor in Da Te district.

Eleven public-private partnerships, in which businesses and government work together, were established with support from the ARBCP. These partnerships, in the bamboo, essential oils and cacao industries, were created to improve the ability of local, forest-dependent people to support their families in a sustainable and environmentally sound way. Conservation-friendly development under these partnerships has increased incomes for 1,400 households. Finally, ARBCP helped the province develop its first Biodiversity Conservation Action Plan, which established detailed targets to be reached by 2020. The plan provides a road map for investing PES-generated funds to support the province's conservation priorities.

FUTURE ACTIVITIES

The ARBCP will continue to coordinate Lam Dong's payment for environmental services agreements as well as other sustainable finance programs in Vietnam including the development of new agreements designed to offset carbon emissions. The program will expand its work in the region by providing support to Cambodia to develop its own PES pilot program. It will work with the ASEAN Center for Biodiversity, Asian Development Bank's Biodiversity Conservation Corridors Initiative, and the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) to apply this model approach in other countries across the region.

PARTNERS

Winrock International, ASEAN Center for Biodiversity, UNESCAP, Asian Development Bank's Biodiversity Conservation Corridors Initiative, and US Forest Service.

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