



Environmental Cooperation – Asia (ECO-Asia)

Asia Regional Biodiversity Conservation Program



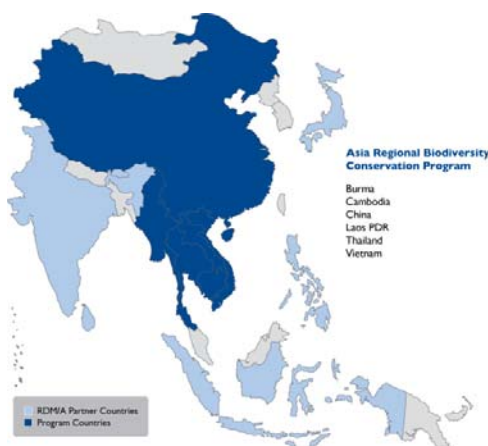
Loss of biodiversity in the Greater Mekong Subregion is occurring faster than anywhere else in the world. The ARBCP develops and applies significant economic incentives-based approaches designed to reverse this trend.

Background The Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) encompassing Burma, southern China, Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, and Vietnam, is an area of significant ecological importance harboring globally important biodiversity. It is home to rare and endangered 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 GDP growth in 2004 ranging from 5.8% in Cambodia to 8.8% in China. The loss of biodiversity is occurring faster here than anywhere else in the world

Increasing development activities in the GMS economic corridors are likely to negatively impact critical ecosystems and important areas for biodiversity conservation by fragmenting natural landscapes under business as usual scenarios. Given the economic nature of the current threats to biodiversity and the development challenges faced by GMS countries, offsetting the opportunity costs of achieving landscape level biodiversity conservation targets is one of the most pressing issues for biodiversity conservation. Without sufficient economic and supporting social and policy incentives, the region's globally significant populations of target species, their habitats, and the important ecosystem functions they provide are likely to disappear or become irreparably degraded.

Approach The goal of ECO-Asia's Asia Regional Biodiversity Conservation Program (ARBCP) is to improve the management of natural resources and biodiversity in Vietnam, the GMS, and ASEAN as well as outlying ASEAN countries. ARBCP implements activities to support four key objectives: restoring and maintaining ecosystem connectivity in biodiversity corridors; promoting sustainable financing for biodiversity and conservation; improving the livelihoods of the rural poor; and strengthening environmental governance and institutions. The ARBCP has established a pilot site in the Dong Nai River Basin in southern Vietnam and has generated incentives-based support for the activities implemented there at the local, district, provincial, and national levels.

Significant Achievements (2006-2008) During its first three years, the ARBCP generated a revenue stream of over \$8 million USD a year from Vietnamese public and private sector sources that will be mobilized to support biodiversity conservation outcomes in Lam Dong and Son La Provinces in Vietnam. The program's most significant achievement is the development of Vietnam's landmark Pilot Payment for Forest Environmental Services Policy (Decision 380 QD-TTg), the first of its



kind in SE Asia. After the legislation was signed, the ARBCP supported the on-going implementation of the pilot policy in Lam Dong Province. In recognition of the value of this effort, the Minister of Environment of Cambodia recently called for program support in the development of a similar PES policy in Cambodia.

With ARBCP support, Lam Dong Province established improved landscape level biodiversity conservation planning and governance mechanisms and tested them at the field level. The ARBCP has improved management on over 650,000 hectares of biologically significant forest lands. The most significant achievements include the addition of 5,600 hectares of key elephant (*Elephas maximus*) and gaur (*Bos gaur*) habitat to improve ecosystem connectivity and function in 109,000 hectares of protected forest land in the Vinh Cuu Nature Reserve and Cat Tien National Park. The program helped Lam Dong Province to avoid deforestation and habitat destruction in an additional 880 hectares in Da Te district, a second key wildlife corridor in the basin. Eleven public/private partnerships were initiated and supported by ARBCP in the bamboo, essential oils, and cacao sectors to improve forest-dependent local livelihoods in these areas.

Conservation-friendly development under the public-private partnerships has increased incomes for 1,400 households.

The ARBCP program supported Lam Dong Province to develop its first Biodiversity Conservation Action

Plan (BCAP), establishing succinct landscape-level management targets to be reached by 2020. The plan provides a road map for investing PES-generated funds to support the province's priority conservation targets. The plan is the first in Vietnam to be fully coordinated with a province's socioeconomic development plans. In partnership with district and commune

Future Activities (2009-2010) Over the next two years, the ARBCP will continue to consolidate and mainstream Lam Dong's water and aesthetic PES agreements and sustainable finance programs in Vietnam, including development of two new carbon offset agreements. The program will replicate its support for creating PES enabling conditions in the GMS through the development of a Cambodian pilot PES policy with application to on-going field activities. It will work with the ASEAN Center for Biodiversity, Asian Development Bank's Biodiversity Conservation Corridors Initiative, the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), and the Prosperity Initiative to catalyze and apply this model approach in Cambodia and other Greater Mekong Subregion and ASEAN countries.

Implementing Partners Winrock International, ASEAN Center for Biodiversity, UNESCAP, and the Asian Development Bank's Biodiversity Conservation Corridors Initiative.

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