



# Journey to improve Environmental Press Professionalism



INTERNATIONAL UNION FOR CONSERVATION OF NATURE



**Big photo:** Lap An Lagoon, Thua Thien-Hue © IUCN Viet Nam.

**Photo (top to bottom):** (1) Journalists taking photos © Internet; (2) Mekong field trip © IUCN Viet Nam; (3) Journalists interviewing Prof. Hoang Tri during Mekong field trip © IUCN Viet Nam.

**Photo (right to left):** (1) Interview local villagers in Son La © Tran Le Thuy, (2) Journalists taking photos © Pham Hoang Nam.

# Journey to improve Environmental Press Professionalism



HANOI  
September 2012



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>1. General introduction</b>	2
<b>2. Series of events</b>	2
Main activities	2
Objectives	2
Expected outputs	2
<b>3. Activity 1: Conference on Forest, Climate change and REDD+in Vietnam</b>	3
<b>4. Activity 2: Press training workshop “Forest, climate change and REDD+ in Vietnam”</b>	4
<b>5. Activity 3: Press training workshop “Investment in coastal ecosystem”</b>	12
<b>6. Comments by organizers and experts</b>	20
<b>7. Organizing Committee</b>	22
<b>8. References</b>	23
Some articles/features after the field trip	23
Media Coverage	32

# 1. General introduction

Currently the Vietnamese media have more and more influences to the local people. However, they are also faced with great challenges in terms of their professional skills. Although there are a large number of journalists from more than 800 newspapers and media, only some of them have opportunities to write features and professional articles. Current weak professionalism and a lack of accessibility to information has resulted in a low quality of publications, with few in-depth articles on difficult topics such as the environment, and development.

Recent studies on the state of environmental information reporting in the Vietnamese media, conducted by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), have indicated that in addition to the limited number of articles published, the quality of environmental articles is generally low, especially when reporting scientific information and views. The main causes of this are thought to be out-of date information, and a lack of understanding and essential skills for selecting, analyzing and presenting information in an attractive and convincing manner.

With an aim to provide information to senior editors in Vietnam, improve the capacity of journalists, and encourage the publication of high quality articles on coastal ecosystem, forests and REDD +, IUCN, CIFOR and the Towards Transparency Organization (TT) jointly organized a series of press events in March 2012.

## 2. Series of events

### Main activities:

1. Conference on “Forests and climate change” for the senior editors of several newspapers in Hanoi on 6/3/2012.
2. Training Workshop on “Forests, Climate Change and REDD+ in Vietnam”, held in Hanoi and followed by a field trip to Son La on 20-22/3/2012.
3. Training workshop “Investment in marine and coastal ecosystems”, held in Da Nang on 27-29/3/2012.

### Objectives:

The series of events have been designed for (i) exchanging information between senior editors engaged in forest and climate change topics, therefore encouraging better attention from senior managers on environmental subjects published in newspapers, (ii) improving the knowledge and skills of journalists about coastal ecosystems, including mangrove forests, forest-related issues, climate change, and increasing transparency and accountability in the management of forest resources in general and REDD+ programs in particular, (iii) encouraging the development of a network between journalists, policy makers, scientists, program implementers, non-governmental organizations and other stakeholders on forest issues, climate change, and REDD+.

### Expected outputs:

These above activities will contribute to (i) assisting senior editors and journalists in better understanding coastal ecosystems, the role of forests in climate change and REDD+; (ii) enhancing press professionalism through training and field visits; (iii) building a network for information exchange between journalists and scientists.

### 3. Activity 1: Conference on Forest, Climate change and REDD+ in Viet Nam

Hanoi, 6/3/2012

#### CONTENTS

The Center for Media Training (Press Department - Ministry of Information and Communications), in collaboration with the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), and the Towards Transparency Organization (TT) held a conference to discuss with senior editors about the role of media and communications in the implementation of projects on forest protection and climate change mitigation. Representatives of the senior editing staff from 15 press agencies in Ha Noi and in the central attended.

The conference aimed to highlight the importance of information related to climate change and REDD + in Vietnam, as well as the current trends among the press at regional and international levels. The conference also aimed to gain support from editors, so they will send journalists to participate in further training events.

At the conference, Mr. Nguyen Thai Phien, Deputy Director of the Press Department stated that in recent years the press has made a major contribution towards the preservation and protection of forests, but just at the reporting level. Awareness-raising among the public and policy makers about forest protection and climate change prevention has not been paid due attention by press agencies and environmental journalists. The Press and other agencies had a discussion in order to reach a common voice on effective forest protection and the mitigation of climate change.

During the conference, journalists had the opportunity to listen to presentations delivered by the Director of communications for CIFOR and representatives from the Science and Technology Department - Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, on the importance of communication in forest protection, anti-corruption for forest protection, and Vietnam's efforts on forest management, protection and climate change mitigation. At least four editors contacted the organizers about sending journalists to the next training session.

The conference also helped participating organizations better understand and reflect on international issues that are relevant to Viet Nam. Attention was paid on editors' expectations about seeking support from non-governmental organizations in order to enable the Vietnamese press to better access and report on information.

#### PHOTO DIARY



Mr. Nguyen Thai Phien, Deputy Director General of the Press Department delivered opening remarks at the conference



Mr. John Colmey, Communication Director of CIFOR presented on the important role of communication for climate change response



A representative of MARD presented the REDD+ implementation plan for Viet Nam



General and senior editors of prominent newspapers in Viet Nam participated in the conference

## 4. Activity 2: Press training workshop on “Forests, climate change and REDD+ in Viet Nam”

Hanoi and SonLa, 20-22.3.2012

### CONTENTS

At the beginning of the workshop, international and national experts introduced the program on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) and Payments for Environmental Services (PES). These two programs will provide financial resources for developing countries to undertake forest protection. Since this is a new concept, local stakeholders still lack information on REDD and PES. The media therefore has a major role for awareness-raising and disseminating to the public information about these issues, and also attracting the attention of policy makers. However, as in many other developing countries, the communications and awareness-raising about environmental issues and climate change in general, and REDD+ and PES in particular, are still very limited.

Mr. Nguyen Nghia Bien, Director of the Financial and Planning Department, Forestry Administration (VNForest) presented the Forest Protection and Development Plan for the period 2011 – 2020, which was approved along with Decision No. 57/QĐ-TTg dated 09/01/2012 by the Prime Minister. The plan sets out objectives for forest protection and development, as well as key solutions and projects to be undertaken.

## CONTENTS

Press experts also delivered a presentation on the definition and concepts of environmental journalism, and the professionalism required. Journalists debated on two articles about the Vietnamese environment posted on the website of The Guardian, in order to illustrate the writing and presentation skills of experts. Journalists were then divided into groups to discuss the professional lessons learned, including writing in-depth reports, using details, story-telling, and the modern structure of articles.

The training workshop was followed by a field trip to Son La province. Journalists practiced writing about PES and REDD+, on the basis of information provided by experts.

The exchange of ideas, communication among journalists, between journalists and local people created a friendly environment and cooperative network among the participants.

## COMMENTS OF PARTICIPATED JOURNALISTS



### Viet Ha, Son La TV

This training gave journalists the opportunity to learn about professional writing styles and how to prepare a news report, especially on climate change topics. For me, it was very interesting to experience the site while listening to different analyses and discussions about environment articles. I enjoyed going to the site and exchanged views on the press works of the world famous authors. We also discussed weaknesses and strengths of various articles, even when the weaknesses were greater than the strengths, in order to improve our future articles.

The site visit could have been better though, as we did not have a chance to discuss environmental issues in-depth with local people. We just stopped at the headquarters of communes and listened to their reports. Next time, we need to learn more about people's life, and how they are changing because TV reporters need more images rather than short communication. Thanks to this training, I now have a newer and closer daily life based approach when writing reports on climate change and the environment. Additionally, I now have a wider professional network so I can consult different colleagues to get more points of view.



### Nghia Nhan, Legal Newspaper, Ho Chí Minh City

I am not an expert on environmental issue. Until now, I only had a general understanding about the environment, for example state policies. Upon joining the trip, I find myself experience the complex relationship with simple view. If we can harmonize community's customs, we can help to improve forest protection and development.

If possible, more training sessions like this should be organized to send national journalists to field sites, while providing local journalists with broader views. Attending field trip would greatly improve the capacity for journalists rather than just providing core information.



### **Ngoc Linh, Vnexpress**

I have participated in many field trips, but this is the best organized one I have been involved with. Journalists were exposed to various cases, met many different people, and were exposed to different information. Thanks to this, journalists can prepare diverse and objective articles on PES. I found this trip very valuable. I have noticed a change in my professional writing skills after the training. Previously I would report just 2 opposing points of view, but now I make use of three-four complex characters, while paying more attention to viewpoints from independent experts. My articles now have a multi-dimensional basis, are more reliable, and more attractive to readers.



### **Nguyet Anh, Editorial Board of Science and Education - Hanoi Radio and Television Station**

The trip helped me better recognize the valuable benefits that forests can bring to people. This is not only wood, but forest products, non-timber forest products, vegetables, fruit, honey, technological development, dairy cattle, tea and coffee development, electricity production, and there is also great potential for tourism development, ecology, water regulation for hydropower development, and the conservation of underground water sources for millions of people downstream. If we could develop hydro-power projects in accordance with CDM criteria, and develop afforestation and forest plantation projects, then these projects could bring us many millions of dollars from international organizations and foreign companies, thanks to our efforts on reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

If we preserve, protect, and exploit forest resources while ensuring sustainable development, we can enjoy long term benefit from forests.

Thank you very much for those who initiated this idea, and the organizing committee for enabling the success of the trip. Only when attending this trip, I can realize above thoughts.



### **Le Quynh Anh, Viet Nam News**

No one has told me before about the structure of an in-depth report in such a systematic way. I only know one way of using details and spread out like oil spill. I really impressed with the new knowledge of “nut graph”, or the term “so what” to convince people the reason why they should pay attention to the article.



### **Tran Linh Chi, CETAC**

I saw significant improvement in the environmental articles prepared by journalists who joined this training, compared with their previous articles. Their articles are now more attractive, modern, and deeper.

## SURVEY ON QUALIFICATION BEFORE & AFTER TRAINING

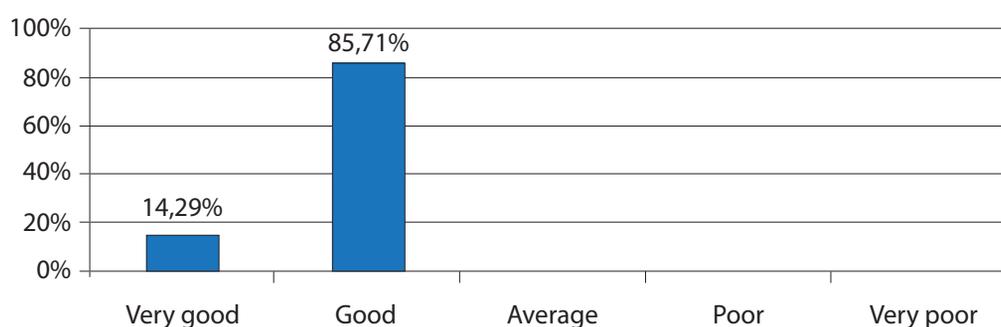
As REDD and PES concepts are relatively new in Vietnam, the survey results indicated that initial knowledge of journalists on this area is very low from 0%-10%. However, after the training, their understanding on this area increased significantly from 60%-70%. This is a positive sign after the training. Hopefully with their new knowledge, journalists will further seek more knowledge on this subject to serve readers all over the country.



Red dot - evaluation of skills before the training  
Green dot - evaluation of skills after the training

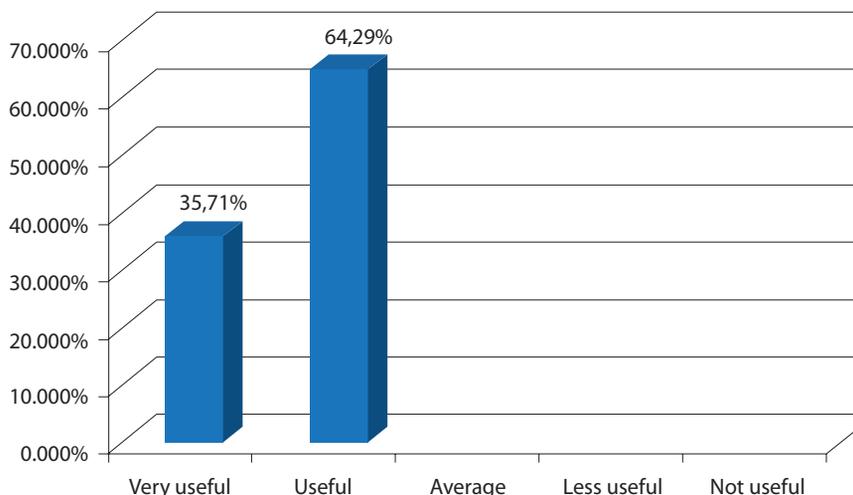
## SURVEY ON SKILLLEVELS BEFORE AND AFTER TRAINING

### I. Your overall assessment of this training?



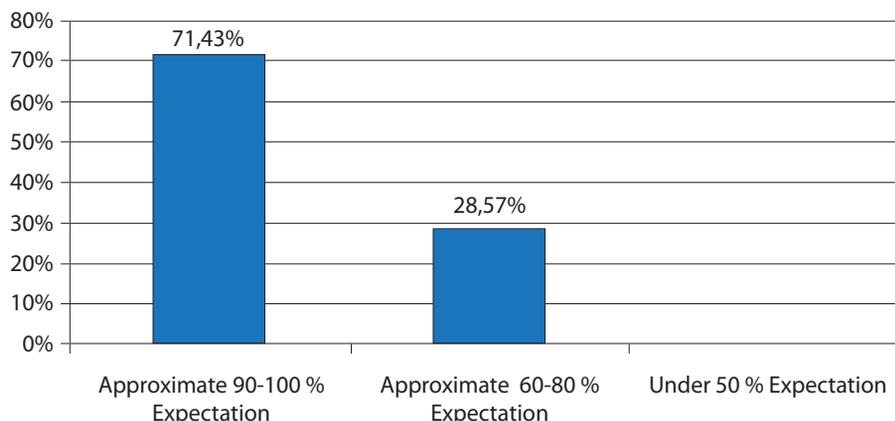
In general, the responses of the journalists who participated in this training were very positive. According to our evaluation, all participants rated the training “good” or “very good” - the two highest grades of the rating scale. 85.71% of the participants indicated that the training was “good” while 14.29% rated “very good”. Therefore we can say that training quality is very good, but that improvements could be made to achieve the maximum rating.

## II. Did you find this training useful for you and your press agency?



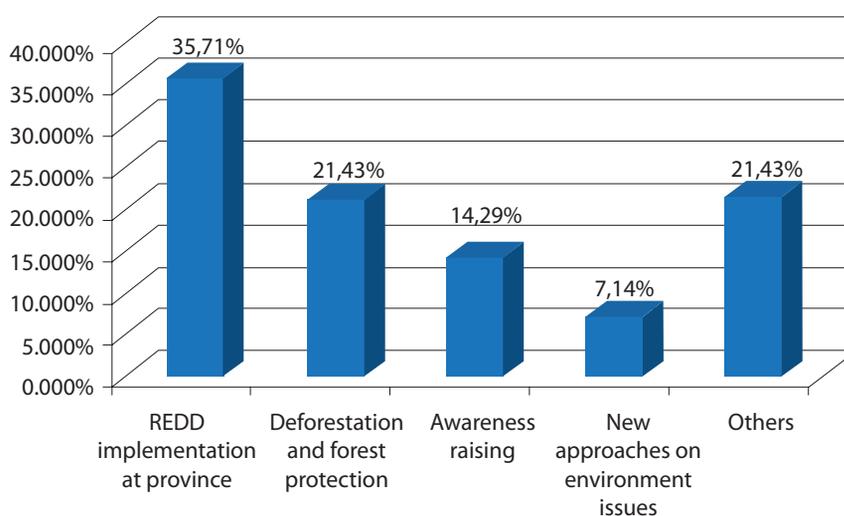
As mentioned above, all the journalists agreed that the training is quite. As indicated in the rating results: 64.29% assessed as “useful” and the remaining 35.71% even rated at “very useful” level.

## III. Did this training meet your expectations? Please explain your reasons



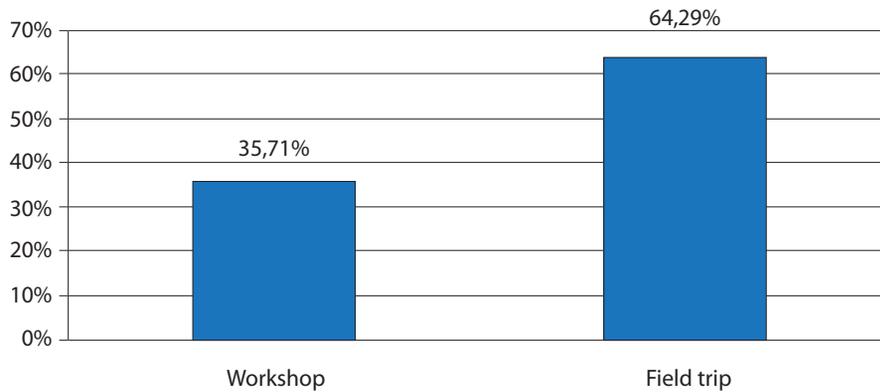
All participants reported that the training met over 60% of their expectations, of which 71.43% of respondents stated that 90 - 100% of their expectations were met. This is a positive result. However, there were a number of suggestions to improve the program content. In particular, participants hoped to spend more time in the field and to contact with more participants in the field.

## IV. What Information or ideas from this training are the most important for you?



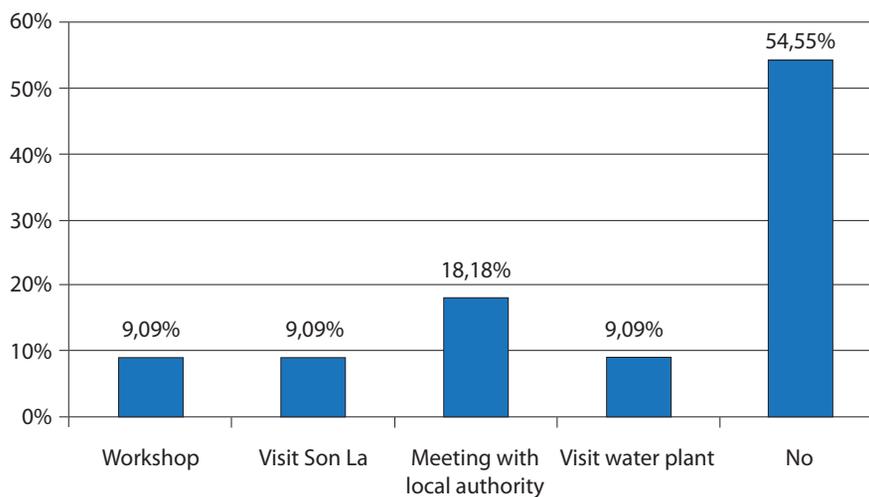
The awareness of the participating journalists on PES and REDD+ programs in Vietnam is significantly improved. 35.71% of the comments focused on PES and REDD+ implementation at the local level, including the need to have sustainable mechanisms, improved sustainability, arrange implementation at local levels and disseminate, raise awareness on PES and REDD+. 21.42% of journalists stated that they had ideas on deforestation status as well as impact of PES and REDD on reduction of deforestation and forest degradation. In addition, possibility to access to environment subject from the press perspective was mentioned as well.

## V. Which part of the training was the most useful to you? Please explain your reasons



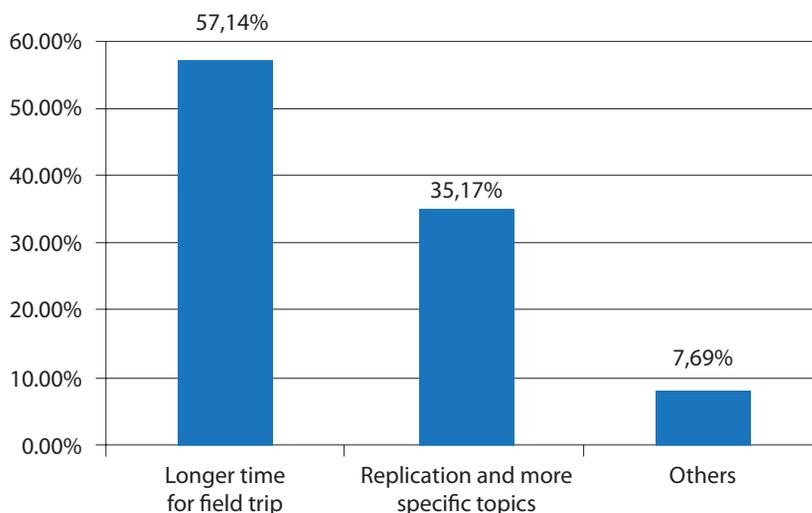
This chart shows that the majority of the journalists (64.29%) found the field trip to be the most useful, while only 35.71% found the workshop the more useful. Therefore information collected through direct communication with PES and REDD+ stakeholders (local authorities, forest owners, and local people) is an important output of the training. In addition, the acquiring of techniques and skills, and the sharing of experiences is considered very useful.

## VI. Which part of the training was the least useful to you? Please explain the reasons



According to more than half (54.55%) of the journalists, no single part of the training was considered least useful, while the remaining reflected some inefficient activities including: workshop, visit to Son La hydropower plant, visit to water plant (9.09%) and meeting with local authority (18.18 %). According to their evaluation, local authorities did not give straightforward statements. The visit to Son La hydropower plant did not brought tangible results. Journalists also requested to have meeting with companies that do not properly implement the program.

## VII. Please give your suggestion for similar programs in the future



More than 50% of the journalists (57.14%) wish to have a longer field trip, to better communicate and exchange with various stakeholders, so as to collect diverse information. Others suggested expanding and improving the program quality by organizing more specialized programs (35.71%), and carrying out capacity building training for journalists prior to the training.

### PHOTOS DIARY



Pa Te hamlet, Ngoc Chien Commune, Muong La District, Son La Province - © Le Ngoc Dzung



Interviews with village people in Sơn La © Tran Le Thuy



Exchange with communal officers on PES implementation © Tran Le Thuy



Delighted to be receiving training certificate © Tran Le Thuy



Dinner of delicious mountain dishes, and the unique “Son La cao” drinking in Son La. All the journalists were very serious while working, but when introduced to the local culture and specialties, they became more excited. Cheerful songs were sung, removing all tiredness through craggy mountains and passes. Fun and unique memories of the trip are unforgettable impressions, which will last forever and be seen as strings that connect all participants of the training.  
© Tran Le Thuy



Untiring professional performance of journalists, even though they had to wait more than three hours as a result of mountain landslides and highway erosion in Hoa Binh. Youth reporters read news on a computer. The bus turned into a miniature but hard-working editorial office © Tran Le Thuy



Journalist from Vietnam Plus of the Vietnam News Agency walking around with a computer to look for 3G connection for sending news reports © Tran Le Thuy

## 5. Activity 3: Press training conference “Investment in coastal ecosystems”

Danang, Hue and Quang Nam, 27-29/3/2012

### CONTENTS

Vietnam is one of the countries most at risk from climate change, sea level rise, and tsunamis. In addition, other impacts in coastal areas are getting serious such as increased salinity, changing ecological conditions, depleted coastal fresh groundwater resources, threatening the lives of millions of people living in coastal areas and on small coastal islands. Therefore, investment in coastal ecosystems is essential for sustainable coastal development, and the protection of marine and coastal environments, while improving the livelihoods of local people.

Opening the workshop, the Associate Professor, Dr. Nguyen Chu Hoi, University of Natural Sciences – National University in Hanoi introduced fundamental concepts on the functions, role and value of coastal ecosystems, to trigger the interest of the journalists on this issue, and introduce other topics.

In particular, the workshop also welcomed the participation of Professor Daniel Murdiyarso, one of the world's leading researchers on climate change. In 2007, Professor Murdiyarso and his colleagues won the Nobel Peace Prize for their work: the 3<sup>rd</sup> assessment of United Nations Committee on Climate Change (IPCC) in 2001; the IPCC special report on land use, land use change, and forest land in 2002; and the chief of editor's review on the 4<sup>th</sup> IPCC's report in 2007. At this workshop, Professor Daniel presented the findings of international research on the role of mangrove forests in climate change mitigation, and provided basic information about climate change to journalists.

At the workshop, Mr. Tran Phong, Director of the Center for Environmental training and communication (CETAC) presented the findings of a study on the status of environmental reporting in 3 Vietnamese newspapers (Investment, Labor and Youth newspaper). This study was jointly conducted by IUCN and CETAC with an aim of identifying the status and trends of environmental reporting in these 3 national newspapers in 2010. Based on the findings of the study, suggestions were made to enhance participation of the press in environment awareness raising among the general public.

Similar to the press training workshop conducted in Hanoi, during the training workshop in Da Nang, press experts also presented the definition of environmental journalism, and necessary professional skills. Journalists debated two Vietnamese environment articles posted by The Guardian newspaper, in order to illustrate professional writing and presentation techniques. Journalists also worked in groups to discuss lessons on professionalism, in-depth reporting, the use of details, story-telling, and modern writing structure.

After the training, all the journalists took part in a field trip to Lap An lagoon, Lang Co - Hue and Cu Lao Cham - Quang Nam. Prof. Mai Sy Tuan, Hanoi Teaching University, and Prof. Nguyen Hoang Tri - General Secretary of the Human and Biosphere Program in Vietnam, two experts on mangroves and ecology were invited in order to exchange information on mangrove ecosystems in Lap An lagoon, and research in Cu Lao Cham marine protected area. Based on information provided by the experts, journalists visited Lap An lagoon and Cu Lao Cham to prepare articles on mangrove forests and coastal ecosystems. In Cu Lao Cham, journalists had a chance to experience life on the island, by staying with local residents. Other activities were conducted in order to promote connection, and the creation of a friendly environment and a cooperative network among journalists.

On the last day of the field trip, the journalists met at the Information Center of Cu Lao Cham, where they shared their views, and asked questions to scientists, representatives of Cu Lao Cham Marine Protected Area Management Board, and IUCN on environmental issues, successful models of reducing plastic bags use, and how to harmonize tourism development and natural resources conservation. This debriefing meeting was evaluated as very useful for journalists, local authorities and scientists, providing journalists with new perspectives on practical coastal ecosystem management.

## COMMENTS OF PARTICIPATED JOURNALISTS



**My Linh, VTV3**

This was a good chance to re-systematize my press knowledge. For a long time, I have done my systemize unconsciously, without systematizing my knowledge. I found this training to be very useful for systemizing journalists.



**Pham Hoang Nam, Viet Nam News**

Despite being rather short, this mangrove training was very useful. Having been an environmental journalist for 10 years, the trip provided me with valuable scientific knowledge and practical experience about mangrove forests and ecosystems, as well as informing me on the struggle against the impacts of climate change. In addition, meetings with leading national and international scientists and managers enabled me to gain a more comprehensive perspective on mangrove forest, as well as environmental conservation and protection in Vietnam.

Hopefully the organizers will regularly organize further trainings to improve the access of journalists to current information about the environment, to have more exposure to scientists and managers, and so have a more balanced view about these topics, and so improve our articles.



**Nguyen Hung, VNExpress**

This trip was planned well - 1- day workshop and 2 - day field trip. Both sessions were well conducted. Useful and interesting information was provided through the workshop, thanks to good preparation. Furthermore, the sites to be visited were well selected, and allowed journalists chances to practice journalistic techniques.

The most impressive session was the training about journalism skills. The other provided information will also help to provide a clearer picture of environmental journalism.



### Do Truong, VNA

I could see a big difference between Lang Co and Cu Lao Cham. While people in Lang Co are confused and do not know how to deal with environmental issue, local residents in Cu Lao Cham are well aware of conservation, thanks to good communication and information dissemination. Hopefully, the model of Cu Lao Cham can be scaled up to Lang Co, and other coastal areas of Vietnam. It will not be possible to change environmental journalism overnight. Therefore the

organization of further trips could be very useful, exposing more journalists to environmental issues. Every newspaper has its own characteristics, so the more issues it covers, the more interesting it is.



### Ho Vinh Son, CETAC

The training was very useful for me and others. For the less experienced, engaging in environmental subjects can be very challenging. Throughout the trip I learned a lot from colleagues, including writing skills, interview techniques, and how to access information. I would like to join future training of this type. For me the most important lesson was learning about how to develop a strong article.



### Thanh Tung, Inspection newspaper - Government (participated in 2 trainings)

I have participated in many trips, and found these two to be very successful and well organized. Thanks to the good organization, journalists had access to the necessary information for their articles. The quality of information that journalists picked up was very good.

Capacity building for journalists was a major aspect of the success of the trip. The organizers were wise to initiate a discussion session based on two articles about climate change in the Mekong Delta and Cat Ba, by foreign authors. We always desire to better access information, and learn how the foreign press performs. In general, the Vietnamese press follows a basic writing style, with unexciting stories. Foreign authors write differently, such as discussing climate change in the Mekong Delta With images of rice bowls, baskets and women at the market.

I think that this is a very good style of journalism that I will apply to my writing. The two foreign articles created a lively exciting and controversial discussion among journalists. It is really the art of the organizers to create competition to improve product quality.

## SURVEY ON QUALIFICATION BEFORE & AFTER TRAINING

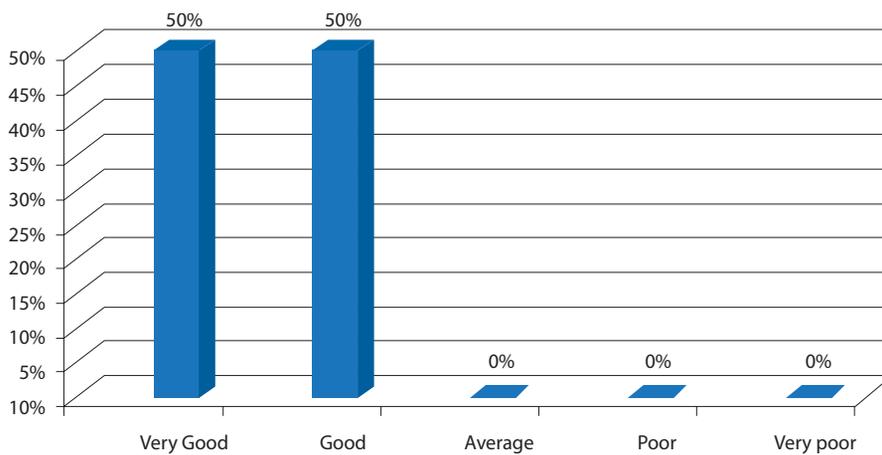
Results of the pre-training assessment indicated that journalists' knowledge and understanding on coastal ecosystems is relatively high at 50% - 60%. This assessment showed that journalists have a certain level of understanding level on this issue thanks to Government's high attention on communication of sea and islands in Viet Nam . Coastal ecosystem issues have been reported in newspapers and other mass media. However, journalists need to learn more in order to be able to better approach new problems. At the end of the training, the self-assessment results indicated that journalists' understanding and knowledge had increased by around 15% -20%.



Red dot: evaluation of skills before the training  
 Green dot: evaluation of skills after the training

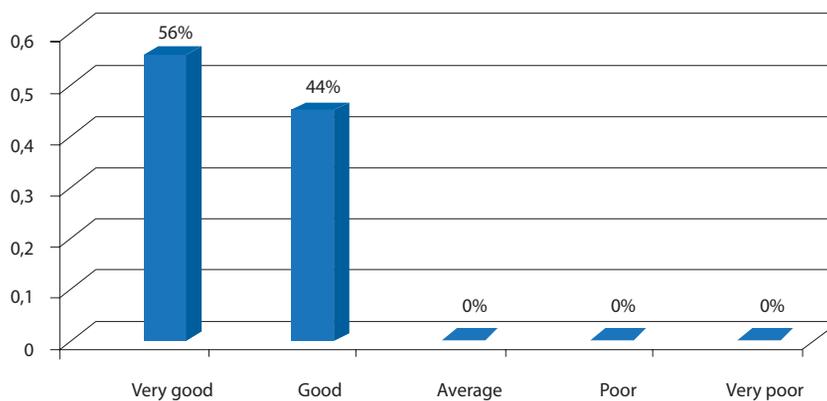
## EVALUATION RESULTS

### I. Your overall assessment of this training



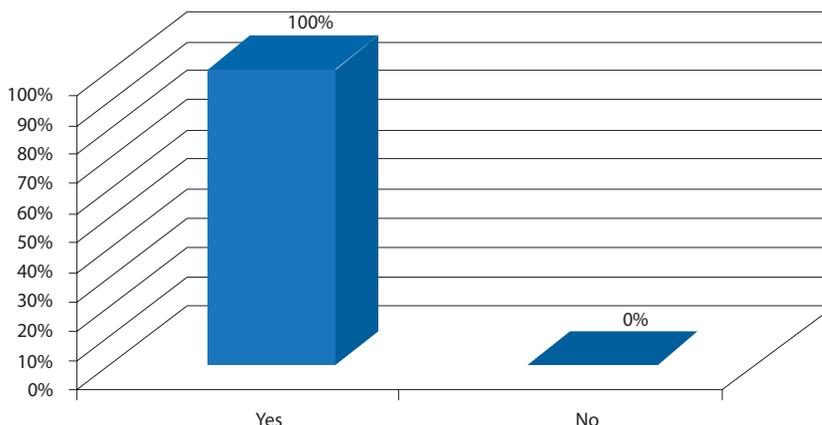
Similar to the training in Son La, the training in Da Nang was also rated at the 2 highest levels “good” and “very good”. Even, up to 50% of the journalists rated the maximum points compared with 14.29% in Son La. It could be seen that lesson learn and experience from the 1<sup>st</sup> training was considered during the 2<sup>nd</sup> one so as to improve its quality.

### II. Did you find this training useful for you and your press agency?



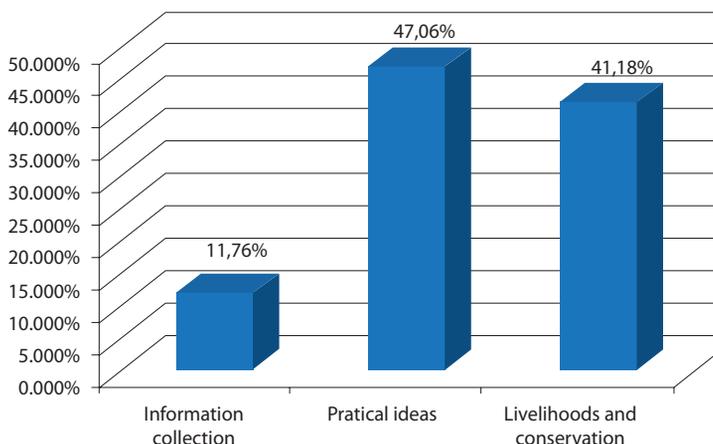
Not surprisingly, 56% of journalists rated the highest point when reflecting on the usefulness of the program (almost 3 times larger than that in Son La). The remaining 44% of the participants found the training useful.

### III. Did this training meet your expectations? Please explain the reasons?



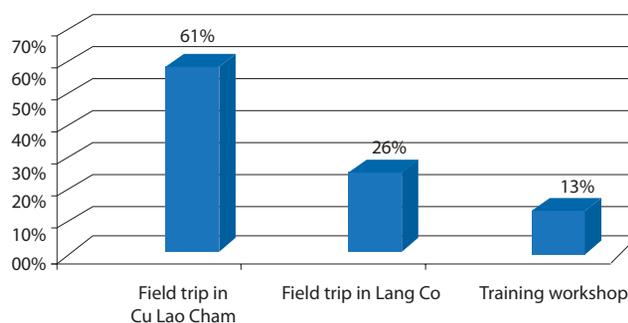
A very positive result can be seen in this evaluation, as according to all the journalists, the training entirely met their expectations. In addition, they also expressed their appreciation of the thorough preparation of the training, including the quality, diversity, and quantity (including mangrove forests, marine ecosystems, and coastal livelihood models) of theoretical and practical information provided, and the opportunity to have direct contact with leading experts.

### IV. What Information or ideas from this training are the most important to you?



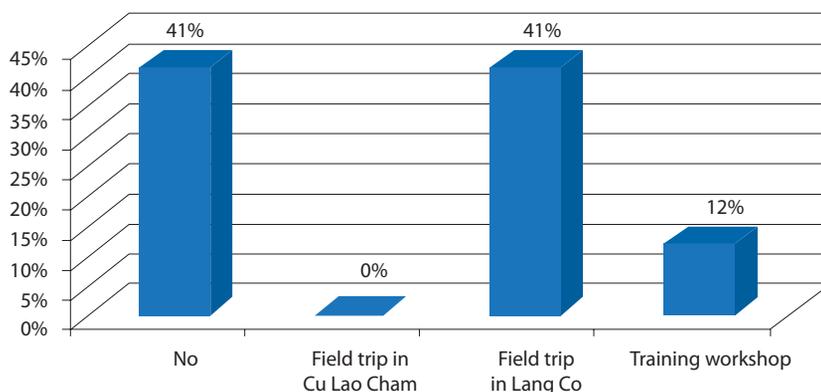
Information collected from this training was quite diverse. Journalism, information exploitation and writing skills have been improved. Practical knowledge, information about mangrove forests in Lap An lagoon, the role of the different stakeholders in livelihood development and conservation, were seen as interesting topics for journalists.

### V. Which part of the training was the most useful to you? Please explain the reasons



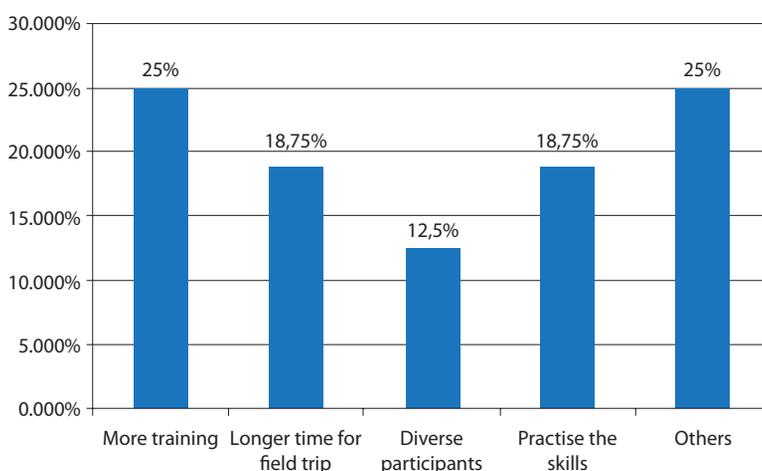
17/18 journalists highly appreciated the field trip. According to them, the visit to Cu Lao Cham was the most useful part. Journalists also mentioned that they could have better understanding about mangroves and its related risks through the visit to Lap An lagoon. 3/18 journalists reported their appreciation on information collected through workshops and communication with experts.

## VI. Which part of the training was the least useful to you? Please explain the reasons



According to 41% of the journalists, all the training sessions were useful. However, the field trip to Lang Co (Lap An lagoon) was not rated well by 41% of participants due to the short time available (only one morning), which resulted in poor interviews and a lack of information. 12% reported that information shared in the conference was quite general, and lacking indepth, and so failed to meet practical demands.

## VII. Please give your suggestions for similar programs in the future



25% of the responses indicated the desire to continue and scale up similar programs. 18,75% would like to have longer duration of field trips in order to further understand the actual situation at provinces, to have more time for group discussions, and writing articles immediately after the field trip. In additions, training should invite more different types of journalists such as television, printed newspaper, representatives of voluntary environmental clubs. Participants also made other proposals such as increasing group discussion duration or organizing training based on each newspaper's focus.

PHOTOS DIARY



Fishing in Lap An Lagoon, Thua Thien-Hue © CCRD



Prof. Daniel Murdiyarto presented at workshop © IUCN Viet Nam



Journalists worked on a fishing boat in Cu Lao Cham. No fish were caught. As explained by experts, fisheries resources tend to reduce and will be exhausted in Cu Lao Cham if no strong measures are undertaken. Local fishermen will face difficulties in their livelihoods if they do not shift to tourism (home-stays and other services) © IUCN Viet Nam



Phạm Hoàng Nam, Viet Nam News Journalist  
Interviewed local people in Cu Lao Cham © Tran Le Thuy



Interview with Prof. Chu Hoi on mangrove forest in  
Lap An lagoon © IUCN Viet Nam



Interview with Prof. Truong Van Tuyen - Director of Research and Community Development Center  
in Thua Thien-Hue responded to journalists on the mangrove forest rehabilitation program against  
the risk of being destroyed for golf course development © IUCN Viet Nam



Happy moment for journalists when receiving  
training certificate © IUCN Viet Nam



VOV journalist received the training certificate  
© IUCN Viet Nam

## 6. Comments of organizers and experts



**Jake Brunner, Mekong Coordinator (Việt Nam, Cambodia and Myanmar), IUCN**

I was very impressed by the active participation and open debate in both training workshops. In fact, the understanding of the journalists is much more than I expected. But I also realize that they may be reluctant to participate in politically sensitive issues. I think the team as CIFOR, TT and IUCN could do a lot to provide journalists opportunities for learning and professional development. It is very

interesting to see how long it would take before we see more profound and interesting environment articles.

I look forward to the 3<sup>rd</sup> and final workshop on water resources management of the Mekong Delta.



**Dr. Phạm Thu Thuy, Coordinator of REDD+ program, CIFOR**

Although the number of PES articles has considerably increased since we organized the training, the current writing style is still a diagnosis-based approach. It is missing anticipation, symptoms and momentum-based articles. In other words, PES articles are purely describing problems, without considering the underlying reasons and solutions. In this way, it seems that there is no

improvement.

Moreover, journalists all wrote fairly similar articles, without going deeply into the core of the problem, especially the political and economic influence of PES and REDD. However, it must be admitted that these are complex issues that require considerable time and information to develop sound articles. 22 Journey to improve Environment Press Professionalism Journalists can be better prepared when joining the next training by getting to know more about the subject and accept the training as a technical dialogue rather than passive information collection. The chairwoman could also be better prepared with better facilitation skills, and could provide an introduction on technical cooperation with organizers. Both journalists and the chairwoman selected an individual approach, which limited momentum and comprehensive problem analysis. Having more team-building exercises to connect all the concerns from all journalists to ensure quality, leading to better and more efficient cooperation and networking.



**Leony Aurora, Communication Officer, CIFOR**

These trainings were successful in establishing networks and sharing knowledge among journalists, participants, organizers and speakers. The willingness to learn and gather information for writing articles, as well as comments reflected in the reviews, convinced us that these workshops were useful. The number of articles published is a good starting point to increase articles on forest and environmental issues in general. However, there should be follow-up training and a

discussion, especially on complex issues such as REDD.

These training workshops employed a testing pattern including update of scientific and policy information, press skills and field trips to review, and discuss with relevant stakeholders. Ideally, journalists will learn from each other rather than just from the speakers and organizers.

What impressed me most was the enthusiasm, creativeness and strength of the Vietnamese journalists. Currently, the press is facing many challenges, but it is obvious that such challenges do not hinder their curiosity and desire to have deep information and true stories that touch Vietnamese people.

Regarding the constraints, though being proved to be successful, the organizers could add a certain flexible time frame into the schedule to avoid changes of valuable discussions and exercises. The coming training workshops should seek to connect participants in various ways, including pair work and group work, in addition to the general dialogue. The organizers should also give examples of good environmental articles in Vietnam instead of just relying on international articles.



**Associate Professor Dr. Nguyen Chu Hoi, Lecturer of Environment Faculty, Natural Science University, Hanoi National University**

The trip was important for me in terms of its diversity of participants. Very often I talk to communities and local leaders during my trips, and this time I talked to journalists who are qualified and knowledgeable. The trip was designed to take stock on fundamental issues and at the same time to highlight important issues for journalists. The discussions were very interactive and really important for journalists. However, the prepared information may not entirely satisfy their expectations. After having some adjustments, journalists rated the workshops useful. Journalists had a chance to experience in the field what they learned during the conference. The visit to Cu Lao Cham also helped them to see emerging practices, and learn about practical problems. Emerging issues, whether positive or negative, were shared and discussed right away.



**Associate Professor Dr. Nguyen Hoàng Tri - General Secretary - Man and Biosphere Committee - UNESCO MAB**

If reporters can access reality, they will better feel and understand the issues involved. That is what we achieved through this trip. Nothing is as good as “seeing is believing”. For the next training, I recommend having a group Discussion after the field trip, to discuss the structure of articles, share any concerns, and seek clarification where necessary.



### Tran Le Thuy, the chair-woman and trainer

This training workshop effectively combined a scientific conference, press professional improvement, and field trips. Journalists were provided with scientific information on environmental issues by experts. Then, journalists jointly discussed and improved their skills on processing and analyzing scientific information, and extracting key details, to enable them to write deeper and more interesting articles. The well organized field trips provided additional information, and confirmed the theories provided during the conference. Some journalists successfully applied techniques of writing detailed, modern articles, making their environmental articles easier to read, and more attractive and comprehensive.

Hopefully in the future, having acquired techniques for the preparation of thorough articles, journalists will further be trained in writing more analytical articles, currently missing from environmental articles.

## 7. Organizing Committee

### International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) works mainly in the field of biodiversity, climate change, energy and green economic livelihood through supporting scientific research, managing field projects throughout different countries in the world. These activities are conducted jointly with government agencies, non-governmental organizations, United Nations and business enterprises in order to develop policy, laws and best lesson learnt.

IUCN Viet Nam has a long historical operation in Vietnam since the first activity on operating the Government to develop the National Conservation Strategy in 1984. Since then, IUCN has significantly contributed to biodiversity conservation and environmental protection, mainly through supporting to legal framework development as the National Action Plan on Biodiversity (1995), National Action Plan on Sustainable Development and Environment (1991-2000), the Forest law (2004), Law on Environmental Protection (2005), and Law on Biodiversity (2009).

IUCN has shifted its support on policy development in the previous phase to policy implementation during the current phase. In general, Viet Nam has a sufficient environment legal framework, including laws and regulations, but its implementation is rather weak. Vietnam became a member state of the IUCN in 1993 and established representative office in Hanoi in the same year. IUCN Vietnam has four members including one government member (Ministry of Natural Resources & Environment) and other members as non-governmental organizations. They are the Institute for Ecological Economy (ECO-ECO), and Research Center for Natural Resources and Environment (CRES), the Center for Marine Conservation and Community Development (MCD), Action for the City (ACCD).

For further information, please visit <http://www.iucn.org/vietnam>

### Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR)

CIFOR advances human wellbeing, environmental conservation and equity by conducting research to inform policies and practices that affect forests in developing countries. CIFOR is a CGIAR Consortium Research Center. CIFOR's headquarters are in Bogor, Indonesia and it also has offices in Asia, Africa and South America.

CIFOR scientists conduct high-quality research across Asia, Latin America and Africa to contribute to the well-being of people who depend on forests, reduce poverty and ensure the survival of the world's tropical forests.

Our approach is one of collaboration and innovation. We ensure projects are tailored to the specific needs and cultures of the local communities, and that practitioners and decision makers can translate our research into action. In Vietnam, most of our work focus on enhancing the role of forests in mitigating and adapting climate change, improving livelihoods through smallholders and community forestry, and managing trade-off between conservation and development at landscape level.

Please kindly see <http://www.cifor.org/> and <http://www.cifor.org/about-us/how-we-work.html> for more information.

## Transparency International (TI) and the Towards Transparency (TT)

Transparency International (TI) is a global civil society organization leading the anti-corruption movement. TI has more than 100 offices worldwide and an international secretariat based in Berlin, Germany. TI aims to raise awareness on the impact of corruption and cooperate with partners such as governments, business enterprises and civil society organizations to develop and implement effective measures on anti-corruption. TI is a non-political party based organization. TI does not conduct investigations and denunciations or expose individual cases. TI always cooperates with other organizations to establish alliances for effective anti-corruption.

Being established in 2008 in Vietnam, the Towards Transparency Organization (TT) is an independent and non-profit consultancy organization. TT's operation aims to contribute to the national efforts on anti-corruption while improving transparency and accountability in Vietnam. In March 2009, TT officially became the national focal agency of TI in Viet Nam. In this role, TT supports the International TI Secretariat in Berlin to coordinate TI's activities in Vietnam, including forestry related activities.

## 8. References

### Some articles/features after the field trip:

#### Locals responsible for future of forests (Le Quynh Anh, Viet Nam News, 27 Mar 2012)

SON LA - Ascending an uphill trail from the Da River in northwestern Son La Province, Lu Van Pu's sturdy figure is lost in the tall green trees. The 57-year-old Thai ethnic villager is heading through natural forest in the catchment area about 10km from his house. It's accessible only on foot.

Finally Pu arrives at a small segment of forest that he is responsible for. For the next six hours, he does a thorough check to make sure no trees have been illegally logged.

He also clears the undergrowth and thins the numbers of young saplings if necessary. He does this work twice a week.

Without such efforts by Pu and thousands of other farmers who help manage forests in the catchment area of Da River, more than 100 small and big hydro-electric plants - including the nation's two largest - could quickly become silted up and fires could break out, leading to massive soil erosion.

It is these forests and other vegetation that feed the river and regulate the amount of water run-off.

They do this by preventing soil erosion, which can quickly get a hold if trees are unwisely or ruthlessly cleared or burned.

Given the vital mission of the forest owners are carrying, putting in place mechanisms to help sustain the forest owners' dedication to their job is imperative.

Until 2009, the efforts by Pu and 51,000 other Thai and other ethnic groups were completely voluntary. When told in 2009 that he - and all the others - would, for the first time, receive a small amount of money for doing the job, he was fearful.

"I thought that if I took the money, I would be punished if something went wrong in the forest under my watch," Pu said when he first heard of the payments, known as a "Payment Environmental Services" (PES) initiative.

"Then I spoke to other villagers and we realised that while the payment makes us accountable, on the other hand, we would be acknowledged for all our hard work and interest," he said. "This meant that people were no longer taking our efforts in forest conservation for granted, so I accepted."

Pu and a community group of about 20 households from Ruc village are responsible for taking care of a total of 10ha of forest.

The village, in Muong La District's Nam Pam Commune, is among hundreds of villages in 157 communes in Son La involved in the scheme. Nearly 51,000 other farmers are also involved.

During the pilot phase from 2009 to 2010, PES fees paid out for this type of catchment work in Son La Province amounted to VND115 billion (US\$5.5 million).

Luong Thai Hung, director of the provincial Forest Protection and Development Fund, the agency in charge of co-ordinating the PES money flow, admits that the annual payment of about \$5 to \$6 per hectare is not much compared to the revenue generated by the villagers from agriculture.

Yet this simple step has helped raise awareness among farmers of the importance of ecological services in forest areas used to collect water for hydro power and irrigation.

This view is echoed by deputy head of Muong La District's Forest Ranger Unit Do Van Truong who says he has seen much improvement in local attitudes. For example, now because of PES payments, the foresters under his unit's watch do not kindle any fires in the forest. Previously, this was quite common.

"This is very important during long dry spells," he says.

And, although the payments may be small, at group level, they are substantial enough to help turn around local economies, says Pham Thu Thuy, an expert on PES from the Centre for International Forestry Research.



Ethnic Thai villager Lu Van Pu in Ruc Village, in northern Son La Province, sets off to patrol a nearby forest in the catchment area of the Da River. Thousands of farmers like Pu are helping to prevent illegal logging and fires breaking out in forestry land in the province.

VNS Photo Tran Le Thuy

### Taking charge

Viet Nam is among the first countries in the world to use the PES initiative - first on a pilot scale at Son La, and at Lam Dong Province in the Central Highlands in 2008. The scheme went national in 2011.

Actually, it is the people of Viet Nam who pay for all environmental services fees, including the payments to the farmers who carry out forestry work.

The fees are set by the Government at VND20 per 1kW of electricity and VND40 per 1 cubic metre of clean water. Electricity and water companies build the fees into the price charged customers.

The total collection will be transferred to the National Forest Protection and Development Fund under the Viet Nam Forestry Directorate who will then distribute the fund to the provinces in proportion to their forestland. — VNS

She says many communities in Son La take in an extra VND60 million to 300 million (\$2,900 to 14,300) per year.

In Pu's commune, the money is used to buy equipment for fire fighting and to pay a little to foresters on patrol duty.

At Chieng Co Commune, Ot Not villagers used their VND20 million (\$952) from PES to finance the construction of a community house.

One major problem is when the owners of hydro plants, such as Electricity of Viet Nam, delay paying fees. The biggest debtor is Electricity of Viet Nam which failed to pay last year's PES fees worth nearly VND550 billion (\$26.2 million), according to deputy director of Viet Nam Forest Protection and Development Fund Pham Hong Luong.

He says that if power companies and water suppliers do not pay their dues, it is difficult for foresters to make demands because they do not negotiate directly with enterprises.

"In the absence of stringent regulations, it is nearly impossible to hold those enterprises accountable," Luong says. "Everyone will suffer in the long run."

For example, Pu and his villagers are still waiting to receive the remainder of their 2010 PES payments. "We need it now so we can buy more fire fighting equipment - and the weather is getting drier every day." - VNS

### **Vietnam's mangroves trees threatened by rising tide of deforestation (Ms. Alisa Tang, The Guardian Weekly, 24 April 2012)**

Standing at the entrance to Lang Co town hall, 69-year-old Mai Truc Lam gestured to the two-story building, the sun-drenched parking lot and two-lane road in front, and described the small coastal community as it once was.

"We are standing in an area that used to be mangroves," the weathered fisherman said, and then described the negative impact deforestation has wrought on the area's sea life. "Now, we do not see some species of fish here anymore."



Under threat... an Acehnese worker prepares mangrove saplings on the outskirts of Banda Aceh. Photograph: Tarmizy Harva/Reuters

A few minutes' drive away, on a sliver of sand that forms the Lap An Lagoon on the central coast of Vietnam, lies a modest grove of trees – some evergreens that shed a path of soft needles, and where the land meets the sea, Lang Co's few remaining hectares of mangroves, perched above the water upon their stilted, flying buttress-like roots.

Some of the mangrove trees have torpedo-shaped seeds, which have poked into the ground and given birth to a new generation of delicate seedlings, all too easily trampled upon by oblivious passersby. Yet these remaining mangroves face the threat of being razed entirely to make way for a golf course as part of local economic development plans – part of a global development trend that has seen the clearance of as much as 50% of the world's mangroves over the past half a century.

Mangroves grow along the ocean coasts of 118 countries – with a quarter of the world's 40m hectares being in south-east Asia – but with widespread deforestation due to population pressure, expansion of shrimp farms and development, scientists fear mangroves may disappear altogether in as little as 100 years. At their best, mangroves form a vast coastal barrier of trunks and roots against the sea, controlling erosion, protecting communities from storms, and providing an environment for greater fish diversity.

Furthermore, scientists last year unveiled research pointing to mangrove forests as ideal repositories for carbon storage – containing an average of 1,000 tonnes of carbon per hectare, compared with 300 tonnes

per hectare of tropical forest – which could help to fight climate change by keeping carbon locked away on land and out of the atmosphere. The scientists found that most of the carbon in mangrove forests – 49% to 98% – is stored below ground in thick, tidally submerged soil in which decomposition is anaerobic in the absence of oxygen. Yet with mangrove conservation up against economic development, the more obvious path to money wins.

“My sense in Lang Co, and in provinces across Vietnam, is that economic development has become a driving force so dominant that environmental precautions have fallen by the wayside,” said Evan Fox, a coastal planning consultant. “In villages where local governments are searching for ways to bolster their economic output, it is difficult to justify preservation of an area if managers and local people cannot discern its tangible benefit”.

There are laws that protect the forests and mangroves in Vietnam, but enforcement can be lax, rendering such regulations impotent. “My interpretation is that it’s illegal but everything is negotiable in Vietnam and since there is no consequence for breaking the law (at least in the environmental domain), mangroves get cut. Anyway, since there are so many conflicting laws, you can probably legalise what you’ve done by reference to a previous law,” said Jake Brunner, programme co-ordinator for the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) in Vietnam.

Shrimp farms have been one of the big drivers behind mangrove loss. A 2011 analysis of images of Vietnam’s southern Mekong delta – an area that is typically mangroves – found that from 1973 to 2008, more than half of the mangroves were converted into shrimp farms, causing serious erosion. Nonetheless, communities and governments have taken little notice of the protective services that mangroves provide until a disaster of epic proportions strikes – such as the Indian Ocean tsunami that killed some 180,000 people in western Indonesia’s Aceh province.

“In Aceh, after the tsunami, the result wouldn’t have been like this, if we still had mangroves,” said Daniel Murdiyarso, a scientist with the Indonesia-based Centre for International Forestry Research and one of the researchers behind the mangrove carbon-storage findings.

Disaster management and risk reduction are now squarely on the Indonesian government’s radar, but in most countries – and most of the time – the impact of climate change is incremental and therefore unlikely to spur governments and communities to action. When typhoons have hit Vietnam, mangroves have helped to save lives.

“That’s when people noticed that where there were mangroves, people survived,” Brunner said. “Thailand and Indonesia suffered a very high magnitude event, the tsunami, and that sent a very clear message. In Vietnam, there have been higher frequency, but lower magnitude events, so it hasn’t quite had the same impact, and you still see mangroves being lost.”

Initiatives like the Mangroves for the Future (MFF), established after the 2004 tsunami and co-chaired by IUCN and the UN Development Programme, offer grants to communities like Lang Co to protect their mangroves. Since 2008, MFF has implemented about 90 projects in its eight member countries across south and south-east Asia. The \$29,000 project in Lang Co – \$23,000 from MFF and \$6,000 from the grantee organisation, the Centre for Community Research and Development (CCRD), and the local community – is to focus on supporting natural regeneration of existing mangroves, which is less expensive and more effective than planting. According to CCRD, Lang Co had about 100 hectares of mangroves two decades ago, but today only five hectares of poor-quality mangroves remain.

Under the MFF grant, the Lang Co fishing association has been tasked with looking after these mangroves. Local fishermen will be trained in mangrove and aquatic resource management and protection.

*Alisa Tang is a Bangkok-based freelance journalist who reports and edits for organisations including the Centre for International Forestry Research, which supported her reporting trip to Vietnam.*

## Golf courses – a boon or bane? (Mr. Pham Hoang Nam, Viet Nam News, 8 May 2012)

The Lap An lagoon in the central province of Thua Thien-Hue was once famous for its plentiful marine resources and diversified ecosystem, thanks partly to a large area of mangrove forests that surrounded and protected it.

However, this precious resource, already depleted by aquaculture and an asphalt road, is in danger of being destroyed completely to make way for a golf course.

An asphalt road running around 800ha of Lap An lagoon has been built in recent years where mangrove forests once stood. The forests had been destroyed earlier for aquaculture by local residents.

The end result is that the lagoon has lost the protective function served by mangrove forests.

“Around 20 years ago, the mangrove forest stretched from the gate of my house for a hundred metres towards the lagoon. But to get roads and electricity, the forest is gone. It’s the price (we have paid) for development,” Luong Diem, a resident of Lang Co town told Viet Nam News.

Now, it has become difficult for him to catch crabs, fish and other seafood.

“In the past, I could get a full bucket of crabs after walking for an hour, but I cannot do that even after a whole day now,” he said.

Around 95 per cent of mangrove forests in the lagoon have been destroyed for aquaculture and the remaining five per cent (around five hectares) will be sacrificed for a golf course.

“If the golf course is built and forest is gone, aquaculture can no longer survive,” said Truong Van Tuyen, director of the provincial Fisheries Association’s Community Development Centre.

Mangrove forests provide ideal habitat for most seafood creatures to reproduce and grow. Now, these seafood resources have seriously declined because the forests have disappeared and the lagoon is polluted by untreated wastewater from Lang Co town.

To improve the situation, the Lang Co Fisheries Association was established early last month with the aim of protecting the environment for seafood and providing a stable livelihood for the fishing community of around 600 people.

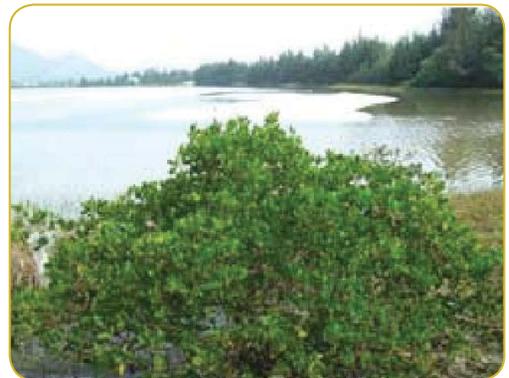
“The mangroves are gone and has taken with it several kinds of seafood including the oyster,” said Mai Truc Lam, chairman of the association.

Some fishermen have belatedly realised the importance of mangroves and are replanting the trees themselves in the hope of returning to the old days of plentiful seafood.

They are not alone in their work. The Mangroves for the Future (MFF) programme, which aims to protect coastal ecosystems, has donated VND480 million (US\$23,000) to protect and replant mangroves in the lagoon.



**The course of our times:** Lap An Lagoon is destined to become a part of a golf course.



**Future in doubt:** New mangroves have been planted in Lap An lagoon. - VNS Photos Hoang Nam

"The most important work in the project is to increase awareness about mangrove forests among all residents here," said Tuyen.

Tuyen is right, because many of the residents still hold on to the belief that the golf course will make them rich, creating more jobs and increasing the market for seafood.

"Mangroves are important but development is much more vital. The golf course can change our lives," said Nguyen Van Tay, who owns a large aquaculture farm.

He believed that aquaculture farmers only need to "sacrifice" for the first two years of the project, waiting for investors to complete a wastewater treatment system for the golf course, after that, aquaculture production would soar and enter a golden period thanks to increased demand from tourists.

Tay was not aware that each day, a golf course would need several thousand tonnes of water and dump three to four tonnes of chemicals to maintain its lawns every year, polluting the soil as well as ground water resources.

"The answer here is to seek the best solution to develop the golf course but promote mangroves for environmental protection at the same time. This is a common issue for every project in Viet Nam," said Nguyen Chu Hoi, head of the governing body of MFF Viet Nam.

"Finding a win-win solution is a target for our project and it will be a good experience for subsequent projects," he said.

Hoi also said that a law to protect mangroves was necessary because the forests could not be restored after being destroyed.

"The law should limit the current uncontrolled deforestation of mangroves," he said.

Before the law is passed and takes effect, Luong Diem has a new job: to take care of 2,000 mangrove seedlings in order to restore the forest as part of an MMF Viet Nam project.

He said, hopefully: "I would like to see the familiar green of mangroves again in my beloved Lap An lagoon."  
- VNS

## Nature vs nurture, the Cham dilemma (Mr. Pham Hoang Nam, Viet Nam News, 8 May 2012)

No exploitation, no nylon bags, no rubbish, only sustainable development, that the manifesto of the Cham islanders, but does it work? **Pham Hoang Nam** reports. Our 25-seat boat seemed tiny as it navigated the high waves of the Hoai River Estuary in the central province of Quang Nam.

We were on our way to the Cu Lao Cham (Cham Island) from Hoi An Port, but there were times we were afraid we might not make it, especially when one big wave covered the canoe and drenched us from head to toe.

Most of us were quiet, cold, tired and worried although the weather was good, and there were several sighs of relief when we did make a smooth landing after 45 minutes of travelling on a 28km sea route.

Then, there was a burst of energy. People were talking, laughing, breathing in the fresh air and enjoying the amazing natural scenery.



**She sells sea shells:** Locals buy seafood at Cu Lao Cham market. - VNS Photo Hoang Nam

It was the third time I was visiting Cham Island, but the first time I was staying overnight in a home-stay arrangement in the Huong fishing village.

The narrow cement road running around the village and the beach presented a very welcome surprise – they were spick and span.

“It is difficult to believe that around 10 years ago, villagers considered the beach their toilet and rubbish dump,” said Dr Chu Manh Trinh, who has been closely linked with Cham Island since a 235sq km Marine Protected Area (MPA) was set up in 2003.

The initiative, funded by the Danish Government, brought in a lot of changes for the better, Trinh told Viet Nam News.

“We have achieved a real ‘revolution’ with strong support from local authorities to have people use indoor toilets subsidised by the Government which keep the beach clean,” he said.

A small group of residents had already gathered to welcome us. We were to stay in their houses that night. Five years earlier, it had been a strange notion for them to be part of a tourism venture. But they accepted it because it was a badly needed opportunity to augment falling incomes.

When the MPA was set up, fishermen were only allowed to catch fish in a limited area during fixed times.

“For the first year after the MPA was set up, the fishing capacity reduced by half, from 1,600 tonnes to 800 tonnes per year. And we had to seek a new source of income for them. This was eco-tourism,” said Nguyen Thi Hong Thuy, director of the Cham Island MPA management board.

The initial days were very hard, and residents complained several times to provincial authorities. But the response was not to relax the MPA’s conditions.

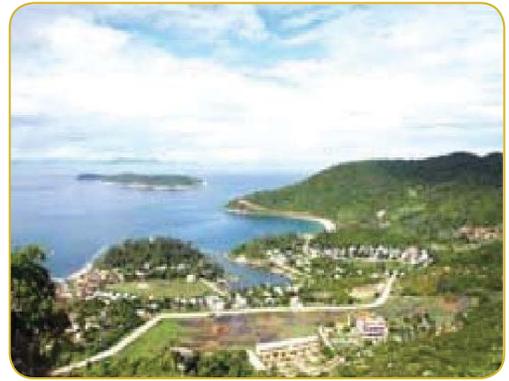
“We chose fishing households that suffered the most impacts from sea preservation efforts and supported them by sending their children to study and work in the tourism sector in Hoi An, and created new jobs for those who lived here,” Trinh said.

Around 222 households in the core zone, nearly half the 500 or so households in the island, received such support.

Nguyen Thi Hiep is one of the first nine people who agreed to be a part of home-stay arrangements for visitors. Now, she has a lot of regular customers and can earn VND5-6 million (US\$250-300) every month, equal to the total income of her family in the past.

“With this arrangement, I don’t need to wake up early at around 3am and travel with my husband to catch fish as I did before. I can stay at home, take care of guests, and provide them with other services like meals and souvenirs,” Hiep said.

Tran Thi Nhi’s family is even more involved in eco-tourism. The household provides short sea-route tours on their own boat to go around the island, see swallows, go fishing and snorkeling.



**An overview:** Tan Hiep island commune on Cu Lao Cham Island, in the central province of Quang Nam. - VNA/VNS Photo Tran Le Lam



**Falling for the day:** Sunset at Huong village, Cu Lao Cham. - VNS Photo Hoang Nam

We travelled in Nhi's boat to see how they caught fish. Unfortunately, there were no fish in her nets that day.

"We catch less fish than before now because of preservation efforts, but the value of fish has increased because of tourism," she explained.

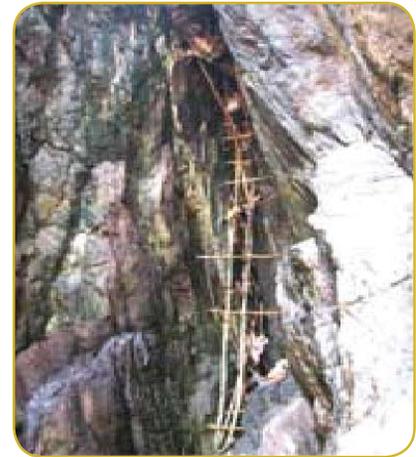
High hopes: Capturing the precious salanga bird nets. — VNA/VNS Photo Vu Cong Dien

That night, one of Nhi's neighbours had enjoyed a huge catch. It was normal for this to happen in fishing, Nhi said.

To date, 25-30 per cent of local residents in Cham Island earn their living for six months a year from providing tourism services. Many of them have received training in hospitality services, cooking, hygienic seafood processing and even English language skills.

Providing the skills and opportunity for an alternate source of income has been the most important factor behind the success of natural preservation efforts on the island.

"There has been a deep change in residents' awareness of the environment. They have acknowledged what preservation has brought to them. They have voluntarily taken part in several environmental protection activities – not fishing in prohibited areas, not using plastic bags, paying environmental fees and separating organic and inorganic waste," Trinh said proudly.



**High hopes:** Capturing the precious salanga bird nets. - VNA/VNS Photo Vu Cong Dien

Furthermore, fishermen can now explain the characteristics of the fish they catch to visitors – where they live, when they reproduce, how long it takes for them to grow large and so on, he said.

While it is obvious that taking part in tourism services helps residents increase their income, they have also realised this cannot happen if there are too many people doing the same thing.

Therefore, the community and the management board have worked together and carefully divided jobs among the families. While some provide services like home-stay, transport and meals, others provide seafood for tourists.

Cham Island is also equipped with a modern solar energy station to provide electricity. All wastewater is processed through biogas plants in each household.

### Successful effort

In 2003, there were just 5,000 visitors to Cham Island and they did not stay overnight. But this year, the figure jumped up to 79,000. The arrival of tourists increased sharply after the place was recognised as a World Biosphere Reserve in 2009.

"I am impressed with what the MPA management board has done over the last two years," said Prof Nguyen Hoang Tri, general secretary of the Viet Nam National Committee for UNESCO's Man and Biosphere programme.

According to Tri, there were several factors behind the success of preservation efforts on Cham Island. One of them was the striking of a proper balance between development and preservation with the participation of many stakeholders: tourism companies, preservation staff and the local community. This has helped the island achieve what UNESCO targets: economic development, environmental protection, hunger eradication and poverty reduction, he said.

“Provincial leaders at all levels in Quang Nam have a very good understanding about the issues facing their localities. They know the importance of coral reefs and how they are related to fish. They know these are valuable resources and they have to exploit them in a sustainable manner,” he said.

Every action has been implemented after collecting residents’ ideas, and Hoi An Party Secretary Nguyen Su visits Cham Island very often, showing that people from all walks of life are closely involved in the preservation effort, he added.

Having people understand the issues and be on the same side as local authorities in carrying out activities for both common and private benefit has been an important step in the right direction.

Participation of the local community is a guarantee for success because their ideas are practical and can dictate sound policies, Tri said.

“Cham Island has achieved one of the goals for a World Biosphere Reserve: harmony between humans and the biosphere,” Tri said.

It has not all been smooth sailing for preservation efforts on the island.

The first thorny issue that the management board faced was equitable distribution of benefits among different groups of people.

“We had to study and come up with regulations that aimed at ensuring the highest benefits for the community as a whole, not just a few groups. And these had to be accepted by everyone,” said director Thuy of the MPA management board.

Former fishermen and divers, who now work as preservation staff, supervise compliance with these regulations.

Climate change impacts including the increasing frequency of natural disasters, wastewater from the mainland, and fishermen from other localities fishing in prohibited areas are some of the other challenges faced by the islanders.

While home-stay arrangements bring more benefits, they can also cause overexploitation as guests staying overnight require more seafood.

“UNESCO has investigated and warned us to welcome only around 700 guests a day. But on holidays, over 2,000 visitors come here. We must reduce this,” Thuy said.

With eight small and separated islands, Cham Island boasts abundant biological diversity and is the second marine protected area in Viet Nam, following Mun Island in Nha Trang. It is also one of eight World Biosphere Reserves.

“We can’t deny the fact that Cham Island is separated and has a population of less than 3,000 who live in two villages: Lang and Huong. These form good conditions for management,” said Nguyen Chu Hoi, former deputy head of the Viet Nam Administration of Seas and Islands.

“But, to their credit, in Cham Island, most of the works have been done properly,” he added.

“Preservation management must cover all aspects of life, including business,” Hoi said.

While he saw more tourism potential on the island, he was also worried about its negative impacts. For example, people drinking and staying up late could disturb local lifestyles, he said.

“Efficient alternative livelihood systems created for local fishermen has allowed Cham Island to become a very good model for community-based environmental protection,” said Evan Fox, an American independent coastal consultant.

Eric Loizeau of France-based Elovoyagers Tourism company said he would like to bring French tourists to the island.

“They would have a chance to enjoy nature and recognise how nature can be protected,” he said.

As we finished our dinner, Hiep and Nhi untied their aprons, and with microphones in hand, sang their traditional melodies for us and for the love of their beautiful home. — VNS

## Media Coverage

### Conference with editors on Forest and Climate change

#### 6/3/2012: 5 minute news on VOV television

Interview with Mr. Nguyen Thai Phien - Deputy Director General of the Press Department - Ministry of Information and Communications and Mr. John Colmey - Director of Communications in CIFOR on the role of forests in the fight against change climate.

#### 20/3/2012: 45-minute documentary on VTV2

Current status of Deforestation and forest degradation at global level and in Viet Nam, using communication materials, films, and CIFOR’s research along with in-depth interview with Mr. John Colmey (CIFOR) on how to solve problems.

Some news and articles highlighting the role of forests in mitigating climate change impacts posted on newspapers such as: Rural Economy, Thiennhien.net, the Vietnam Journalist Association, Vietnam Plus.

### Press Training Workshop “Forest, Climate change and REDD+ in Vietnam”

No.	Newspapers	Title	Links
01	Vnexpress	Benefit from green forest prevents illegal loggers	<a href="http://vnexpress.net/gl/khoa-hoc/2012/03/tienrung-xanh-chan-tay-lam-tac/">http://vnexpress.net/gl/khoa-hoc/2012/03/tienrung-xanh-chan-tay-lam-tac/</a>
02	Youth	Forest owners turn to be debtors	<a href="http://www.thanhvien.com.vn/pages/20120324/chu-rung-thanh-chu-no.aspx">http://www.thanhvien.com.vn/pages/20120324/chu-rung-thanh-chu-no.aspx</a>
03	Vietnam News	Locals responsible for future of forests	<a href="http://vietnamnews.vnanet.vn/Sunday/Features/222703/locals-responsible-for-future-offorests.html">http://vietnamnews.vnanet.vn/Sunday/Features/222703/locals-responsible-for-future-offorests.html</a>
04	VOV	Press training on fighting against deforestation	<a href="http://vov.vn/Home/Tap-huan-bao-chi-ve-chong-pha-rung/20123/203723.vov">http://vov.vn/Home/Tap-huan-bao-chi-ve-chong-pha-rung/20123/203723.vov</a>
05	Mega News (tintuc.vnn.vn)	Press training on fighting against deforestation (re-publis VOV)	<a href="http://tintuc.vnn.vn/vdco/kinh_te/thi_truong/436535/tap-huan-bao-chi-ve-chong-pha-rung.htm">http://tintuc.vnn.vn/vdco/kinh_te/thi_truong/436535/tap-huan-bao-chi-ve-chong-pha-rung.htm</a>
06	thiennhien.net	Press training on forest, climate change and REDD+	<a href="http://www.thiennhien.net/2012/03/20/tap-huan-bao-chi-ve-rung-bien-doi-khi-hau-va-redd/">http://www.thiennhien.net/2012/03/20/tap-huan-bao-chi-ve-rung-bien-doi-khi-hau-va-redd/</a>
07	tinmoi.vn	Press training on forest, climate change and REDD+ (republished by thiên nhiên net)	<a href="http://www.tinmoi.vn/tap-huan-bao-chi-ve-rung-bien-doi-khi-hau-va-redd-03819050.html">http://www.tinmoi.vn/tap-huan-bao-chi-ve-rung-bien-doi-khi-hau-va-redd-03819050.html</a>

No.	Newspapers	Title	Links
08	Vietnam Plus	Training workshop on forest and climate change in Viet Nam	<a href="http://www.vietnamplus.vn/Home/Hoi-thao-tap-huan-ve-rung-bien-doi-khi-hau-tai-VN/20123/131663.vnplus">http://www.vietnamplus.vn/Home/Hoi-thao-tap-huan-ve-rung-bien-doi-khi-hau-tai-VN/20123/131663.vnplus</a>
09	Industrial magazine	PES in Sơn La	<a href="http://www.tapchicongnghiep.vn/News/channel/1/News/403/18250/Chitiet.html">http://www.tapchicongnghiep.vn/News/channel/1/News/403/18250/Chitiet.html</a>
10	Website – VEA	Training workshop on forest, climate change in Viet Nam	<a href="http://vea.gov.vn/vn/hoptacquocte/tintuchoptac/Pages/T%E1%BA%ADp-hu%E1%BA%A5n-b%C3%A1o-ch%C3%AD-v%E1%BB%81-R%E1%BB%ABng,-Bi%E1%BA%BFn-%C4%91%E1%BB%95i-kh%C3%AD-h%E1%BA%ADu,-Ch%C6%B0%C6%A1ng-tr%C3%ACnh-REDD+.aspx">http://vea.gov.vn/vn/hoptacquocte/tintuchoptac/Pages/T%E1%BA%ADp-hu%E1%BA%A5n-b%C3%A1o-ch%C3%AD-v%E1%BB%81-R%E1%BB%ABng,-Bi%E1%BA%BFn-%C4%91%E1%BB%95i-kh%C3%AD-h%E1%BA%ADu,-Ch%C6%B0%C6%A1ng-tr%C3%ACnh-REDD+.aspx</a>
11	Gov's Inspection Newspaper	Son La cao	<a href="http://www.thanhtra.com.vn/tabid/77/newsid/53972/temidclicked/34/seo/S">http://www.thanhtra.com.vn/tabid/77/newsid/53972/temidclicked/34/seo/S</a>
12	Hanoi TV	Film on PFES implementation in Son La	Transmitted on 15/4/2012 at 14.30 p.m

### Press training workshop “Investment in coastal ecosystem”

No.	Newspapers	Title	Links
01	Danang VTV (27/3/ 2012)	Summary (2 min.): press training workshop on role of coastal ecosystem	Video available in IUCN
02	VOV (21/4/2012) at 09.15 a.m	Interview (46 min.) with Associate Prof. Dr. Nguyen Chu Hoi & Prof. Hoang Tri on the indispensable role of coastal ecosystem	<a href="http://www.tapchicongnghiep.vn/News/channel/1/News/403/18250/Chitiet.html">http://www.tapchicongnghiep.vn/News/channel/1/News/403/18250/Chitiet.html</a>
	VOV (27/4/2012)	Training workshop: capacity building for journalists engaged in environment aspects.	<a href="http://vov.vn/Home/Nang-cao-nang-luc-cho-nha-bao-viet-ve-linh-vuc-moi-truong/20123/204430.vov">http://vov.vn/Home/Nang-cao-nang-luc-cho-nha-bao-viet-ve-linh-vuc-moi-truong/20123/204430.vov</a>
	VOV (14/5/20012 at 08.15a.m)	A Story on Lập An Lagoon	IUCN lưu audio file. Download file tại <a href="http://www.mediafire.com/?1oo91co76tvkudo">http://www.mediafire.com/?1oo91co76tvkudo</a>
03	Hanoi TV	On-going development of a film on Cu Lao Cham, which is planned to be shown in May-June 2012	
04	Viet Nam News (14/4/ 2012)	Interview with Prof. Chu Hoi	<a href="http://vietnamnews.vnnet.vn/Opinion/223490/overexploitation-ofcoastal-areas-contributes-to-climatechange.html">http://vietnamnews.vnnet.vn/Opinion/223490/overexploitation-ofcoastal-areas-contributes-to-climatechange.html</a>
	6 /5/2012	Golf courses: boon or bane?	<a href="http://vietnamnews.vnnet.vn/Sunday/Features/224415/golf-courses--a-boon-orbane.html">http://vietnamnews.vnnet.vn/Sunday/Features/224415/golf-courses--a-boon-orbane.html</a>
	6/5/2012	Nature vs nurture, the Cham dilemma	<a href="http://vov.vn/Home/Nang-cao-nang-luc-cho-nha-bao-viet-ve-linh-vuc-moitruong/20123/204430.vov">http://vov.vn/Home/Nang-cao-nang-luc-cho-nha-bao-viet-ve-linh-vuc-moitruong/20123/204430.vov</a>

No.	Newspapers	Title	Links
05	Viet Nam Plus	Improvement of skills for journalists writing coastal ecosystem	<a href="http://www.vietnamplus.vn/Home/Nang-ky-nang-cho-phong-vien-viet-he-sinhthaibien/20123/132890.vnplus">http://www.vietnamplus.vn/Home/Nang-ky-nang-cho-phong-vien-viet-he-sinhthaibien/20123/132890.vnplus</a>
06	Guardian Weekly	Vietnam's mangroves trees threatened by rising tide of deforestation	<a href="http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2012/apr/24/vietnam-mangrove-deforestation-climate-change">http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2012/apr/24/vietnam-mangrove-deforestation-climate-change</a>
07	Viet Nam Press Agency/ Communist Party Website	Improvement of professionalism, skills for journalists engaged in coastal ecosystem	<a href="http://cpv.org.vn/cpv/Modules/News/NewsDetail.aspx?co_id=30071&amp;cn_id=514976">http://cpv.org.vn/cpv/Modules/News/NewsDetail.aspx?co_id=30071&amp;cn_id=514976</a>
08	Infor. Portal - Vietnam Environment Agency/MONRE	Press training–Investment in coastal ecosystem	<a href="http://vea.gov.vn/vn/tintuc/tintuchangngay/Pages/T%E1%BA%ADphu%E1%BA%A5n-b%C3%A1och%C3%AD-%C4%90%E1%BA%A7ut%C6%B0-cho-h%E1%BB%87-sinhth%C3%A1i-v%C3%B9ng-b%E1%BB%9Dbi%E1%BB%83n.aspx">http://vea.gov.vn/vn/tintuc/tintuchangngay/Pages/T%E1%BA%ADphu%E1%BA%A5n-b%C3%A1och%C3%AD-%C4%90%E1%BA%A7ut%C6%B0-cho-h%E1%BB%87-sinhth%C3%A1i-v%C3%B9ng-b%E1%BB%9Dbi%E1%BB%83n.aspx</a>
09	Dan Tri	Sharp degradation of many coastal ecosystems	<a href="http://dantri.com.vn/c20/s255-579549/nhieu-he-sinh-thai-vung-bo-dang-bi-suy-giam-manh.htm">http://dantri.com.vn/c20/s255-579549/nhieu-he-sinh-thai-vung-bo-dang-bi-suy-giam-manh.htm</a>
10	Gov's online-newspaper	More investment in coastal ecosystem	<a href="http://baodientu.chinhphu.vn/Home/Dau-tu-nhieu-hon-cho-he-sinh-thai-vungbo/20123/133637.vgp">http://baodientu.chinhphu.vn/Home/Dau-tu-nhieu-hon-cho-he-sinh-thai-vungbo/20123/133637.vgp</a>
11	DARD in Tuyen Quang	Press Training: "Investment in coastal ecosystem"	<a href="http://tnmttuyenquang.gov.vn/index.php/vi/news/Moi-truong/Tap-huan-bao-chi-Dautu-cho-he-sinh-thai-vung-bo-bien-9399/">http://tnmttuyenquang.gov.vn/index.php/vi/news/Moi-truong/Tap-huan-bao-chi-Dautu-cho-he-sinh-thai-vung-bo-bien-9399/</a>
12	Gov's Inspection 17/5/2012	80% of mangrove forest area loss over the last 50 years	<a href="http://thanhtra.com.vn/tabid/77/newsid/52365/temidclicked/34/seo/Mat-80-dien-tich-rung-ngap-man-trong-50-nam/Default.aspx">http://thanhtra.com.vn/tabid/77/newsid/52365/temidclicked/34/seo/Mat-80-dien-tich-rung-ngap-man-trong-50-nam/Default.aspx</a>
		Breath holding for the last mangrove belt in Lang Co	<a href="http://www.thanhtra.com.vn/tabid/77/newsid/54238/temidclicked/34/seo/Nin-tho-truoc-dai-rung-ngap-man-cuoi-cung-o-Lang-Co/Default.aspx">http://www.thanhtra.com.vn/tabid/77/newsid/54238/temidclicked/34/seo/Nin-tho-truoc-dai-rung-ngap-man-cuoi-cung-o-Lang-Co/Default.aspx</a>
13	New Newspaper	Skills improvement for journalists involved in writing articles on marine ecosystem	<a href="http://www.baomoi.com/Nang-ky-nang-cho-phong-vien-viet-he-sinh-thai-bien/79/8155503.epi">http://www.baomoi.com/Nang-ky-nang-cho-phong-vien-viet-he-sinh-thai-bien/79/8155503.epi</a>
14	Youth	Mangrove forest rehabilitation in Lap An Lagoon	Posted on newspaper, filed in IUCN





IUCN VIET NAM COUNTRY OFFICE

1<sup>st</sup> Floor, 2A Building, Van Phuc Diplomatic Compound  
198 Kim Ma Street Ba Dinh District,  
Ha Noi, Viet Nam  
Tel: ++844-37261575/6  
Fax: ++844-37261561  
E-mail: [info.vietnam@iucn.org](mailto:info.vietnam@iucn.org)  
Website: <http://www.iucn.org/vietnam>



Journalists recording during Mekong field trip © IUCN Viet Nam