

# Environmental services

## Recognising and maintaining ecosystem values

IUCN Viet Nam Programme Theme



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## Why Environmental services? Maintaining ecosystem and biodiversity values

In many ways, life in Viet Nam is shaped by services and benefits provided by ecosystems and biodiversity. Collectively, these benefits are known as ecosystem services. Ecosystem services include products like clean drinking water, processes like nutrient cycles, and functions such as storm buffering. Yet rapid economic growth can result in a significant loss of the ability of the environment to maintain these services. The loss of these services would be a loss of natural capital for the country, a threat that urgently needs to be addressed.

Healthy ecosystems will ensure the provision of good services that support human well being. For example in Viet Nam, the rich coastal and marine ecosystems, including mangrove forests, coral reefs and sea grass meadows, provide food for millions of Vietnamese people and serve to buffer the impacts of natural disasters on local livelihoods and income security through protection from storm surge and typhoon damage. Fisheries are a significant source of income and nourishment. Wetland areas – which include mangrove swamps and tidal mudflats – have been central to national economic development. Wetlands are storehouses of globally endangered biodiversity and the production of much of the country's rice, fish, shrimp and other food staples relies on healthy wetlands, especially in the Red River Delta and Mekong River Delta. In addition, wetlands provide a range of ecosystem services, including groundwater recharge, flood control and water purification. And forests – which in 2005 covered about 37% of total land area in Viet Nam – provide tangible products such as wood and non-timber forest products (NTFPs). These products support rural community livelihoods and contribute to local and national economies. Forests also provide environmental services through prevention of soil erosion, watershed protection, landscape beauty and wildlife for tourism, while also serving as a carbon sink and a store of biodiversity.

## IUCN Viet Nam and Environmental services

Viet Nam has a number of options for approaches to take towards maintaining these important ecosystems. A reform of the Protected Areas system, in combination an integrated approach to managing wetland, terrestrial and marine ecosystems, is an important first step. The development of management plans, at the species level as well as for entire habitats and Protected Areas, offers an opportunity to ensure long-term

benefit sustainability; these plans would also serve to focus local, national and regional cooperation to achieve win-win solutions. Financial incentives such as Payments for Environmental Services (PES), to encourage widespread maintenance of environmental services, must be supported.

IUCN Viet Nam has substantial experience in supporting ecosystem and site management planning, species conservation programmes and action plans, projects to reduce poverty through co-management and sustainable use in and around PAs, and development of financial mechanisms – including PES – to support the provision of environmental services. For the Environmental Services Programme 2007-2010 we commit to providing high-quality technical advice to support environmental and ecosystem services in Viet Nam's development plans.

## Objectives

1. Management of ecosystems and protected areas for the provision of environmental services achieved through government capacity building and support for the development of national benchmarking systems.
2. Species conservation and management programmes developed
3. Co-management approaches to reduce poverty in communities living in and around protected areas identified and developed
4. Financial and incentive mechanisms to support provision of ecosystem services developed, piloted, and promoted

## Principle Partners

IUCN Viet Nam will continue to cooperate with the Viet Nam Water Partnership, the National Wetlands Support Programme, and the Forest Sector Support Partnership. Specific programme support will continue for the Gulf of Tonkin Initiative and the Asia Regional Biodiversity Conservation Programme. IUCN will continue to support those Government agencies such as MARD, MONRE and MOFI which are responsible at the national level for maintaining ecosystem services. In addition, IUCN Viet Nam will assist provinces and communities to enhance local initiatives for the provision of ecosystem services.