Success Story:
Leveraging Technology to Protect Biodiversity

Forests in the Annamites Range of Vietnam are home to some of the rarest species in the world, including a number of endangered species. These forests and the species that live in them are depleting at an alarming rate, also imperiling the communities who depend on these limited resources for their livelihoods. Forest degradation and poaching are a cause of grave concern across the region, especially in Vietnam's Quang Nam (QN) and Thua Thien Hue (TTH) provinces.

The USAID Vietnam Green Annamites Project is harnessing technology to take on these challenges. The project has introduced a system that monitors endangered species in these forests. In addition, the project is improving the quality of data collection and forest patrolling through a spatial monitoring and reporting tool (SMART) that helps forest rangers to conduct biodiversity observations, maintain patrol records, and spot illegal activities like poaching.

Photo credit: USAID Green Annamites Project

The Green Annamites Project is USAID's flagship environmental project in central Vietnam. It partners with the government, private sector, development partners, and communities to protect Vietnam's forests, improve natural resources management (NRM), and increase the incomes and resiliency of vulnerable local communities. The project is implemented by ECODIT, an American company with 25 years of experience working to advance environmentally-and socially-responsible development around the world.

Vietnam Green Annamites Activity Overview

Period of Performance: September 2016 – December 2020
Value: $24 million
Client: The United States Agency for International Development (USAID)
Contact: Capricia Chabarekh, Home Office Project Manager, cchabarekh@ecodit.com

To safeguard the region's globally significant biodiversity and forest resources, the Green Annamites Project is also working with the Government of Vietnam, the Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA), and local forest rangers to introduce a cost-effective monitoring system throughout the forest areas of QN and TTH provinces. The system uses a satellite images to identify areas of deforestation and in a timely and efficient manner—and all results are stored via a national database. These technologies are paired with data collected from field surveys to ensure that forest conditions are captured accurately and transparently. Park rangers, forest managers, and other stakeholders are alerted of any forest change through mobile devices.

In May 2018, the project and its partners launched a one-year campaign to increase local knowledge of this new technology. The campaign began with training technical staff and forest rangers of Vietnam's Forest Protection Department and district protection units to use these advanced technologies and equipment to monitor changes in the forest. Participants at the training learned to collect data through a mobile application and access satellite image-based alerts on forest loss. Follow-up training sessions were held on practicing and applying the knowledge participants had previously learned. The participants created real forest monitoring entries, uploaded and reviewed data collected, and are now training their colleagues to use this system.

Photo credit: USAID Green Annamites Project

❝ECODIT prides itself on making cutting-edge technology accessible to local communities, so that they use it to improve their work and become better stewards of their precious natural resources ❞

High-tech methods are also helping forest rangers crack down on illegal activities like poaching. Since nearly half of QN and TTH provinces is covered by forest, it has been a challenge for local Vietnamese authorities and park rangers to reduce illegal poaching and hunting activities in protected areas. The SMART approach, introduced by the Green Annamites Project in partnership with the Vietnam Association of National Parks and Protected Areas (VNPPA), has helped them to identify threats to forests resources. SMART evaluates, measures, and enhances biodiversity conservation and wildlife law enforcement. This data then enables NRM departments in Vietnam to predict where illegal activities are happening, and develop a patrol plan that addresses various conservation priorities.

Photo credit: USAID Green Annamites Project

"ECODIT prides itself on making cutting-edge technology accessible to local communities, so that they use it to improve their work and become better stewards of their precious natural resources," said Roula Attar, Vice President of Quality, Learning and Communications. Since its founding in 1993, ECODIT has designed and implemented innovative programs which have improved the lives of millions of people in an environmentally sustainable way.