



Success Story: USAID-Supported Private Sector Eco-Tourism Partnerships Transform Vietnamese Community

Phan Van Ty is a 61-year-old fisherman who lives with his wife in the scenic fishing village of Ngu My Thanh in central Vietnam. He has been a fisherman for more than 40 years. But in recent years, he and his fellow villagers have seen their incomes decline due to overexploitation of lagoon resources and destructive fishing practices. “Earning a living from fishing—my community’s main livelihood—has gotten more and more difficult,” said Ty.

This is a problem that extends far beyond Ty’s village and the fishing sector. Throughout central Vietnam, poor natural resource management (NRM), overexploitation, and an increasingly erratic climate have led to deforestation and the decline of resources. More than 500,000 people in these areas derive their incomes from natural resources, and many of them are now seeing their incomes and prospects suffer.

Since 2016, the USAID Vietnam Green Annamites Activity, a four-year environmental project implemented by ECODIT (a U.S. small business), has been working in communities throughout central Vietnam to improve NRM, protect biodiversity, and boost incomes by introducing alternative livelihoods. A key component of the project team’s approach is private sector engagement. To date, the project has mobilized more than \$18M of investment funds for sustainable landscapes, and has facilitated mutually beneficial partnerships with everyone from local agricultural cooperatives to major national and multinational corporations.



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– Phan Van Ty (Fisherman, Ngu My Thanh, Vietnam)

Vietnam Green Annamites Activity Project Overview

Period of Performance: September 2016 – December 2020

Value: \$24 million

Client: United States Agency for International Development (USAID)

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The common thread among these partnerships is that they facilitate biodiversity conservation and bolster the incomes of local communities. Many support microfinance initiatives and Payment for Forest Environmental Services, while others enable communities (many of whom are ethnic minorities) to cultivate promising alternative livelihoods such as handicrafts and valuable medicinal plants. In one notable partnership, the Activity linked Ikea wood supplier Scancia Pacific with the local communities, who now provide them with sustainable Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certified wood.



One industry that has garnered significant private sector engagement is tourism—the project has facilitated more than \$1.3M in tourism investment to date. Central Vietnam is ripe for these types of partnerships, with its pristine coastlines, lush forests, and vibrant local communities. Resting on a picturesque lagoon, Ty’s village is one of many in this region with the potential to attract significant tourism. However, until recently, efforts to develop tourism there had been poorly coordinated, as villagers lacked the knowledge, skills, and resources needed to attract tourists, maintain tourism infrastructure, and provide quality hospitality services.

In order to help Ty’s village reach its potential, the project facilitated a partnership with the Dai Bang Tourism Company, a Vietnamese tour operator. The company helped the village attract tourists while providing resources that enabled them to develop their skills and beautify the village. Building on this, the Project organized trainings on tourism services, management, and tour guiding, and supported villagers to build a community-based tourism group. It also helped the villagers obtain basket boats and taught them to operate the boats so they could lead boat tours around the lagoon.

Today, fishermen like Ty are earning new income by working with the private sector as tour guides, homestay operators, and more. As a result of this shift, the village is cleaner and more prosperous, the tourism company is thriving, and the villagers are earning more than \$100 in additional income per year. “We have seen so many improvements in Ngu My Thanh,” said Ty. “I am so pleased that our members are now more united...I believe that together we will turn Ngu My Thanh into an ecotourism model for the region.”

