



Community-based Ecotourism as a Tool for Conservation in Protected Areas - A case study from Bach Ma National Park, Vietnam

Abstract der Masterarbeit von TRAN QUYET TOAN

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Betreuer: Prof. Dr. Renate Bürger-Arndt, Dr. Christiane Hubo

Abstract

The establishment of protected areas (PAs) is aimed to conserve biological diversity, and to maintain ecological goods and services for environmental protection and economic development. Conflicts have been developed since people living in or close to PAs do not have rights to access to PAs' resources. This has certainly become the case in Vietnam. Community-based ecotourism (CBET) has been considered as a tool for better conflict resolution to meet both long-term conservation goals and the sustainability of local livelihoods. This research used a case study at Bach Ma National Park in the Central of Vietnam to investigate how CBET contribute to local livelihood improvement and conservation of the Park. This site was selected because some CBET models were piloted there. Semi-structured interviews were held with 79 individuals, including Park's staff, villagers and owners of ecotourism or tourism-related businesses. Qualitative analysis was applied to the data to investigate the views and relationships among these stakeholders with regard to CBET development.

This research has clearly demonstrated that CBET can partially contribute to the sustainability of local livelihoods, thus partially reduce the local impact on Park's resource. CBET can support to obtain the conservation targets of the PAs. Access rights to non-strictly protected- resources of the Park for ecotourism as a livelihood option may contribute significantly to local income improvement. Conversely, local people are enhancing the CBET inter-appreciation and the Park's resource preservation. However, if institutional arrangements for CBET development were better developed it would probably attract more community involvement in CBET activities in particular and PA management in general, reduce conflicts, better conserve PA's biodiversity and improve local livelihoods. Supplementary livelihood options such as CBET can be potential if its activities are at sustainable and manageable levels in buffer zones of PAs. This approach would balance more effectively conservation and development goals. The findings of this research confirm the need for legislative changes in ecotourism management to create a better structure that will benefit both biodiversity conservation in PAs and the sustainability of local livelihoods.