

Case Study Report: Vietnam
Bàng - Grass Preservation Project to Keep the Food Source for Red-Head Cranes
(*Grus antigonesharpii*)
Add: Phu My Commune, Kien Luong District, Kien Giang Province, Vietnam

International Finance Cooperation - IFC
and International Crane Foundation - ICF

Background of the project area

The *Bàng* - Grass Preservation Project started in this area in 2004. Phu My has the last extensive remnant of *Lepironia* wetland in the Mekong Delta. Many people have participated in the process of this Project, from idea development to its implementation. Local government wanted to turn the wetland into aquaculture and farm lands.

Introduction of the target ICH

The Khmer Community and their Tradition of Making Grass Mats: *Bàng* - grass grows naturally in the Mekong delta and it was very popular. When first people explored the land, they used two most important tools – *phang* for cutting grass and *nop*, which was made of *bàng* - Grass, for sleeping. Nowadays, Khmer people not only make grass mats for sleeping or for drying rice, they also make products for family use during their spare time. They are very attached to these objects, so they make new ones themselves to replace the ones that are worn out.

Usually, the women stay at home to knit, while men go to the fields to gather the grass, then press and dry it. Many men also work outside. The elderly women mostly do not speak Vietnamese and they have little connection with the outside world. The children go to school, but they often drop out during the last grades of elementary or secondary schools. Some children are able to be enrolled in the provincial boarding high school.

Like the Khmer community in this village, Khmer people in Cambodia also have the tradition of making grass products, but nowadays they usually go to this community to buy grass because they no longer have grass fields. The grass-making tradition has its ups and downs, but it helps create jobs for people, especially women. Income generated from *bàng* - grass - knitting is fairly stable, contributing to the overall family economy. People usually spend it on daily expenses, while keeping earnings generated from rice cultivation for more important expenditure.

Objectives of the Project

Red-Head Cranes already appear in the list of animals that need urgent preservation. In Vietnam, the number of Red-Head Cranes is very small. They appear mostly in the Mekong Delta and do not live here as they used to in the past. They live in Cambodia and fly to *bàng* - grass field in this area to look for food. Red-Head Cranes do not eat bang grass, but they eat roots of Nang grass, which is very similar to bang grass and lives together with bang - grass. For that reason, wherever there is bang grass there is nang grass. Therefore, the Project aims to preserve bang grass fields in order to keep the food source for Red-Head Cranes, and also to help revive and maintain the tradition of making grass products for the Khmer community. Newly-created grass products are made by using traditional skills and techniques, with the intention of being friendly to the environment; therefore they become more diverse in types and styles, and have found their ways

to many markets abroad, such as Japan, Mexico or EU. This creates more jobs for farmers during their spare time and helps them generate more income. Skill training is provided to villagers so that they can make fine handicrafts from *bàng* - grass.

Methods of Project Implementation

- Poor people can directly benefit from nature conservation
- Combining biodiversity conservation with poverty alleviation and ICH conservation. With better understanding of how to sustainably protect environment and ecology, the community have better use for of the grass fields; therefore contributing to the protection of the Red-Head Cranes.

Outcomes of the Project

- Income of local people increases. Participating families: 200 (350 households in the village). Daily wage: 45.000 VND (3 US\$) - before project: 10.000 VND
- Villagers keep making grass products
- The Wetland is protected
- The return of Red-Head Cranes after one year of protection

Conclusion or Summary

Bang - Grass Preservation Project to keep the food source for Red-Head Cranes.

The Khmer tradition of *bàng* grass-knitting has played an important role in improving the community's living conditions.



