

**COMMUNITY MEMBER LEARNING IN A COMMUNITY-BASED ECOTOURISM
PROJECT IN NORTHERN VIETNAM**

by

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ABSTRACT

Tourism development sometimes focuses too much on short term monetary benefits and inadvertently causes environmental and social degradation. Community-based ecotourism (CBET) is an alternative model of tourism development that has the potential to avoid certain negative side-effects while promoting environmental, cultural, and economic sustainability. Adult learning and education and gender issues are two critical but under-researched areas in ecotourism development.

Informed by a combination of theoretical concepts in adult learning, environmental adult education, and women's empowerment in community development, this study examines the content, process, and outcomes of community member learning in three aspects of a CBET project in Vietnam. These include: 1) The development and management of the CBET project; 2) The protection and conservation of the local environment; and 3) Local women's empowerment.

Field research for the study was undertaken on a model CBET project in Giao Xuan commune near Xuan Thuy National Park, Vietnam, a wetland recognized for its importance to environmental conservation by the Ramsar Convention. The study took an interpretive case study approach incorporating qualitative research methods of interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. Thirty-one research participants took part in the study, including seven project staff and consultants, and twenty-four community members.

Study findings indicate that even though there is much room for the improvement of the planning and implementation of the CBET project, community members in the Giao Xuan CBET project have actively learned to make CBET an effective strategy linking the development of

ecotourism with sustainable development. The CBET project has brought a new source of income to the local community, promoted local environmental conservation and made positive changes in local gender roles and relations. Study findings contribute to knowledge of the effectiveness of CBET as a means of community development, the role of adult learning and education in CBET, and the integration of a gender perspective into the planning and implementation of CBET.

PREFACE

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DEDICATION

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

I was born two years after the war between the USA and Vietnam. Children in my generation grew up without having to witness bombs, shootings, separation, and death; however, we still experienced difficult times during the reconstruction of the country. After many years of war, the country suffered from heavy losses of both human resources and infrastructure.

My hometown was a typical small Vietnamese city with streets linked to stores, schools, parks, and markets. Cities in Vietnam are very densely populated and many city kids of my generation did not have much exposure to the natural environment. Most of the space in the town was occupied by housing, office buildings, schools and other buildings. In school, we learned about life in the countryside – about things like rice, water buffalos, farms, farm animals, and farmers – but this knowledge was abstract, from books and lectures. Our learning environment was contained within the four walls of the classroom. In this way, we learned about rice without ever seeing a rice field. We learned about farmers but we did not meet a single farmer in person. We learned about different historical places and events but we did not have the chance to actually go to see such places.

Unlike today, people then did not have enough money to travel around to learn about other places and people. I remember that my family did occasionally have the chance to go on trips, but I wished that we could have had more money to travel. One trip we did take opened my eyes to the experiences of those in poorer areas. It was a trip to the countryside in another province. The first destination was a historical place named Hoa Lu, which was an ancient capital of Vietnam in the 10th and 11th century (968 – 1010) located in Ninh Binh province. After visiting Hoa Lu, we also took a tour of Tam Coc, which has three natural caves situated along a local river with ceilings about two meters above the water. I had many new experiences during

these trips and learned firsthand about the lives of poor rural people. The first time I saw water buffalos and touched a wet rice field in person was during my family's trip to Hoa Lu and Tam Coc. But the most memorable experience on that trip was the meeting between my family and a local woman who rowed a boat for us through three caves along a river. The trip was my very first out-of-school lesson about other people's hard life.

In addition to myself, my parents, and my older brother, the boat held a tour guide, the local woman, and her young daughter child (3-4 years old). I remember that the woman explained that she needed to bring her child along because there was no one to take care of her while she was working. During the trip, we talked to the local woman and learned that many people like her had to work hard in order to have enough money to afford food for their families. She worked full time as a farmer, but still had to work many extra hours as a tour guide to earn some extra money. According to her, due to financial hardship, many people in her community did not have the chance to go to school, so they all tried to work very hard with the hope that one day they could save enough money to send their children to school. They all hoped that with education their children would have an easier life.

The story of the local woman on that tour stayed with me for many years. From the experience of that trip, I realized that I myself was very lucky to have the resources and opportunities to study at good grade schools and later at good universities. While I wished that my family could have had more money to travel, I knew that other families like that of the woman tour guide hoped only to have enough money for food and to send their children to school. The story of the gap between the rich and the poor and the inequality of educational opportunities for people became even clearer to me when I went abroad to study. I started wondering about the learning opportunities available for marginalized people in disadvantaged

communities. Can such opportunities help people learn and achieve a better life? All of the experiences, observations, and understandings of education and life that I have accumulated throughout my life have inspired this study on adult learning and education for poor Vietnamese people in a community development project.

1.1 Research Problem

In response to negative impacts on local communities caused by mass tourism in the last two decades, various alternative models of tourism have been introduced. The goal of these alternative models is to benefit and empower local communities and ultimately to help achieve sustainable tourism development¹. Such alternative models include green tourism, soft/low impact tourism, pro-poor tourism, sustainable tourism, ecotourism and most recently, community-based ecotourism (CBET). CBET has come to be seen as a variant of sustainable community development (Scheyvens 1999, Björk 2007, Stronza & Gordillo 2008). Done properly, CBET should contribute to the environmental conservation of wildlife and wilderness, allow local communities to generate new sources of livelihood predicated on this conservation, and reinforce or revive traditional culture and lifeways (Zeppel, 2006, Butler & Hinch 2007, Honey 2008). CBET is also seen as a site for educating visitors about local culture and human rights and for increasing visitors' environmental awareness (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2009; Honey, 2008, Suansri, 2003).

Whether the sustainable development goal of CBET is achieved depends on many stakeholders involved in the CBET project, especially community members, visitors, and project consultants and the staff of organizations. In order to successfully implement a CBET project,

¹ In this dissertation, the term “sustainable development” encompasses and highlights the interconnected sustainability of all social, economic, cultural and environmental components in the development process.

community members need to learn how to manage a CBET project in the most effective way. They also need to have appropriate methods for educating visitors about their local culture and environment. Meanwhile, whether CBET can be a site of the promotion of cross-cultural knowledge and environmental conservation also depends on visitors' knowledge, behaviour, attitude, and willingness to learn and share their knowledge with local communities. In addition, the success of a CBET project also very much depends on whether a CBET project's consultants and staff employ appropriate policies and practices that might best support local communities (Honey, 2008; Suansri, 2003).

In the last decade or so, research has been conducted on many different aspects of CBET, but not much has been done on the components of learning and teaching. For example, research has explored CBET as a tool for economic development and its impact on local livelihood (Manyara & Jones, 2007; Stronza, 2007; Zeppel, 2007). Likewise, CBET's role in local environmental conservation and promotion of cross-cultural understanding is perhaps one of the most researched topics (Beaumont, 2001; Christie & Mason, 2003; Fuller, Caldicott, Cairncross, & Wilde, 2007; Haas, 2003; Lee & Moscardo, 2005; Powell & Ham, 2008; Zambrano, Broadbent, & Durham, 2010; Zeppel, 2008; Wearing & Neil, 2009). Literature has also explored the dynamic relation between power and local participation and ownership of CBET initiatives (Blackstock, 2005; Buckley, 2003; Fletcher, 2009; Johnston, 2003; Reed, 1997; Southgate, 2006; Sproule, 1999; Stronza & Gordillo, 2008; Victurine, 2000; Wood, 1998; Zeppel, 2007). However, there is a general lack of research done directly on the learning and teaching aspect of CBET. Instead, this topic has been briefly covered among many other themes in CBET research (Weaver & Lawton, 2007). Most research that has directly examined learning and teaching only focuses on whether CBET can be a potential tool for environmental conservation through

educationally-oriented programs for visitors in wildlife tourism. Very little research has been done on community member learning in CBET. Thus, while CBET is a rich site of adult learning and teaching, it is still understudied. This is true even though learning and teaching play a significant role in the process of implementing and developing CBET initiatives and are central to all of the major goals of CBET (Weaver & Lawton, 2007; Walter, 2009).

In addition, even though CBET is known for its potential positive impact on local communities, it is no stranger to the social, psychological and political complexities of development initiatives at large. Factors such as external partnerships, internal cooperation, capacity-building, funding, dependency, leadership, local institutions, development approaches, land rights, cultural identity, and relations of class and gender can all contribute to the success or failure of CBET projects (Jones, 2005; Lacher & Nepal, 2010, Laverack & Thangphet 2007; Nepal, 2004; Weaver & Lawton 2007; Stronza & Gordillo, 2008; Hitchner, Apu, Tarawe, Aran, & Yesayaet, 2009).

With several notable exceptions (Dilly, 2003; Pleno, 2006; Reimer & Walter, 2013; Schellhorn, 2010; Scheyvens, 2007; Stronza, 2005; Tran & Walter, 2014; Tucker & Boonabaana, 2012), research in the field of ecotourism has been mostly “gender blind.” In a recent review of research in ecotourism, Weaver and Lawton (2007, p. 1168), for example, examined over 75,000 abstracts related to ecotourism in 6,000 periodicals, noting that ecotourism is now firmly established as an academic field of inquiry. And yet among the vast corpus of research in the field, the authors only identified two studies peripherally related to gender. Other social, political and cultural complexities of development are also important in CBET, but my study focuses primarily on gender relations since women’s empowerment was a key educational objective of the CBET project I chose to study.

1.2 Ecotourism in Vietnam

The integration of Vietnam's economy into the regional and international economy has caused the Vietnamese Government to reform its policies on economic structures in many fields including Tourism. After the “renovation” policy of “*doi moi*” was implemented in 1986, the Vietnamese Tourism industry was shifted from a highly centralized State-owned mechanism into one that is more decentralized, market-based, and open to private and foreign tourism operators (Leksakundilok, 2004; The National Tourism Ordinance, 1999). The global tourism industry's promotion of sustainable tourism has also made the Vietnamese Government move towards the development of tourism forms that ensures sustainable practices and outcomes (Bui, 2009; Lipscombe & Thwaites, 2003). Ecotourism and Cultural-Historical Tourism have been identified as two forms of tourism that are promoted in the national tourism development strategy (The National Assembly of The Socialist Republic of Vietnam, 2005; The Standing Committee of the National Assembly, 1999).

The Vietnamese Government has introduced a number of initiatives that encourage its goal of sustainable tourism development. Some examples of these initiatives are *The National Tourism Ordinance 1999*, *The Regulation on Ecotourism Activities in the National Parks*, *The Natural Preservation Areas*, *The National Master Plan for Tourism Development 1995 – 2010*, *The National Tourism Action Plan 2006 – 2010*, *The Tourism Development Strategy 2001 – 2010*, *The National Tourism Action Program 2007-2012* (promulgated after joining the World Trade Organization), *Tourism Development 2020*, and *Vision 2030*. The above policies indicate the importance of sustainable tourism development as a national goal and strategy. They provide a legal policy foundation for the implementation of national tourism development to promote the national economy while ensuring the conservation of biodiversity, societal, cultural and

environmental sustainability.

Vietnam has also actively participated in different regional and international sustainable tourism development organizations and programs. Vietnam is a member of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA), the Asian Tourism Association (ASEANTA), and the Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS). In 1989, Vietnam became a member of The Ramsar Convention on the conservation and sustainable use of wetland resources, which includes regulations on ecotourism activities in wetland areas. In 1992, Vietnam signed the *Sustainable Agenda 21* at the United Nations Summit in Rio. In the same year, Vietnam joined the six Greater Mekong Sub-region Countries Program, which aims to promote subregional economic relations. The program promotes tourism as a strategy for contributing “substantially towards the Millennium Development Goals of poverty alleviation, gender equality and empowering women and sustainable development in the sub-region by 2015” (Khanal & Babar, 2007, p. 1).

The integration of the Vietnamese tourism industry into the regional and international tourism market has provided remarkable economic benefits for the country. The revenue from tourism has increased sharply in the last two decades and continues to grow. For example, it is reported that in 2009, tourism was generating revenue of 32.40 trillion VND, approximately 24 times more than that of 1990, when it was 1.34 trillion VND. Revenue from the tourism industry has contributed approximately 5% of the national GDP (Vietnam National Administration of Tourism, 2009). In 2004, Vietnam was ranked by the World Tourism and Travel Committee as 7th among 174 countries in the world for increases in visitors. There has been a continuous increase in the number of both domestic and foreign tourists per year in Vietnam. In 1990, the number of domestic tourists was 1,000,000, and 250,000 for international visitors. By 2009, the number of

domestic and international tourists was 11,700,000 and 1,893,605, respectively (Ibid).

Vietnam has gained remarkable revenue from the tourism industry thanks in part to the government's reform of the structure and administration of tourism. Vietnam's integration into the global tourism industry has also encouraged the Vietnamese Government to enact a number of policies on the promotion of sustainable tourism development. The number of National Parks has increased from 3 to 30 since the "renovation" policy of "*doi moi*". Vietnam is now internationally recognized as "a destination for exotic nature-based tourism" (Suntikul, Butler, & Airey, 2010, p. 201). The success of CBET at this initial stage of development is currently unclear and may comprise a critical turning point for both the environment and local communities. Even though Vietnam has been developing rapidly and has been relatively successful in reducing poverty, its Environmental Sustainability Index is the lowest in Southeast Asia - revealing the fact that Vietnam is facing many challenges regarding the environment and sustainable development (MCD, 2007a). Furthermore, there are concerns about whether local communities really benefit from CBET. The Vietnamese Tourism industry may be vulnerable to inadequate cooperation across different stakeholders and among different levels of authorities regarding the implementation of sustainable tourism practices (Bui, 2009; Le, 2006; Lipscombe & Rik, 2003; Leksakundilok, 2004).

1.3 Research Questions

This research study examines the non-formal education and informal learning of community members in a CBET project in Giao Xuan commune (which will be introduced later), and the impacts of learning on local people in the commune. The study has the following research questions:

1. What do community members learn in non-formal and informal settings in order to develop and manage the CBET project in Giao Xuan? How do the learning processes take place? What are the outcomes of the learning processes? How do these outcomes relate to community members' knowledge, skills, and values?
2. What environmental learning activities do community members experience in the Giao Xuan CBET project? How do these environmental learning activities take place? What impact do these environmental learning activities have on community members' environmental knowledge, attitude, and actions?
3. What do local people learn about gender equality in the Giao Xuan CBET project? What impact does learning about gender equality and the planning and implementation of the CBET project have on changes in gender roles and relations as well as the empowerment of local women in the Giao Xuan community?

1.4 Significance of the Study

Adult learning and education is critical to the success of CBET (Weaver & Lawton, 2007; Walter, 2009). However, very little research on this topic has been conducted. Among the research that has been conducted directly on the learning and teaching aspect of CBET, most has focused only on visitor learning. To date, with the exception of Walter (2009), who studied community member learning in CBET, extant research has examined the impact of visitor education on changing visitors' environmental knowledge and behaviour, mostly in wildlife ecotourism (Beaumont, 2001; Orams, 1997; Orams & Taylor, 2005; Zeppel 2008). Other

research has focused on CBET as a site for educating visitors about the community and local ways of life (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2009; Suansri, 2003; Walter & Reimer, 2011). The present study contributes to the discussion of a very important but under-researched aspect of adult education in CBET; that is, community member learning. The research results may be of value to concerned academics in the field not only because the aspect of learning and teaching in community-based ecotourism is new, but also because empirical research on community-based ecotourism in the Vietnamese context is still rare.

This study contributes to a growing body of knowledge on ecotourism as sustainable development. In addition, this study illustrates the complexities of integrating a gender perspective into community-based ecotourism, and how this may result in positive benefits for local women. The study also demonstrates the general utility of applying gender analysis tools commonly used in Gender and Development projects to the specific case of community-based ecotourism. Thus the study can be an important source of knowledge for international, national and local ecotourism development agencies and organizations. These include governmental, intergovernmental and nongovernmental organizations. These agencies and organizations can use the study findings to create more appropriate policies and programs for the development of ecotourism that might best support local communities.

Last but not least, this dissertation provides recommendations for the Giao Xuan community which may help local people identify ways of improving their particular CBET project so that it helps their economic development while preserving their local culture and environment. Finally, since the CBET project in Giao Xuan commune is a pilot project for community-based ecotourism in other communities in Vietnam, this research is well-positioned to help develop a wider model of CBET in Vietnam.

1.5 Dissertation Organization

This dissertation includes eight chapters and is organized as follows. Chapter One provides a brief introduction to my personal background and previous experience as these have inspired this dissertation. This chapter also includes an introduction to the context of sustainable tourism development in Vietnam, research questions, and the significance of the study. Chapter Two provides an overview of the different forms of CBET that have been defined and used in the literature. The chapter continues with a review of empirical research on community member learning and gender issues in CBET development. Chapter Three reviews theoretical concepts of non-formal education and informal learning, environmental adult education, and women's empowerment in development projects. These theoretical concepts helped to inform my thoughts and ideas for developing this research study and they also helped me to unpack and make sense of the study findings. Chapter Four introduces the research site, provides a justification for the methodological approach employed in this study, presents various research steps including gaining access to the research site, participant recruitment, and data collection and analysis, identifies my position as a researcher, and describes associated ethical considerations to the trustworthiness of the research study. Chapters Five, Six, and Seven report findings that respond to the three main research questions of this dissertation. Chapter Eight includes a discussion of study findings, recommendations for the Giao Xuan CBET practice, research limitations, recommendations for future research, and closing remarks.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

In the introductory chapter, I noted that community member learning and gender issues are two very important but under-researched aspects in CBET development. Since these two aspects of CBET are the focus of my study, in this chapter I present a review of research that has been conducted on these issues. This review helps me to understand the practice of community member learning and gender issues in CBET development. In addition, it also helps me to more clearly delineate areas where community member learning can occur, how gender issues are examined in CBET, and what specific research gaps exist.

The notion of ecotourism is contested (Cater, 2006; Duffy, 2006; Weaver and Lawton, 2007), because it depends on “the overall concept of tourism development, the perspective of the definers and the purpose of its application” (Leksakundilok, 2004, p. 23). Thus, I begin this chapter by reviewing different forms of CBET that have been defined and used in literature including: 1) Authentic ecotourism; 2) Community-based tourism; and 3) Indigenous ecotourism. In the second section, I review different knowledge and skills that community members learn in CBET. First, community members engage in local capacity building programs to learn fundamental knowledge and skills to manage and implement CBET projects (Denman, 2001; Suanri, 2004). Second, they learn to construct and implement ecotourism curriculum, such as various activities that visitors will do during their CBET trips (Walter, 2009). Third, community members have opportunities to learn about other cultures and reflect on and reinforce their own local values (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2009). And finally, they learn to raise awareness of environmental conservation (Powell & Ham, 2008). In the last section of this chapter, I present a review of literature on the complexity of gender issues in CBET (which vary depending on

different local contexts), and the impact of education on gender relations in CBET projects has on the empowerment of local women.

2.1 What Is Community-Based Ecotourism?

Community-based Ecotourism typically involves travel to locations where the natural environment thrives. Ideally, CBET projects are locally managed and maintained in a sustainable fashion by those indigenous to the tourist destination in such a way that the travellers are educated about the local ecosystem and are able to contribute to the preservation of the area. Walter (2010) outlines some basic principles and common themes of community-based ecotourism:

1) Principles of local participation, control or ownership of ecotourism initiatives; 2) A focus on environmental conservation and local livelihood benefits; 3) The promotion of customary and indigenous cultures; and 4) The promotion of local and indigenous human rights and sovereignty over traditional territories and resources. (p. 3)

In a further categorization, Walter (2010) defines three kinds of “grassroots” ecotourism. These are: 1) Authentic ecotourism; 2) Community-based tourism; and 3) Indigenous ecotourism. In the section that follows, I will describe these three “grassroots” forms of ecotourism.

2.1.1 Authentic Ecotourism

“Authentic” ecotourism or “real” ecotourism is a term used by Honey (Honey & Stewart 2002; Honey, 2008; see also Walter, 2010). It is based on a definition of ecotourism constructed by the International Ecotourism Society (TIES).² Ecotourism here refers to “travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the welfare of local people;” “authentic”

²The International Ecotourism Society (TIES) is a non-profit organization founded in 1990 and committed to promoting ecotourism. It aims to “make tourism a viable tool for conservation, protection of bio-cultural diversity, and sustainable community development.” (TIES, 2011)

ecotourism is described by Honey (2008) as:

Travel to fragile, pristine, and usually protected areas that strives to be low impact and (often) small scale. It helps educate the traveler, provides funds for conservation, directly benefits the economic development and political empowerment of local communities, and fosters respect for different cultures and human rights. (p. 33)

“Authentic” or “real” ecotourism focuses first and foremost on raising ecotourists’ awareness of the environment and the need for conservation, especially in natural areas where the tourism occurs. In addition, it is essential that local culture is respected and local community members are involved in ecotourism practices in order to benefit and empower local communities.

Honey (2008) identifies seven characteristics that “authentic” or “real” ecotourism should have:

1) Involves travel to natural destinations; 2) Minimizes impact; 3) Builds environmental awareness; 4) Provides direct financial benefits for conservation; 5) Provides financial benefits and empowerment for local people; 6) Respects local culture; and 7) Supports human rights and democratic movements. (pp. 29-31)

Authentic ecotourism is seen as an alternative to mass tourism, and minimizes and prevents the negative social and environmental impacts that are caused by mass tourism. Because of its mandate, a key principle in operating and managing “authentic” ecotourism is to make sure that increasing environmental knowledge is taken into account, local knowledge and values are appreciated, and local benefits and human rights are supported and promoted. Therefore, the general assumption underlying this model of ecotourism is that knowledge is empowering and can increase the intention and actions of individuals to actually help in conservation efforts and preservation of the environment. However, the operation and management of authentic ecotourism practices and development are not limited only to the local community. Authentic ecotourism can also be developed by agencies and organizations outside of the community or it

can be implemented through partnerships with local communities and other outside stakeholders (Honey, 2008).

2.1.2 Community-Based Tourism

Suansri (2003), in her *Community-based Tourism (CBT) handbook*, defines CBT as:

Tourism that takes environmental, social, and cultural sustainability into account. It is managed and owned by the community, for the community, with the purpose of enabling visitors to increase their awareness and learn about the community and local ways of life. (p. 15)

Similar to Honey's (2008) notion of authentic ecotourism, the issues of society, culture and environment are covered in the concept of CBT provided by Suansri. However, if Honey stresses the importance of increasing the knowledge of ecotourists and local residents about environmental and cultural conservation, Suansri sees the local community as the core focus of CBT.

In contrast to authentic tourism in which the operation and management of tourism can be conducted by agencies or organizations outside of the community, CBT highlights community “ownership” (Suansri, 2003, p. 18; Walter, 2010). This means that the ultimate goal of CBT is to get community members involved in all aspects of tourism practice and development, and the purpose of CBT is to meet the needs of the local community. Local community members are the main actors in CBT and are believed to have overall authority. These members are responsible for and have rights to manage the natural resources as well as the social and cultural values in their community. Community members with local wisdom are ideally involved in designing and organizing tours, operating activities included in the tours, educating tourists about local cultural and ecological values and livelihood, and providing local products and services to tourists. For

example, they might provide local food, means of transportation, and accommodation for tourists (Leksakundilok, 2004; Suansri, 2003; Walter, 2010). Therefore, the underlying assumption of the CBT model is that community control is critical and results in a host of beneficial outcomes for local people.

CBT is considered a powerful tool for a kind of community development that brings a wide range of economic, social, cultural, political and environmental benefits. However, Suansri (2003) argues that CBT can only become an effective long-term tool of community development if the following principles are adequately and thoroughly taken into account:

- 1) Recognize, support and promote community ownership of tourism;
- 2) Involve community members from the start in every aspect;
- 3) Promote community pride;
- 4) Improve the quality of life;
- 5) Ensure environmental sustainability;
- 6) Preserve the unique character and culture of the local area;
- 7) Foster cross-cultural learning;
- 8) Respect cultural differences and human dignity;
- 9) Distribute benefits fairly among community members;
- and 10) Contribute a fixed percentage of income to community projects. (p. 13)

2.1.3 Indigenous Ecotourism

Indigenous communities have experienced much suffering caused by the invasion of mass tourism. In order to have space for natural protection, conservation areas and tourism, many indigenous communities were forced out of their native lands. Consequently, many of them suffer from poverty and have lost their rights to resources and their ancestral lands and resources (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2009; Nepal, 2004; Zeppel, 2006). Similar to Suansri's community-based tourism, indigenous ecotourism is seen as a tool for community development, but it is considered first and foremost as a strategy to protect, regain and promote indigenous communities' rights and ownership to their ancestral land, natural resources, and intellectual, cultural and spiritual values (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2009; Zeppel, 2006). In this case, indigenous

control is assumed to be the most critical aspect that leads to environmental conservation and empowerment of indigenous communities.

Historically, many indigenous communities were colonized or are still considered colonized. Socially and politically, many of them are still in a marginalized segment of society and are often among the poorest as well. Geographically, however, indigenous communities often reside in rich natural areas with many wildlife resources (a favourable condition for developing ecotourism). Yet these locations are often in remote areas where the infrastructure is either in poor condition or not developed at all (Fuller, Caldicott, Cairncross, & Wilde, 2007; Zeppel, 2006). All of these issues make it more difficult for indigenous communities to develop ecotourism. Therefore, it is understandable that indigenous communities sometimes need support and assistance from outside agencies like international and local NGOs or multilateral organizations for the ecotourism development process.

Even though indigenous communities often are perceived as needing assistance from outside agencies, indigenous communities have their own principles for ecotourism that they implement and develop in their own territories. According to Zeppel (2006), indigenous ecotourism is:

- 1) Based on indigenous knowledge systems and values;
- 2) Based on promoting indigenous customary practices and livelihoods;
- 3) Used to regain rights to access, manage and use traditional land and resources;
- 4) Used to manage cultural property such as historic and sacred sites;
- 5) Takes place under the control and active participation of local indigenous people;
- 6) Includes indigenous communities in ecotourism planning, development and operation;
- 7) Managing indigenous cultural property in terms of land, heritage and resources; and
- 8) Negotiating the terms of trade for the use of ecotourism resources. (p. 12)

2.1.4 Community-Based Ecotourism Definition Summary

In general, the three fundamental forms of CBET overlap, but have slightly different foci with regard to their main purpose. Whereas the “authentic” ecotourism model focuses more on conservation and the content that is taught to ecotourists, community-based tourism and indigenous tourism models focus more on community control and cultural preservation (Walter, 2010). In practice, not all ecotourism projects neatly follow a single form. And even though the three forms of CBET have some shared principles, the principles may be implemented and developed differently depending on each form's focus and strategy as well as the context where CBET occurs.

2.2 Community Member Learning in Community-Based Ecotourism (CBET)

The definitions of CBET discussed in the previous section indicate that education is an important component in CBET development. Even though there is a dearth of literature on learning in CBET, especially on community member learning, research done to date has pointed out some aspects in which community members experienced learning. These aspects of learning include: 1) Learning knowledge and skills to manage and implement CBET; 2) Learning to construct and implement an ecotourism curriculum; 3) Learning about other cultures, and reinforcing local cultures and values; and 4) Raising oneself's and others' awareness of environmental conservation.

2.2.1 Learning Knowledge and Skills to Manage and Implement CBET

CBET is quite often developed in communities in which economics is poor but natural

wonders are rich and unique (Honey, 2008). Local people who participate in CBET usually do not have enough knowledge, skills, and experience to successfully develop and manage CBET initiatives due to their lack of both formal and informal education and training opportunities (Laverack & Thangpher, 2009; Tran, 2002; Victurine, 2000). Thus, local communities need support and training to develop their CBET initiatives. Such support and training are known as local capacity building programs (Fuller, Caldicott, Cairncross, & Wilde, 2007; Nepal, 2004). Local capacity building programs are usually sponsored and provided to local communities by external agencies such as NGOs and government agencies (Suansri, 2004; Trejos, Chiang & Huang, 2008) and are often delivered through workshops, technical assistance in the field, and follow-up training for skills enhancement.

Typically, local capacity building programs contain: 1) Awareness raising workshops related to the CBET and 2) Training that provides skills and knowledge needed for planning, operating, and managing the CBET initiative (Denman, 2001; Suanri, 2004; Victurine, 2000). CBET awareness raising programs are often provided at an early stage of CBET with an attempt to provide local communities with general background knowledge on CBET. In these programs, local people are provided with information and knowledge on environmental conservation, and potential benefits that CBET can bring to local communities if operated appropriately. In addition, through these programs, local people also learn about possible environmental, social, cultural and economic impacts of CBET on local communities (Denman, 2001; Nepal, 2004).

The most common skills and knowledge constructed in capacity building curriculum are ecotourism product development, management and leadership skills, financial control, negotiating skills with people inside communities and with outside agencies, marketing,

knowledge on legal issues, and networking (Denman, 2001; Laverack & Thangphet, 2007; Walter, 2009). Knowledge and skills on hosting guests are also covered. These include hospitality skills, language training and cross-cultural knowledge, guiding skills, knowledge of foods and cooking, sanitation and medical care (Christie & Mason, 2003; Suansri, 2004; Victurine, 2000; Walter, 2009).

Comparatively little research has been done on how people learn in CBET community capacity building programs. However, the research that has been done indicates that, for the most part, knowledge and skill transmission has been the main pedagogy of local capacity building programs, and such a top-down development approach has not empowered and benefited communities (Leksakundilok, 2004). For example, in a study on tour guide training programs, Christie and Mason (2003) point out that the current training tour guide models focus too much on “knowledge transmission and skill acquisition” (p. 14). They then propose a model of transformative tour guide training in which tour guides not only learn knowledge, skills and practical guiding experience, but also how to embrace different values and ways of learning from tourists. This proposed model of tour guide training opens up space for potential transformative experiences for both tour guides and tourists.

Some researchers highlight different approaches that are shown to be more effective than the knowledge and skill transmission approach, including the “participatory approach” (Laverack & Thangphet, 2007) and the “learning by doing” (Victurine, 2000) approach. In particular, it has been claimed that the application of a participatory approach, which emphasizes community participation and empowerment, can help local people identify what they need to learn. The participatory approach also helps local people learn about their strengths and weaknesses and to

ultimately control and manage their CBET initiative. Essentially, it has also been suggested that training in local capacity building programs is an ongoing venture in which the content and pedagogy needs to be adaptive and modified throughout the CBET implementation. Onsite experiential learning where local people learn and apply skills and knowledge through real tasks in CBET with the assistance and onsite feedback of trainers has been reported as an effective form of learning in local capacity building programs (Victurine, 2000).

From a broader perspective, other researchers find that establishing networks among CBET initiatives is an effective way of providing technical support to local communities. Establishing networks can help CBET ventures to promote “common quality standards” (Denman, 2001, p. 21) and thus obtain a better and more sustainable practice and competitiveness (Wood, 2007). Tran (2004) suggests that training for local people in countries where CBET is still relatively new (e.g., Vietnam) should be conducted locally, domestically and internationally. He emphasizes the importance of exchange agreements among different CBET initiatives so that local people can have opportunities to learn and exchange their knowledge and experience with people who work in the tourism field in different locations.

Researchers pinpoint barriers that greatly affect local people's process of obtaining knowledge and skills for tourism development in communities. Contradictory views between training program providers and local communities toward the objectives, scope, and methods used to operate CBET projects have been reported as a main barrier for the effectiveness of community capacity building programs (Fuller, Caldicott, Cairncross, & Wilde, 2007). Fletcher (2009) and Palmer (2006) point out that some capacity building programs provided by external agencies promote a Western global agenda and ideology and therefore do not respond to the

needs and circumstances of local communities. In research on a CBET project in Fiji, Faralley (2011), for example, found that a mismatch between Western notions of democratic decision-making and local Fijian systems of governance, cultural concepts, kin groups and clan systems worked against the success of the project.

A lack of trainers' understanding of local people and context is another barrier for meaningful participation of local people in capacity building programs. For example, academic prerequisites for training programs are often too difficult for local people from rural areas (Sproule, 1999). Some workshops are ineffective just because workshop facilitators or instructors, who might be knowledgeable but are not familiar with community-based projects, use too much jargon in an area of knowledge that local people find unfamiliar (Trejos et al 2008). And even the venue where the training occurs and the length of the training programs can also make it difficult for local people to get involved from the beginning to the end. For example, the length of time may be too long and the location might not be situated in a convenient and accessible location for local people. Local people often have too many other duties that they need to address in their homes and communities. It may be impossible for them to become involved in a long training program that takes place outside of their communities (Southgate, 2006).

The constraints of time and finance that providers of local capacity building programs often face can also make it more challenging for successfully building local capacity. It takes time and resources to increase local people's knowledge, skills, experience, and confidence so that they can independently manage the CBET initiatives in their communities (Aref, 2001; Halpenny, 2003; Tran, 2004). Many local communities have failed to continue the CBET ventures after the projects sponsored by external agencies finished. This was partly due to time

and resource constraints in local capacity building programs. Local people in these cases were not fully ready to run projects by themselves because they were not provided with enough opportunities to develop adequate leadership and management skills to maintain and develop the projects (Manyara & Jones, 2007). Victurine's (2000) research on capacity building programs for community-based tourism entrepreneurship suggests that the long-term commitment of donors or trainers is required for successful local capacity building programs. In addition to adequate time for working with local people and equipping them with needed skills and knowledge to provide ecotourism services, Denman (2001) also highlights the importance of providing some training on assessment skills to local people. Key indicators such as "economic performance, local community reaction and wellbeing, visitor satisfaction and environmental changes" are highly recommended to be introduced to the community so that local people would be able to regularly assess the performance of CBET in their communities and make adjustment for improvement even after external agencies withdraw from communities (Denman, 2001, p. 24).

2.2.2 Learning to Construct and Implement an Ecotourism Curriculum

Developing and delivering an ecotourism curriculum is a critical component in a CBET project and it is also a learning process for local people. Local people (usually with consultation of tourism experts) have to decide what aspects of local knowledge and values to include in ecotourism curriculum. Ecotourism curriculum is often constituted with a diverse range of local knowledge pertaining to the environment, culture, history, and local livelihood. Environmental knowledge comprises local ecological systems, wildlife, marine life, vegetation, and traditional knowledge of natural conservation (Beaumont, 2001; Kontogeorgopoulos, 2005; Kwan, Eagles,

& Gebhard, 2010; Lai & Nepal 2006; Lee & Moscardo, 2005). Knowledge of local traditions, lifeways, language, music, art, cultural heritage, and so on, constitutes the theme of cultural knowledge (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2009; McIntosh, 2004; Johnston, 2003; Walter, 2009). A wide range of knowledge on local livelihood is also covered including agriculture, fishing, hunting, food processing, animal husbandry, and medicinal herbs and plants (Kwan, Eagles, & Gebhard, 2010; McIntosh, 2004; Walter, 2009).

Local people also need to plan and develop learning resources to offer to visitors and the pedagogy that they will employ to teach visitors. Different resources for learning include books, magazines, brochures, local community websites, local information centres, local museums, and other resources related to CBET in local communities (Kwan, Eagles, & Gebhard, 2010; Walter, 2009). One of the most common pedagogies used in ecotourism curriculum includes interpretation by guides (Orams & Taylor, 2005; Powell & Ham, 2008). Interpretation is defined as “the process of communicating to people the significance of a place or object so that they enjoy it more, understand their heritage and environment better, and develop a positive attitude to conservation” (Moscardo, 1995, as cited in Beaumont, 2001, p. 320). It is noted that the content and design of ecotourism tours have a powerful effect on the outcome of changes in the ecotourists’ knowledge, attitudes and behaviour. Indeed, a well-designed ecotourism interpretive program can contribute to the inspiration of positive behaviour and attitudes, and the practical support of tourists toward sustainable local development (Powell & Ham, 2008). Many advocates for the positive influence of ecotourism on ecotourists have done research with participants who were involved in some kind of educationally oriented programs or interpretive activities during the tours (Beaumont, 2001; Powell & Ham, 2008; Zeppel, 2008). A successful

interpretive program is supplemented by the important role of tour guides who greatly contribute to the success of delivering the program. If interpretation is considered an educational process in ecotourism, tour guides are seen as “educational agents” in this process (Christie & Mason, 2003, p. 4). Thus, the local guide's role is not simply to convey information, but to facilitate learning so that they can have a positive influence on the change of ecotourists' knowledge.

Transmission of local knowledge and values through telling stories on local history or sharing personal experiences is another pedagogy applied by local people in CBET, especially in indigenous communities (Zeppel & Muloin, 2008). This pedagogy is often rooted in indigenous cultures and has been applied in attempting to raise the awareness of both indigenous and non-indigenous people about lands and resources that have been taken away, damaged natural environments, racism, and cultural erosion. Local people ultimately hope to raise the self-awareness and self-esteem of indigenous people about their culture and environmental knowledge, and change non-indigenous people’s perspective on indigenous communities (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2009; Kent, 2006; Zeppel, 2007).

To help visitors gain a deeper understanding on local traditions and lifeways, local people have to incorporate various activities into an ecotourism curriculum and learn to implement them in a way that can help visitors obtain hands-on experience through participating in the activities. For example, in homestay programs, host families do not simply provide food and accommodation to visitors but they prepare and share meals together with visitors. By doing this, local people can help visitors to obtain knowledge of and experience in cooking local dishes (Walter, 2009). In addition, local people also incorporate different cultural and livelihood activities as part of the ecotourism curriculum such as fishing, beading, weaving, planting,

hunting, and farming (Nepal, 2004; Stronza, 2007; Zeppel, 2007) or local cultural activities such as dancing, singing, and storytelling (Beaumont, 2001; Higgins-Desbiolles, 2009; Johnston, 2003; McIntosh, 2004). In addition to providing information and knowledge related to local cultural and livelihood activities to visitors, local people need to learn how to give clear and practical instructions on how to do such activities and encourage visitors to participate and do these activities by themselves (Walter, 2009; Walter & Reimer, 2011).

It is reported that providing hands-on experience to visitors and opportunities for visitors to learn directly from local people's knowledge and experience is one of the most effective pedagogies employed in CBET. It has been pointed out that experiential learning was a “meaningful way” to obtain local knowledge, as noted, for example, by a visitor in his trip to New Zealand:

I personally find it better when someone is talking to me and you're there and seeing things relate to the information he/she is giving you.....Interacting with Maori people is most important because that is the only way you learn about the culture; from having interaction with that culture.....it's not just a paragraph in a book, it's a personal and interactive experience. It's more meaningful that way. (McIntosh, 2004, p. 10)

The existence of a partnership is often part of constructing and implementing an ecotourism curriculum in many communities. The partnership can occur between local community and private companies or between a local community and local or international NGOs (Stronza & Gordillo, 2008). Social and organizational skills are an essential component that local community members need to obtain in order to be engaged in partnerships while implementing CBET. Working cooperatively with other agencies requires community members to learn how to negotiate, make decisions, and manage and gain support from partners. Again, such skills can be obtained among local members themselves, but often times can also be

obtained through working with other outside partners (Walter, 2009, Stronza, 2007).

Substantial research has shown the challenges that local communities face while constructing and implementing an ecotourism curriculum. For instance, Zeppel (2006) argues that ecotourism has been used as a tool for indigenous people to express their world-views and cultural values towards the bonds and reciprocal relationship between the natural environment and humans. By sharing their views, indigenous people want to introduce their indigenous knowledge and cultural identity to non-indigenous populations. In addition, by doing this, they hope to change non-indigenous people's perspectives on indigenous communities as well as reinforce the distinctiveness of their cultures (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2009). However, indigenous eco-cultural values and practices are sometimes in conflict with mainstream principles. For example, for many indigenous communities, activities like hunting and fishing are considered a form of traditional knowledge. Those activities are not simply indigenous subsistence activities, but they are also a way of conserving their identity and cultural values (Lai & Nepal, 2006; Nepal, 2004; Zeppel & Muloin, 2008). Therefore, some indigenous communities want to introduce such activities to ecotourists as one of their traditional activities (Nepal, 2004). However, fishing and hunting are contradictory to Western conservation and sustainable development ideology (Cater, 2006; Lai & Nepal, 2006; Zeppel & Muloin, 2008).

A lack of indigenous employees is another issue indigenous communities face while implementing their CBET ventures and this challenge can threaten traditional indigenous cultural ways and knowledge. Zeppel and Muloin (2008) point out that non-indigenous and indigenous staff have different views and ontology towards wildlife. Non-indigenous staff see wildlife under the scientific eye and therefore the information they convey to ecotourists mostly focuses on

“biological facts and species information” (p. 133). However, this is not usually the way indigenous people interpret wildlife. To many indigenous people, wildlife is often associated with social and cultural aspects. Therefore, instead of providing biological and species information to ecotourists, indigenous guides often “verbally presented traditional uses and personal stories about wildlife along with aboriginal ‘dreaming’ or creation stories about totemic animal species” (p. 133). In such cases, where non-indigenous staff do not appropriately convey the spirits of indigenous cultures, the potential of promoting ecotourists’ authentic cultural understanding might be limited.

If economic and political aspects are considered “key motivators” for ecotourism projects, environmental and cultural issues are seen as “key outcomes” (Zeppel, 2007, p. 334). However, the desired outcomes of ecotourism curriculum operating in local communities are sometimes contradictory depending on how and by whom the outcomes are constructed. In many cases, researchers have observed that the ecotourism curriculum in many rural areas of less developed countries is conceptualized and practiced under Western views rather than local communities’ views (Cater, 2006; Fletcher, 2009). Western ideology and culture is promoted through ecotourism training programs or the construction of ecotourism curriculum that is assisted and funded by external agencies. Such promotion of Western constructed ecotourism curriculum may influence change in local cultures (Fletcher, 2009).

2.2.3 Learning Other Cultures and Reinforcing Local Values and Cultures

In order to construct the content of ecotourism curriculum, community members often share and learn knowledge related to local natural resources and traditional experience in

livelihood practices. Tour guides can learn much from community elders who often have thorough and insightful understanding and knowledge of community history, traditional cultures and values (Walter, 2009). A number of researchers highlight that learning among local community members in CBET can help raise local people's pride in their own cultures and lifeways and create cohesion among local community members (Fuller, Caldicott, Cairncross, & Wilde, 2007; Wearing & Neil, 2009).

The introduction of local cultures and customs from community members to visitors in CBET can be an effective tool for local communities to maintain, restore and promote local cultural practices and traditions (Haas, 2003; Higgins-Desbiolles, 2009; Wearing & Neil, 2009). However, it has also been claimed that the need for foreign currency has influenced the tourism development and plans in many local communities. In order to attract more visitors, cultures are commercialized to meet the needs of visitors and are then not necessarily authentic or meaningful to local communities. Cultural practices that were done only by local community members on some special occasions are now performed publicly as often as needed for the interest of visitors; many traditional activities have been turned into tourism service activities, and so on. These changes raise concern over the reality that sometimes what ecotourists observe and witness is not the authentic cultures of local communities but just "staged authenticity" (Wearing & Neil, 2009, p. 124).

Interacting with visitors provides community members another opportunity to learn. They can improve their language skills through communicating with foreign tourists (Kontogeorgopoulos, 2005). A substantial amount of knowledge and skills is obtained unintentionally by local people through "trial and error" with visitors. Questions raised by

tourists also help ecotourism staff (especially tour guides) to reinforce and improve their local knowledge (Walter, 2009, p. 525). In addition, local people gain cross-cultural knowledge and skills from hosting visitors who come to local communities from different cultures (Walter, 2009). Even though hosting visitors from different countries can create an opportunity for promoting cross-cultural understanding between local people and visitors, it can also cause social problems catering to tourists such as drugs, gambling, and prostitution (Lask & Herold, 2005; Leksakundilok, 2004).

It has also been claimed that cultural learning exchange depends much on both local people and visitors' knowledge, attitudes, and willingness to learn and share their culture and values (Denman, 2001; Christie & Mason, 2003; Suanri, 2004). Some research has been concerned with the power relationship between visitors and host communities in which ecotourists treat local cultures and communities as “products” that they have “consumed” with their tours (Wearing & Neil, 2009, p. 122), and thus CBET is no longer a site of cultural learning but has turned into a site to degrade local cultures. For example, ideally, ecotourists are expected to be “culturally respectful of local customs, dress codes and social norms” (Zeppel, 2007, p. 324). However, many activities done by ecotourists have caused negative impacts on local cultures and in many cases disturb, disrespect and even damage local communities' culture and spirits. Such activities include, going to the places that are considered sacred to local people and are not to be visited by outsiders (e.g., burial places), and camping on art and ceremonial sites (Smith, Scherrer, & Dowling, 2009).

2.2.4 Raising Self and Others' Awareness of Environmental Conservation

A substantial body of literature suggests that CBET can be seen as an educative tool that helps people involved to raise their environmental knowledge and sense of environmental conservation (Beaumont, 2001; Powell & Ham, 2008; Zambrano, Broadbent, & Durham, 2010; Zeppel, 2008). One stream indicates that CBET can actually contribute to local communities' conservation of their natural resources. Those in favour of this stream assert that CBET has created many new jobs for local communities. These are jobs which replace or at least partly shift a community away from harmful activities associated with exploiting natural resources for short term benefits; for example, overfishing, excessive logging, and slash and burn agriculture (Stronza, 2007; Zeppel, 2007).

It is believed that the income that CBET brings to local communities helps to raise local people's awareness of the importance of protecting and conserving the local environment. CBET often occurs in natural and wildlife settings and the success of a CBET project depends partly on maintaining the quality of natural resources (Wood, 2007). By preserving a sustainable environment, local people can then develop CBET, which in turn ensures a source of stable income for local communities and helps preserve natural resources (Kiss, 2004; Kontogeogropoulos, 2005; Stronza, 2007)

Some research underscores that CBET projects do not automatically change local people's sense of the need for environmental conservation. Their sense of environmental conservation depends on the nature of CBET and the benefits that it brings to local communities. In particular, in order for community members to pay more attention to environmental conservation, the income that communities gain from CBET needs to be high enough to cover

the local communities' basic livelihood first (Kiss, 2004). In addition, environmental conservation beliefs and practices in local communities are influenced by those who actually own or have rights to manage and control local resources (Stronza, 2007). It has been argued that local communities will have a more responsible sense of protecting the local environment and resources if they have rights to use, manage and develop them (Doan, 2000; Sproule, 1999).

The premise that CBET is necessarily associated with the improvement and promotion of environmental conservation often lacks the support of empirical research (Kiss, 2004). Along similar lines, Stronza (2007) points out that supporting research often takes for granted that an increase in employment and income from tourism will make local people reduce exploitation of natural resources, and consequently, will lead to better local environmental conservation. In contrast, Stronza (2007) found that CBET can economically help local livelihood, but it does not necessarily create a better sense of conservation. She indicates that some changes in local communities' activities, which are believed to contribute to environmental conservation (e.g., stopping hunting and fishing), occur not as a result of changes in the sense of environmental conservation but because of other reasons. For example, local people are too busy when involved in ecotourism work and have no time left for hunting and fishing. In some cases, local people may even use their income from tourism to buy more equipment to assist in farming and the exploitation of natural resources. In this case, natural resources are depleted faster and easier (Stronza, 2007). In addition, an increasing number of ecotourists from the minority world have traveled to CBET sites in the majority world, usually by airplane (Mowforth & Munt, 2009)³.

This reality raises a concern over the use of a huge amount of gas and emission caused by long

³ In this dissertation, the terms "the majority world" and "the minority world" refer to economically poor and economically rich countries, respectively. It actually is the case that economically poor countries have most of the population; meanwhile economically rich countries represent a small part of the population.

distance transportation that can contribute to global warming (Duffy, 2006). Moreover, even though many of ecotourists are educated people with a college degree and often have a genuine interest in learning about local environment, cultures, and people (Honey, 2008), some critics have argued that the penetration of ecotourists into sensitive natural areas can cause and threatens local protected areas (Butler, 2004; Wall, 1997).

2.3 Gender Issues in Community-Based Ecotourism

The literature on gender and tourism has explored multifaceted aspects of gender identities, roles and relationships in tourism development policy and practice (Aitchison 2005; Ferguson, 2011; Gentry, 2007; Hall, Swain, & Kinnaird, 2003; Kinnaird & Hall, 1994; Swain, 1995). Concerns have arisen over a gendered division of labor in ecotourism, and the intensification of women's traditional gender roles through participation in CBET projects (Reimer & Walter, 2013). Local women who participate in CBET are often limited to certain kinds of low paid jobs such as cooks, cleaners, waitresses, and craft sellers; meanwhile, men often take higher paid jobs such as tour guides, taxi drivers, boat operators, and maintenance workers (Sproule, 1999; Gentry, 2007). It is clear from the above studies that the type of jobs that local women are often limited to in CBET are not only low wage jobs but also the kind that intensify their traditional reproductive labor in cleaning and cooking in the domestic sphere.

However, it has also been suggested that the involvement of women in CBET can make changes in both men's and women's traditional roles both in the home and community. For example, in a comparative study of gender, tourism development and poverty reduction in southwestern Uganda, Tucker & Boonabaana (2012) found that men's traditional gender role as

“breadwinners” changed with women’s participation in tourism. The study also indicates that women’s new roles helped to change oppressive cultural and religious gender norms and negative attitudes toward women, but their workload increased significantly. At the same time, with new tourism income, some women were able to hire domestic helpers or otherwise arrange to share the burden of their reproductive labor in caring for children and elderly family members. The overall effect of women’s participation in tourism was to increase income spent on family and children’s needs (education, food, clothing), promote community development among a network of women, and allow them to invest in and own property (land and rental housing), thus securing a measure of economic security, independence and increased confidence in their relations with men.

In a similar vein, Stronza’s (2005) research on a community-based ecotourism project in the Peruvian Amazon found that women assumed additional burdens of labor when working in an ecotourism lodge. However, since their husbands spent more time on ecotourism work and less time on other productive and community work, many women took over some of their husbands' traditional responsibilities such as making decisions on selling produce or attending community meetings. To some extent, these new responsibilities opened up new gender roles and increased women's decision-making power and involvement in community affairs. Likewise, Tucker (2007) provides evidence that in tourism development in Turkey, Muslim women, whose mobility was limited by patriarchal traditions to the private sphere of the home, adopted new gender roles in paid tourism employment in the public sphere (e.g., working as tourism entrepreneurs, service staff, and hotel receptionists) which helped to promote new gender identities and relations.

Research has also shown how adult education and gender mainstreaming in CBET development can be an influential factor on changes in gender roles and relations and the empowerment of local women. For instance, Empowering Women in Nepal (EWN), a training and leadership program for women trekking guides in the Himalayas, has trained over 400 women ecotourism guides, many of whom have successfully started their own ecotourism businesses (EWN, 2013; Jackson, 2010). As part of EWN's ecotourism training, women learn about patriarchy, women's rights, safety and assertiveness. Many have gone on to effectively challenge oppressive patriarchal relations in ecotourism guiding and in wider Nepali society. In other countries, however, women who became ecotourism guides without such training have been less successful at confronting male oppression: they have been accused of being prostitutes, endured the threat of male violence, have been positioned as too weak to guide, or simply pushed aside by more aggressive men guides (Schellhorn, 2010; Scheyvens, 2007).

2.4 Chapter Summary

Three main variations of CBET were discussed in this chapter: 1) Authentic ecotourism; 2) Community-based tourism; and 3) Indigenous ecotourism. Even though there are differences in the main focus of each form of CBET in practice, community members are involved in all three forms of CBET and experience ample learning. Two typical sites of learning are local community capacity building, and the construction and implementation of an ecotourism curriculum. The main areas of knowledge and skills that community members learn include: 1) Knowledge and skills to manage and implement CBET; 2) Ecotourism curriculum construction and implementation; 3) Cross-cultural knowledge and local values reinforcement; and 4) Self

and others' awareness of environmental conservation.

This review of literature has identified some important aspects that inform this study. First, community member learning in CBET takes place in both non-formal and informal settings. Second, the approaches employed by outside agencies to assist local communities to set up and implement a CBET project have a significant influence on community member learning processes and outcomes. Third, the promotion of local livelihood, environmental conservation and culture is expected to be a key goal of CBET development. And lastly, gender is a critical and debated but under-researched issue in CBET development, but adult education about gender mainstreaming in CBET can help to promote the empowerment of women.

CHAPTER 3: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter provides a discussion of theoretical concepts of adult learning and education, and women's empowerment in community development that is intended to guide my understanding of learning that community members experienced in the Giao Xuan CBET project and the impact of the CBET project on local gender roles and relations. An overview of the conceptual framework for the study, its rationale, and the ways in which it frames research findings is first presented. A detailed review of theoretical concepts on adult learning and education, and women's empowerment in community development follows.

3.1 Overview of Conceptual Framework

Learning in CBET often takes place in non-formal and informal settings. The educational approach(es) employed in a particular local capacity building program in CBET can have a significant influence on the learning content, processes, and outcomes that community members experience. The local capacity building program was an important component in the development of the Giao Xuan CBET project. Outside experts such as ecotourism, environmental, and economic experts and MCD project staff came to Giao Xuan and helped to build capacity so that local people could develop and implement the CBET project. Thus, it is necessary to review educational approaches that have been applied in capacity building in community development projects. The conceptual framework of educational approaches, as informed by Freire (1973) and Clover (2002a, 2003, 2004), guide my analysis of non-formal education activities included in the Giao Xuan CBET project across the three finding chapters in this study.

Moreover, literature also suggests that local community members in CBET experience ample informal learning, so the nature of different forms of informal learning are also reviewed. I draw my analysis of informal learning from the conceptualization of informal learning presented by Foley (1998; 1999; 2001), Livingstone (2001), and Schugurensky (2000). The review is a fundamental framework that helps me to unpack various informal learning settings and processes that Giao Xuan community members encounter to develop and manage the CBET project (Chapter 5), protect and conserve the local environment (Chapter 6), and make changes in local gender roles and relations and empowering local women (Chapter 7).

This chapter also reviews other aspects of adult learning including: 1) Experience and learning; 2) Learning and transformation; and 3) Individual and collective learning. Experiential learning has been shown to be one prominent form of learning that takes place in CBET (Walter, 2009; Walter & Reimer, 2011) and experience is fundamental to learning in adulthood (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007; Miller, 2000). Thus, the conceptualizations of experience and learning help me both to analyze how community members learn from their experience and to identify the impact that experiential learning has on community member learning outcomes in the CBET project. Moreover, CBET is an important pedagogical site of social movement learning and social movements are considered a site of both personal and collective learning (Hall & Turray, 2006; Kilgore, 1999). Learning activities in social movements are believed to lead to personal transformation and social change (Welton, 1993). Therefore, I also include components on transformative learning, and individual and collective learning in this chapter.

Finally, since one research question of the study concerns gender equality learning in CBET and its impact on gender roles and relations, I present a conceptual framework that is

informed by Longwe's (2002) five levels of women's empowerment framework: welfare, access, conscientization, participation, and control. This framework has been around for many decades in the context of gender and development, but has only been recently proposed for use in gender analysis in CBET by Walter (2011), and Tran and Walter (2014). I use this framework to inform my discussion of changes in local gender roles and relations and empowerment of local women in the project (Chapter 7).

3.2 Definitions of Non-Formal Education and Informal Learning

Even though formal, non-formal and informal learning are considered three broad forms of learning in adult learning and education, often times researchers use these terms but do not provide a clear definition (Colley, Hodkinson, & Malcom, 2002). It has also been argued that “there was no single agreed definition of what learning is” (Colley, Hodkinson, & Malcom, 2003, p. 2). Below I provide definitions of non-formal education and informal learning used in my study.

3.2.1 Non-Formal Education

Non-formal education refers to the form of education that is organized and systematic (e.g., by some educators or some organizations) with curriculum and facilitators, but does not necessarily occur under the direction of a government or the formal schooling system. Non-formal education can take place in many different settings including social movements, charity organizations, churches, working places, community settings and it can be conducted through workshops, seminars, and lectures (Hall & Turay, 2006; Holst, 2002).

Merriam, Caffarella and Baumgartner (2007, pp. 30 -31) summarize four subtypes of non-formal education: 1) A complement to the formal system; 2) An alternative to the formal system; 3) A supplement to the formal system; and 4) Being associated with international development programs. Complementary non-formal education refers to education that benefits people who do not have the chance to obtain basic skills and literacy that are supposed to be provided by the formal education system. Alternative non-formal education indicates education that is often offered in indigenous communities. This alternative non-formal education links to traditions and cultures of particular communities that often have their own ways of teaching and learning. Supplemental non-formal education can quickly provide knowledge and skills to help learners meet the rapid changes in social, economical, and educational needs in case it takes time for formal curriculum to be organized and put into place. Finally, international development programs are often implemented through community development projects and aim to provide local communities with needed knowledge and skills so that local communities can improve their living conditions or take action for social change.

In CBET, non-formal education often takes place in the local community capacity building program for community members provided by governmental or non-governmental organizations that help community members with the formation and implementation of CBET projects in their communities (Denman, 2001; Victurine, 2000; Walter, 2009). In addition, non-formal education is seen in educationally oriented programs incorporated in CBET projects which often aim at promoting local cultures and environmental conservation (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2009).

3.2.2 Informal Learning

Informal learning is understood as “any activity involving the pursuit of understanding, knowledge or skill which occurs without the presence of externally imposed curricular criteria” (Livingstone, 2001, p. 4). It happens when “people teach and learn from each other naturally and socially in workplaces, families, community organizations and other social settings” (Foley, 1998, p. 141) and it is sometimes “tacit” and “embedded in actions” (Foley, 1999, p. 3). Based on the above definition, informal learning can take place by community members during the implementation of a CBET project. They can learn informally through interacting and working with various stakeholders involved in the CBET project such as fellow villagers, visitors, external staff, ecotourism or environmental experts or colleagues in other CBET sites, and local authorities (McIntosh, 2004; Walter, 2009).

Schugurensky (2000) argues that the definition of informal learning is too broad and he suggests three forms of informal learning including: 1) Self-directed; 2) Incidental; and 3) Socialization. At a very basic level, self-directed learning is a form of learning in which learners intentionally take initiative in their learning and do not need assistance from “educators”. However, the self-directed learning process can include a “resource person” (Schugurensky, 2000, p. 3). Meanwhile, incidental learning happens almost “by accident” when learners communicate with others or through actions as they go about their daily life (Foley, 1998, p. 141). However, after their unintentional learning experience, learners do notice that they have learned something from their experience (Schugurensky, 2000). Socialization or tacit learning is a form of learning in which learners are neither intentional nor conscious of learning when it occurs.

It has been argued that studying adult learning in informal settings is particularly difficult and has not been adequately studied (Overweil, 2000). Part of the reason is there is not always curriculum or set material that people are learning (Livingstone, 2001). Sometimes people just learn from each other from an informal conversation. There are all kinds of informal learning happening around us without us even noticing it taking place. This kind of learning happens anywhere and anytime. Even though this makes the study of adult learning in informal settings difficult, this form of learning is critically important to learning in adulthood because it has a great potential to influence many individuals (Livingstone, 2001).

3.3 Paulo Freire's Educational Approach

The educational approach written in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* by Paulo Freire in 1970 has been implemented and influential in many development contexts (Mayo, 2004). In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, different important educational concepts were developed. Freire's work aims to inspire the poor to make liberating changes from an oppressive reality. In addition, he also gives suggestions to educators on working together with the poor and/or inspiring the poor so that they can empower themselves to recognize and challenge established norms and behaviours in society.

Even though Freire's educational approach was developed against the background of a literacy program he started in Brazil, the pedagogy that he developed can be implemented in other community development contexts where participants are from marginalized and poor conditions. The local people in the context of my study represent such an example. However, it is essential for me to keep in mind that the application of Freire's educational concepts should be

solidly tied to the local social and historical context as well as the ideology of local people in the Giao Xuan CBET project. This section focuses on discussing two main educational concepts developed in Freire's work including “banking education” and “conscientization.”

3.3.1 Banking Education

One of Freire's basic assumptions is that education is inherently political (Yoo, 2007; Taylor, 1993). There is no kind of neutral education that only communicates information without carrying some other kind of message or without some kind of non-political purpose. “Banking education” is a term used by Freire to describe a type of education used by the dominant group in society to “domesticate” those of lower social classes. In this kind of education, learners act like a “bank” and teachers “deposit” information in them:

In this model, the teacher is the subject of the learning process, and the learners are its objects; the role of the teachers is to ‘deposit’ contents in the mind of the learner, as if it were a tabula rasa to be filled with information. Hence, the teachers is considered as knowledgeable and the student as ignorant. (Schugurensky, 1998, para. 5)

In other words, the purpose of the teaching is to transfer the information that the educators are supposed to teach. Students are not encouraged to think critically about any of the information that is given to them. The role of an educator is to “regulate the way the world ‘enters into’ the students” and to “fill’ the students by making deposits of information which he considers to constitute true knowledge” (Freire, 1978, p. 65).

For Freire, banking education is oppressive because it is structured and implemented in the way that minimizes students' creativity and promotes the interests of the oppressors. Thus, the banking education concept implies that an educated person is the person who can adapt to the world envisioned and created by the oppressors (Freire, 1978). Freire also pinpoints

consequences of banking education:

The more students work at storing the deposits entrusted to them, the less they develop the critical consciousness which would result from their intervention in the world as transformers of that world. The more completely they accept the passive role imposed on them, the more they tend simply to adapt to the world as it is and to the fragmented view of reality deposited in them. (Freire, 1978, p. 62)

Freire's concept of banking education is critical in understanding the politics of education in various contexts. However, the over-simplicity in Freire's categorization of people in society as the oppressed and the oppressors has been criticized (Blackburn, 2000). Blackburn also argues that the oppressed people may not see themselves as powerless, may not even want to be empowered in certain ways, and have their own ways of showing their power such as "sabotage, non-cooperation, and the secret observance of a distinct culture and identity" (Blackburn, 2000, p. 10).

3.3.2 Conscientization

Freire's concept of conscientization describes the process in which the oppressed recognize and understand the existing structure that shapes their lives, critically assess it in the connections to social, political and economic structures, explore the capacity to change, and take action to change the existing situation. The ultimate goal of this process is social transformation on existing inequities in society in order to have more socially fair and just conditions for everyone (Freire, 1973). Therefore, particular kinds of education can help to "emancipate" or "liberate" oppressed people from their subordinate position in society.

Freire proposes some alternative ideas for how education can occur that is not oppressive but empowering. The teachers and learners have different roles and the methodology of teaching

is different: "In Freire's problem-posing model, the teacher becomes the facilitator, the traditional class becomes a cultural circle, the emphasis shifts from lecture to problem-posing strategies, and the content, previously removed from the learners' experience, becomes relevant to the group" (Schugurensky, 1998, para. 6). Therefore, the teacher is a person who guides discussion instead of a person who "deposits" information in his/her students (see also Taylor, 1993; Gadotti, 1994; Kane, 2001). The learners are to critically think about the problems they are presented with instead of accepting the information that is given to them.

This highlights the key difference between "problem-solving" and "problem-posing" methods of education (Connolly, 1980). In problem-solving education, teachers present problems to analyze and for their learners to solve. Usually the problem is not necessarily relevant to the lives of the learners and it is assumed that there is only one solution to the problem. In problem-posing education, learners are allowed to critically reflect on ideas presented. Learners and teachers discuss and challenge each other and can connect the content to other situations or contexts relevant to the daily lives of the learners (Connolly, 1980).

Learning in this setting occurs through "dialectical dialogue." Dialogue here refers to a kind of discussion. Dialectical means the process of considering different viewpoints or positions simultaneously and seeing how these positions are interrelated, work together or are in conflict. Therefore, learners are encouraged to discuss problems and critically consider different viewpoints. Learners are also encouraged to use some of their own experiences and to be open to other learners' opinions.

Under Freire's description of "banking education" it is only the learners who are "learning" information from the teachers, meaning that learners absorb whatever knowledge the

teachers impose upon them. In non-oppressive or empowering education, both the learners and teachers learn from each other. This is sometimes why the roles of teachers and learners are described as “teacher-student”, “student-teacher” (Mayo, 2004; Taylor, 1993; Gadotti, 1994; Kane, 2001). Teachers continually challenge their own assumptions about the knowledge they have acquired in light of dialogue with students. Learners do the same, such that people in both roles can transform and learn.

Critical reflection is an important component in Freire's non-oppressive or transformative education. Critical reflection cannot be understood and promoted without adequately considering the context through which critical reflection occurs. The process of critical reflection that takes place in an informal setting like in a community where learners are marginalized, disadvantaged groups who might “have been silent all their lives” can be very different from the one that occurs in a situation in which learners are from privileged groups of people such as university students (Schugurensky, 2002, p. 66). To engage such groups of marginalized people in an ongoing reflective dialogue, it is essential to have a community with caring and respectful members. Learners need to feel safe to share their stories and experiences, and feel comfortable with reflecting on their own views as well as others’ views and experiences (Schugurensky, 2002; Duveskog & Friis-Hansen, 2009; Easton, Monkman, & Miles, 2009). In addition, critical reflection may be manifested in vastly different ways depending on particular cultural contexts. Critical reflection is not simply a cognitive process but it can be ecological, spiritual, art-based, and holistic (Clover, 2002b; Knowles & Coles, 2002; Miller, 2002; Morrell, 2002; Wane, 2002).

3.4 Clover's “Conscientization” and “Educative Activism”

This section explores Clover's concepts of “conscientization” and “educative activism” which guided my understanding of how non-formal and informal environmental learning activities took place in the Giao Xuan CBET project. It also helped me to identify the influences that these environmental learning activities have on community members' environmental knowledge, attitude, and actions in Chapter 6.

Drawing on Freire's approach of conscientization and praxis in adult education, “conscientization” and “educative activism” in Environmental Adult Education presented by Clover (2002a, 2003, 2004) aims to empower local people to help them recognize their own capacity as agents of change. According to Clover (2003), “it is not solely a matter of individual behaviour change” but “a process of political and social learning” which helps to raise critical awareness and promotes individual and collective action for socio-environmental change and makes concrete “links between the environments and social, economic, political and cultural aspects of people’s lives” (Clover, 2003, p. 10).

“Conscientization” and “educative activism” values ordinary people's knowledge. The creation of new knowledge on the environment is grounded and constructed through the practice of people's existing knowledge and experience. Local knowledge is also important to socio-environmental change. In particular, local women's rich ecological knowledge and their critical roles in the construction and promotion of local knowledge are recognized and emphasized. Socio-environmental change only occurs if the people most affected are directly and actively involved (Clover, 2000).

Teaching and learning processes are seen as moving away from the top down and

information transmission approach. Instead, “conscientization” and “educative activism” approaches emphasize an engaged, participatory, and collective process. Collective learning and action are more influential on social-environmental change than individual learning and action. Individual behaviour changes can be ignored or dismissed but changes done and enforced by a large group of people can have powerful influence on changes in the local community as a whole. Learners should be provided with opportunities “to reflect collectively and critically upon the root causes of environmental problems” and “to learn to think and struggle together to develop the abilities, skills, and confidence to move different agendas forward” (Clover, Jayme, Hall, & Follen, 2013, p. 13)

3.5 Experience and Learning

In addition to educational approaches, various aspects of learning also have a significant influence on community member learning process and outcomes in community development projects. Researchers have discussed multiple aspects of experience and learning that emphasize the connection between personal life experience and learning (Dewey; 1963), discuss the nature of experience (Fenwick, 2003), point out various propositions of experiential learning (Kolb & Kolb 2005), and relate experience and learning to learners' informed action or transformation (Lange, 2009; Wittmer & Johnson, 2000). In adult learning, research shows that people can learn from their personal experience, but not all life experiences are educative and life experience can work for some learners but not for others (Dewey, 1963). In addition, experience in learning also refers to learning by doing. People learn by actually doing things, drawing lessons from actual practice, refining and changing things if necessary (Fenwick, 2003).

Drawing on the work of John Dewey, Kurt Lewin, and Jean Piaget, Kolb (1984) proposed a theory of “experiential learning” which is defined as “the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. Knowledge results from the combination of grasping and transforming experience” (Kolb, 1984, p. 41). Kolb's experiential learning model contains four main components: 1) Concrete Experience; 2) Reflective Observation; 3) Abstract Conceptualization; and 4) Active Experimentation. In this learning cycle, learners can be involved in new experiences (concrete experience), observe and reflect on their concrete experiences (reflective observation), construct new ideas and concepts (abstract conceptualization), and then test these new ideas and concepts in real life situations (active experimentation). Learners can then obtain new experiences from their actual experiments and thus resume their cycle of learning. These four components of experiential learning do not necessarily need to occur in order but are normally considered as a cycle. For example, learning does not necessarily always start with a “concrete experience.” In this learning cycle, “concrete experience” and “abstract conceptualization” can be seen as two ways of obtaining experience and “reflective observation” and “active experimentation” help to transform learners' experiences.

Even though Kolb's experiential learning theory has been influential on adult education (Bergsteiner, Avery & Neumann, 2010; Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007), critiques have been made on certain aspects of this theory. It has been argued that Kolb's experiential learning theory emphasizes individual experience but does not give adequate attention to individual contexts. Fenwick (2001) argues that “specific contexts shape an individual's experience in different ways” (Fenwick, 2001, p. 11). Thus, she affirms that “experiential

learning cannot be discussed apart from its political, social, and cultural contexts” (Fenwick, 2001, p. 24). Similarly, Vince (1998) emphasizes the importance of considering social power relations in understanding individuals' experiential learning. According to Vince (1998), individual unequal positions in society can have an effect on whether individual experience is voiced or/and accepted due to the dynamics of power relations.

Another critique of Kolb's experiential learning theory is that its learning process is cognitively biased and rational (Fenwick, 2001; Holman, Pavlica, & Thorpe, 1997; Jordi, 2011). Michelson (1998) describes the rational process in Kolb's experiential learning theory as similar to many “Western knowledge-practices” (p. 217) in which knowledge is constructed with “the mind/body split and the privileging of mind over the body” (Michelson, 1998, p. 218). Scholars also proposed a more holistic and integrative conceptualization of experiential learning which acknowledges both the role of emotion, feeling and rational processes in the construction of experiential knowledge (Michelson, 1998; Jordi, 2011).

Adapting Kolb's experiential learning theory, a programme in environmental education and environmental studies of the Audubon Expedition Institute (AEI) designed a curriculum with four stages: “preparation, direct experience, reflection and transformation, and application” (Wittmer & Johnson, p. 113). It was asserted that students in the program experienced a transformative learning process. Going beyond the goal of personal transformation of Kolb's theory, AEI's students, as a result of experiential learning with “real people, place, and circumstances,” were expected to not only change at the personal level, but also at the social level. Their learning was seen as “much deeper and more profound way because of their intimate involvement with the subject” and actually led to informed actions that responded to social-

environmental inequity (Wittmer & Johnson, 2000, p. 120)

In a similar vein, Lange (2009) also reported on how experiential learning can lead to a transformative process with learners. In an adult sustainability education course, Lange (2009) designed a course with different learning activities that offered learners a chance to reflect on their own activities; examples included doing an ecological footprint of their lifestyles, and reflecting on their daily habits and on their perspectives of what it means to be “successful, happy, productive and secure” (Lange, 2009, p. 199). They also visited communities to learn from the hands-on experience of community members and critically reflected on community members' sustainable activities. These included visiting an organic farm, an organic restaurant, and a woman who makes tree-free paper by recycling old clothes.

Other researchers have highlighted the importance of the “learning by doing” aspect of experiential learning in different contexts of EAE. Sumner (2008), for example, calls for attention and recognition of organic farming practice and knowledge contribution to sustainable development. In her research, Sumner calls organic farmers “lifelong learners” who gain knowledge and “the way of knowing and looking at the world” through hands-on experience, critically reflecting on their everyday farming practice and practically solving their problems (Sumner, 2008, para, 41).

Arguments in support of experiential learning maintain that experiential learning cannot only help learners to personally transform but also provides them with “tools, inspiration, and dedication to transform culture and society” (Wittmer & Johnson, 2000, p. 113). Experiential learning, according to Belanger (2003), is a form of learning that challenges the formal education system. Such learning needs to be more “life-rooted, life-oriented, and life-wide” (p. 87) in order

to enable a learner “to relate newly acquired knowledge to his or her own experience with his or her environment” (p. 85). Educators recognize that such experiential knowledge is in danger of being lost and it needs to be restored, maintained and enhanced for the sake of local community's benefits (Strathy & Tabunakawai, 2004).

3.6 Learning and Transformation

As one of the major theoretical traditions of adult learning and education, transformative learning and its role in understanding how people learn has been highly profiled in the adult learning and education literature. Since its introduction in 1978 by Jack Mezirow, many aspects of transformative learning have been critically analyzed and discussed, including its nature, key elements, the process of transformation, and its relationship with other aspects that have influence on learning (Taylor, 2007).

At a very basic level, transformative learning refers to a process of how people shift from their old perspectives, assumptions and expectations to a new, meaningful and justified way of knowing by making sense of experiences that happen in their lives (Mezirow, 1996, 2000). Mezirow's conceptualization of transformative learning was influenced by Habermas' notion of instrumental learning and communicative learning. Instrumental learning refers to learning that is “task-oriented problem solving to improve performance,” whereas communicative learning is “learning what others mean when they communicate with you.” (Mezirow, 2000, p. 8).

Perspective transformation is considered a core aspect of transformative learning. Perspective transformation refers to the process of reconstructing a frame of reference to a new “more fully developed” perspective (Mezirow, 1996, p. 163). Mezirow (2000) described 10

phases in the process of perspective transformation that may occur, but not necessarily in the same order:

1) Disorienting dilemma; 2) Self-examination with feelings of fear, anger, guilt, or shame; 3) Critical assessment of assumptions; 4) Recognition that one's discontent and the process of transformation are shared; 5) Exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions; 6) Planning a course of action; 7) Acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one's plans; 8) Provisional trying of new roles; 9) Building competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships; 10) A reintegration into one's life on the basis of conditions dictated by one's new perspective. (p. 22)

Among the above 10 phases, it is believed that “disorienting dilemma” is critical and may lead to “epochal” transformation, which happens very suddenly and dramatically. However, the process of transformation can also be “incremental,” which involves a series of transformations related to points of view (Mezirow, 1995, 2000).

Critical reflection is considered to play an essential role in the process of perspective transformation (Mezirow, 1998). By critically reflecting on our own assumptions (“subjective reframing”), and on others' viewpoints (“objective reframing”; Mezirow, 2000, p. 23), we may experience a process of reinforcing or discarding our current frame of reference and embracing a new one which is more “inclusive, discriminating, open, emotionally capable of change, and reflective” and may help us to “generate belief and opinions that will prove more true or justified to guide action” (Mezirow, 2000, pp. 7-8). In other words, people may consciously think about their own assumptions or knowledge in light of learning others' viewpoints or encountering new knowledge or experiences. This leads people to refine their perspective or knowledge system hopefully in a better way.

If critical reflection is considered to play an essential role in the process of perspective transformation (Mezirow, 1998), reflective discourse is believed to be an important medium

through which transformative learning can occur, develop and be enhanced (Mezirow, 2000).

The discourse in transformative learning is not the kind of dialogue which aims to decide who is right and who is wrong about a certain issue. It is instead an active dialogue in which people who are involved in the dialogue seek a better and more justified understanding of assumptions and belief. This process is conducted by critically assessing one's assumptions with supporting insightful evidence and arguments and by being open to others' perspectives and being willing to examine others' perspectives and experience in one's own assumption justification process (Mezirow, 2000).

Mezirow (2000) asserts that in the learning journey of a person, the process of making sense of meaning, seeking informed and justified meanings and making responsible actions is likely to occur in adulthood when a person is mature enough to understand his/her experience and to assess when and how an idea or argument is justified. Mezirow also believes that transformative learning theory is particularly appropriate for understanding how adults learn because it aims to obtain a framework that focuses on examining different aspects of the learning process as well as helping people to understand how adults learn in diverse settings (Mezirow, 2009).

Mezirow's transformative learning theory focuses mainly on individual change. The theory describes what individuals have (i.e., meaning systems) and what they must individually go through in order to change their meaning systems and perspectives. However, some critics argue that its focus on individual learning is one of its weaknesses. Miles (2002) points out the importance of incorporating "progressive personal change and progressive social change" (p. 23). Kasl and Elias (2000) elaborate on how transformative learning can occur for groups of

people:

Transformative learning is the expansion of consciousness in any human system, thus the collective as well as individual. This expanded consciousness is characterized by new frames of reference, points of view, or habits of mind as well as by a new structure for engaging the system's identity. Transformation of the content of consciousness is facilitated when two processes are engaged interactively: the process of critically analyzing underlying premises and the process of appreciatively accessing and receiving the symbolic contents of the unconscious. Transformation of the structure of the consciousness is facilitated when a learner is confronted with a complex cultural environment because effective engagement with that environment requires a change in the learner's relationship to his or her or the group's identity (p. 233).

Critiques have been also made on Mezirow's overemphasis on the rational process of learning and inadequate attention to learners' context (Clark & Wilson, 1991; Taylor, 2001). For example, Taylor (2001) notes that learners' critical reflection process of transformative learning is often described as a rational process. Meanwhile, Brookfield (2000, 2009) emphasizes the importance of taking power and hegemony into account in understanding critical reflection. He affirms that ideology critique needs to be a central part of critical reflection because it helps people to be aware of how dominant ideologies are shaped and reinforced to maintain and promote an unjustly economic and political society (Brookfield, 2000).

Not all transformations are as a result of a rational learning process theorized in Mezirow's transformative learning theory. There exist other ways of learning that are also believed to contribute to potential transformations. Some examples include the art-based techniques approach that helps to create a transformative learning environment (Butterwick & Lawrence, 2009), learning that emphasizes the "inner world" of learners which defined as "soul work" or "inner work" (Driks, Mezirow, & Cranton, 2006, pp. 125-126), and spiritual learning that helps people see "the interconnectedness of life at every level of cosmos" (Miller, 2002, p. 100) and helps Indigenous communities to "transform their historical circumstances and become

active participants in their own health and well-being as well as make significant contributions to global existence” (Shilling, 2002, p. 155).

In addition to the discussion of transformative learning on human issues, scholars have also made an effort to integrate the natural world and environmental issues in this paradigm. Miller (2002) looks into transformative learning from a spiritual perspective and calls it “compassionate knowing” (p. 99). Compassionate knowing occurs when we deepen our engagement in the world and become an integral part of everything and everything is an integral part of ourselves (Miller, 2002). The description of compassionate knowing supports the planetary view of transformative learning which suggests that transformation helps human beings to know their interconnection with the physical world (O'Sullivan, 1999). In addition, Lange (2009) also shows that learning in a natural setting can contribute to helping learners experience compassionate learning. For example, learning activities may take place in “undisturbed native aspen parkland” instead of in a classroom. Learners may engage in activities like “sitting against a swaying tree, lying on the peaty of earth in tall grass watching clouds” and “coming to understand the life cycle of a tree” with the guide of an environmental educator. Immersing oneself in a natural world, relaxing, and being away from “immediate concerns” help learners deepen their understanding of their self-being, come to know their “body and intuitive knowledge” and their connection with other-beings (the natural world, other peer learners, the instructor) in a new profound way (Lange, 2009, pp. 199-201).

In addition to the above critiques on Mezirow's conceptualization of transformative learning, the overuse of transformative learning theory in understanding and explaining adult learning has been criticized and challenged by Newman (2012). Newman (2012) points out six

flaws of transformative including: 1) Transformative learning is described as being different from other learning in kind rather than degree; 2) Transformative learning is presented just as the reworking of one's identity but not consciousness; 3) Transformative learning refers to a finite learning experience, but, in fact, learning experience is cumulative and continual; 4) The emphasis of “discourse” as the centre of a transformative learning process; 5) Learners' mobilization/change in behaviour is seen as transformation in a lot of transformative learning literature; and 6) The relation of spirituality and transformative learning in which “spirituality is thrown into the mix as if its inclusion were unproblematic” (p. 46). Moreover, Newman claims that what has been termed “transformative learning” is basically just “good learning” (Newman, 2012, p. 36). Newman then proposes nine different aspects of learning including “instrumental, communicative, affective, interpretive, essential, critical, political, passionate, and moral” and asserts that “good learning” takes place when all of these nine aspects of learning present (Newman, 2012, p. 51).

3.7 Individual and Collective Learning

Although learning is often understood in terms of individuals, theories in social movement learning argue that learning can happen to groups of people and possibly *must* happen in a collective way for social change to occur. Kilgore (1999) argues that learning in social movements can be understood from the perspective of collective learning. Social movements happen because groups of individuals are concerned with some social issue and come together to try and solve it. Informal learning in social movements may be better understood by focusing on how groups of individuals learn and achieve their goals rather than focusing on individual

learning processes. Kilgore's (1999) theory has several individual-level components, "identity, consciousness, sense of agency, sense of worthiness and sense of connectedness" (p. 196), and several group-level components, "collective identity, group consciousness, solidarity and organization" (p. 197). The theory basically states that the group components interact with each person's individual-level components and vice versa to determine how individuals and groups develop and change.

Collective learning can occur in a group of people, different groups within a community, or between groups in a local community and outsiders. "Environmental adult education is one framework within which adult educators can facilitate collective learning opportunities for adults around ecological concerns in order to formulate concrete responses" (Hill & Clover, 2003, p. 1). Karlovic and Patric (2003) reported a process of collective learning that took place among a group of women who were all concerned about the tension between the responsibility of taking environmentally ethical action and their daily-life activities. It was shown that a collective learning process, which emphasized collective critical reflection, sharing experiences and resources, recognizing and embracing the differences among people in groups, helped those women to be open about their concerns. It also helped them to critically discuss root causes of the issues and possible actions, which otherwise might have been challenging for them to figure out individually. The paper also illustrated that the involvement of people in collective learning responds to a sense of "connectedness" and "worthiness," as termed by Kilgore (1999, p. 197), by which individuals want to see themselves connected to other people and as worthwhile contributors for the collective cause of the group.

A substantial amount of research also supports the position that collective learning in

environmental adult education is promoted by the common visions of social-environmental justice within groups of people. People want to fight for this vision and find it necessary to learn and act together to promote their shared visions. The Kondhs (Indigenous people in India), for example, have come together to learn about their lost culture, and the causes of injustice and racial discrimination in their community (Kapoor, 2003). Together they have formed an organized group of 60 villages to revitalize their culture, re-obtain their rights over environmental management and protection, and restructure the relationship between Indigenous people and state government. The Kondhs have illustrated the strength of collective learning in increasing a sense of community. This has also led to collective actions to help local people to cope with challenges and to change the existing conditions in their community (Kapoor, 2003).

3.8 Longwe's Women's Empowerment Framework

Leach (2003) synthesizes four main gender analysis frameworks in the Gender and Development field including: 1) The Welfare approach; 2) Women in Development approach (WID); 3) Gender and Development (GAD); and 4) Gender Mainstreaming (GM). According to Leach (2003), at the most basic level, the Welfare approach attempts to support women with their needs in their reproductive roles as wives and mothers in the domestic sphere. Meanwhile, WID is rooted in the Western feminist movement in the 1970s and focuses on harnessing women's productive roles and their contribution to economic development. GAD emerged in the late 1980s and mid 1990s due to the ineffectiveness of WID in addressing the inequality within gender relations. GAD includes the gender efficiency and gender empowerment approaches. Gender efficiency is described as an approach in which gender analysis is incorporated “in the

planning of all development interventions” in order to understand “men's and women's roles and responsibilities” in development (Leach, 2003, p. 9). Meanwhile, gender empowerment is an approach that attempts to increase women's awareness of “the gender structures and power relations within which they operate their self-confidence and their participation in the the development process” (Leach, 2003, p. 10). GM builds on gender efficiency and gender empowerment strands in GAD. This approach aims to integrate good aspects of both gender efficiency and gender empowerment strands into various steps of development work (e.g., design, implementation, and evaluation) to ensure both men's and women's concerns are addressed in order to promote gender equality.

Since its emergence in the mid 1990s, GM has been widely adopted and promoted in numerous government educational institutions and community development projects implemented by both governmental and non-governmental organizations. GM has been criticized on its lack of consideration of local diverse contexts (Bacchi & Eveline, 2010; Morley, 2010; Silfver, 2010), which has been characterized as a “one size fits all” (Silfver, 2010, p. 480) or “top down” approach (Karlsson, 2010, p. 510) that has led to ineffectiveness of promoting gender equality. In the worst case, instead of contributing to “emancipation” in an effort to bring about gender equality, the implementation of GM without consideration of local contexts might reinforce “neo-colonial legacies” (Silfver, 2010, p. 493). To resolve this critical problem, a call has been made for the need to conduct an intersectional analysis when GM is applied (Morley, 2010; Unterhalter & North, 2010). The intersectional analysis should cover various social aspects that can influence each other and have an impact on gender issues such as ethnicity, social class, kinship, culture, and religion (Para-Mallam, 2010; Silfver, 2010).

Concerns have also been raised on GM as a technical strategy. It focuses on the link between women in education to economic development rather than a potential empowerment approach that brings about equality in gender relations (Moser & Moser, 2005; Unterhalter & North, 2010). For example, GM's effectiveness in some educational and development programs, which have been implemented by international organizations such as the World Bank, has been assessed based heavily on the number of women and men or boys and girls included in the programs and less on the empowerment intent of GM (North, 2010; Vaughan, 2010). In some cases, the inclusion of gender issues in a development project has become a condition for receiving funding from donors, thus some NGOs included GM in their proposals without a thorough understanding of GM or even without an intention of spending funds on gender issues (Wendoh & Mollace, 2005). Silfver (2010) argues that:

Gender mainstreaming in its technical guise was difficult to grasp because it did not make it under the skins and into the bones of women or men. It never could as they were not the ones setting agendas. (p. 492)

Walter (2011) has proposed how gender analysis frameworks employed in Gender and Development research and planning might be applied to community-based ecotourism; in particular, using Longwe's framework for women's empowerment (March, Smyth, & Mukhopadhyay, 1999). This framework has been tested and refined over several decades of research, theorizing and work in the field of Gender and Development (Leach 2003; March, Smyth, & Mukhopadhyay 1999; Moser 1993). As in the above description of gender analysis frameworks in Leach (2003), Longwe's women's empowerment framework has its roots in the second strand of GAD that is gender empowerment and closely links to the GM approach.

Table 3.1 below summarizes the main elements of Longwe's Women Empowerment

framework and how it may be applied in order to examine the level of women empowerment in CBET projects .

Table 3.1

Longwe's Women's Empowerment Framework (March, Smyth, & Mukhopadhyay, 1999)

Control		
Participation	↑	↑
Conscientization	Increasing Equality	Increasing Empowerment
Access		
Welfare		

Control – equal control in decision-making over factors of production and distribution of benefits

Participation – equal participation in decision-making processes related to policymaking, planning and administration

Conscientization – conscious understanding of gender roles and a gender division of labor, and that these can be changed to be more equitable

Access – equal access to factors of production (land, labor, credit, education, public services)

Welfare – equal access to material welfare (food, income, shelter, medical care)

As shown in Table 3.1, Longwe's framework includes five levels of women's empowerment: 1) Welfare; 2) Access; 3) Conscientization; 4) Participation; and 5) Control. The framework also indicates a direction for movement of the level of empowerment from welfare to control showing a greater increase in the level of empowerment. Even though the five levels of empowerment are presented as hierarchical levels, they are meant to be circular and mutually

reinforcing in practice (Longwe, 2002). Longwe's Women's Empowerment Framework can be used to examine what impacts an ecotourism project with an integration of a gender perspective in the planning and implementation have on local women's empowerment. Specifically, the level of women's empowerment can be indicated by assessing to what extent women experience the five levels of empowerment through their participation in an ecotourism project. However, it is noted that the five levels of Longwe's framework might or might not occur as the result of women's participation in an ecotourism project.

Longwe's Women's Empowerment Framework also incorporates an analysis of the gender division of labor in reproductive, productive and community roles (March, Smyth, & Mukhopadhyay, 1999). In analyzing these gender roles, it is useful to reference three forms of work within the gender of labor in CBET synthesized by Walter (2011). According to Walter (2011), reproductive labor includes childcare, elder care and care of the ill, provision of meals, cleaning, housework, clothing, and the emotional labor of hosting guests. Productive labor points to the production of food, shelter, handicrafts, teaching of language, dance, weaving, rituals, etc, to tourists, and income-generating activities such as tour guiding, vending, and small business. Community labor focuses on activities such as organizing and running an ecotourism cooperative, attending meetings, developing policy, resolving conflicts, marketing, coordinating with tour businesses, and representing the project to outsiders.

Longwe's Women's Empowerment Framework emphasizes the critical role of development projects in overcoming gender inequality by capturing a dynamic range of equality, empowerment and gender needs in women's participation (March, Smyth, & Mukhopadhyay, 1999). However, the framework does not directly address the complexities that may occur in an

ecotourism project in relations to gender and its intersections with social class, ethnicity, social structures, hierarchies of power, cultural norms, and social contexts. Moreover, it may also encourage a focus on women rather than gender relations, and an understanding of empowerment as a linear, static process of change. Despite the above limitations, Longwe's Women's Empowerment Framework is still a powerful analytical tool to examine women's' participation in ecotourism projects which helps to make changes in policies and practices of ecotourism projects that bring the best benefits to both men and women in local communities (Walter, 2011).

The importance of gender perspectives in understanding the benefits and effects of community-based ecotourism for local women and men participants has steadily increased in the last decade (Dilly, 2003; Pleno, 2006; Swain & Swain, 2004; Scheyvens, 2000, 2007; Schellhorn, 2010; Stronza 2005; Tucker & Boonabaana, 2012; Walter 2011). Research has also shown that adult non-formal education is essential for CBET development in local communities (Denman, 2001; Victurine, 2000). Thus, gender analysis in adult non-formal education in CBET development is a critical step to help CBET developers and local communities understand the local context and the complexity of local gender roles and relations. As a result, they can make good decisions on the integration of contextually appropriate and effective educational programs in CBET, which can potentially contribute to the success of developing CBET as a sustainable livelihood in local communities.

3.9 Chapter Summary

This chapter has elaborated a conceptual framework for unpacking and analysing community member learning and changes in gender roles and relations. In both non-formal and

informal settings, community member learning can be individual or collective, experiential or transformative, incidental, tacit or self-directed; the educational approaches applied in non-formal education and other activities incorporated in a community development project have a significant influence on what and how local people learn. Local people are more likely to recognize their capacity as agents of change, and use their knowledge and experience to take informed action to solve and manage local issues when educational approaches applied in community development projects are non-oppressive and empowering. The conceptual framework included in this chapter also suggests that individual learning can contribute to changes in both learners and community, however, collective learning and actions create much more significant socio-environmental changes. Finally, Longwe's empowerment framework helps us to understand the multifaceted ways in which women may experience empowerment in CBET, and the role of non-formal education in the process of change in gender roles and relations.

CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents an introduction to the research site. The site is a CBET project that has been implemented in Giao Xuan commune (district), one of the buffer zones of Xuan Thuy National Park, Vietnam. The chapter also introduces interpretive case study as the methodological approach employed in this study. A detailed description of the data collection and analysis methods is included. The chapter then presents the role of the researcher. Finally, the chapter discusses the trustworthiness of the research study and associated ethical considerations.

4.1 Research Site

The Giao Xuan community-based ecotourism project is situated on the alluvial coastal estuary on the Red River Delta adjacent to Xuan Thuy National Park, in Nam Dinh province, about 150 km southeast of Hanoi. In 1989, the Park was recognized by the International Bureau of the Convention on Wetlands as Southeast Asia's first Ramsar site (i.e. a wetlands of international importance). In 2003, Xuan Thuy was officially upgraded and approved as a national park, and in 2004, recognized by UNESCO as part of the Red River Delta World Biosphere Heritage Site (Xuan Thuy National Park, 2013). The park itself covers approximately of 15,000 ha of extremely biodiverse coastal wetlands, including mangrove forests, intertidal mud flats, islands and marshes. The park is a wintering area for migratory water birds and a stop-over in the migration of non-water birds. All told, the park has 219 species of birds and 110 aquatic plant species, 500 species of seabed organisms and zooplankton, and a large variety of marine animals such as shrimp, fish, crabs and oysters (Xuan Thuy National Park, 2013).

There are five buffer communities surrounding the Park: Giao Thien, Giao An, Giao Lac,

Giao Hai and Giao Xuan. These buffer communities are situated on approximately 8,000 ha of land. No one now lives within the Park's core boundaries. However, small-scale collection of aquatic products is allowed provided it does not harm the natural environment in the core zone (e.g. using destructive fishing practices, cutting trees, hunting birds, polluting water) (Nguyen, 2012, p. 1). Currently, only small scale collectors, who are mostly women, are allowed access to the park, while commercial aquaculture, run mostly by men, is forbidden. However, even in the buffer zones, population growth and economic development has created environmental problems which threaten local livelihood. These include over-harvesting of clams, oysters and crabs, over-fishing, clearing of mangroves for aquaculture, and pond pollution run-off (MCD, 2007a). This has led to a decline in biodiversity, loss of ecological services provided by aquatic plants and marine life, loss of natural habitat, and increased coastal sedimentation (MCD, 2007a).

As a potential solution to these environmental problems, in 2006, Giao Xuan commune (district) was chosen by the Centre for Marinelife Conservation and Community Development (MCD), a Vietnamese non-profit environmental organization, to be a pilot site for the development of a community-based ecotourism project. Giao Xuan is a coastal commune of almost 10,000 people known for its distinctive churches and pagodas, traditional architecture and cuisine, and rural lifestyle. Local ecotourism attractions include bird watching, boat trips through the mangroves, biking and trekking, accommodation and local cuisine in traditional Vietnamese homes, participation in rice farming and shellfish harvest, visits to local churches, pagodas and a marketplace, viewing of traditional opera (*cheo*), and trips to see the making of homemade fish sauce (*nuoc mam*), rice wine and processed jellyfish.

Across the community of Giao Xuan, the main sources of livelihood are wet rice

cultivation (50%), coastal fishing and aquaculture (36%) and services (14%) (Than, 2011). Women comprise 51% of the local population and 60% of them are considered to be poor (MCD, 2007a). Commercial clam farming started in Giao Xuan in 1990, when the first nets were installed in the intertidal zone. Connections with Chinese traders then provided a ready market for clams, the number of farms rapidly expanded, and many clam farmers, who were exclusively men, became wealthy (Le, 2008). By contrast, clam collecting, done mostly by poorer women and girls, still produces relatively little income, and is often done under harsh conditions on land leased from rich farmers. It is estimated, on average, that women stand in ocean water from eight to 10 hours a day, up to 20 days per month (MCD, 2007a). A good number of men migrate to Hanoi to do seasonal labor in construction or other temporary work as well. Women traditionally generate income in small trade, manage household property and budgets, cook, clean and take care of children. Following Confucian gender norms, wives are subordinate to their husbands, younger siblings to older siblings, and children to parents. Men traditionally are family breadwinners and control major financial decisions.

The Giao Xuan CBET project, entitled “Empowering women, improving lives, and conserving the environment through community-based eco-business in Xuan Thuy National Park area” was funded by the Small Project Facility of the European Commission in 2006. The project was implemented by MCD, and eventually secured US\$100,000 funding from the European Union and the McKnight Foundation for 2006-07. CBET funding then continued at reduced levels from 2008 to 2011 as part of a second larger project on sustainable livelihoods and environmental conservation in coastal areas, funded by the European Union and Oxfam Novib. The Giao Xuan project’s overall objective was “to strengthen and develop the skills and

capabilities of community members (especially poor women and fishermen) in conservation-based eco-business to address poverty and improve living standards through sustainable livelihoods that conserve the environment” (MCD, 2007a, p. 4). A variety of activities were collaboratively implemented by the local community, MCD, and other project partners with the aim of promoting community participation and benefits. Within this larger aim, a key objective was to: “Increase women’s participation and management of alternative sustainable livelihoods” (MCD, 2007a, p. 4).

By 2012, six years after the Giao Xuan CBET project was established, the project had hosted approximately 2,000 domestic and international tourists. About 40 households now gain supplementary income from the project through guiding, homestay, food services and cultural performances, earning on average \$USD 24 per month per household (Than, 2011). The Giao Xuan CBET Cooperative for Community Eco-tourism, founded in 2010, is now a legal entity, and the ecotourism project is recognized as a successful CBET model for other communities. Based on Giao Xuan’s success in meeting conservation, livelihood and gender equity goals, MCD plans to implement similar projects for other buffer communities in Xuan Thuy National Park. The Giao Xuan project has also hosted numerous CBET experts and community members from other provinces to visit and learn about the formation and operation of CBET in coastal areas.

Figure 4.1

Nam Dinh Province – The Research Site on the Vietnamese Map



(Wikimedia Commons, 2014)⁴

⁴The map was obtained from <http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:VietnameseProvincesMap.png> on October 10, 2014 and is available for reproduction and modification under the Creative Commons Attribution/Share-Alike License version CCBY-SA 3.0, which allows fair use of the image for research purposes.

Figure 4.2

Xuan Thuy National Park and the Buffer Communes



(MCD, 2006g)

4.2 Interpretive Case Study Approach

Merriam (1998) describes three kinds of case studies: 1) Descriptive case study; 2) Interpretive case study; and 3) Evaluative case study. A descriptive case study is what researchers do when they have little or no theory and the end result might not be to develop any theory. The researcher just describes what they found in the research project (Merriam, 1998). In the interpretive case study, the researcher wants a “rich, thick description” of the data they collect (Merriam, 1998, p. 38). In addition, the researcher also wants to understand “with the intent of analyzing, interpreting, or theorizing about the phenomenon” (Merriam, 1998, p. 38). Finally, Merriam (1998) describes an evaluative case study approach as involving some “explanation” of the phenomena being studied as well as some “judgement” about an educational program, for example (p. 39). This research employed an interpretive case study approach, which allowed me to describe under-researched areas in CBET in great detail including community member learning and the complexity of relationships in gender and ecotourism development.

Among the possible critiques of case study research (see Flyvbjerg, 2006, for a review), there is one that stands out as most prominent. This critique focuses on the generalizability of case study research (Campbell, 1975; Flyvbjerg, 2006; Merriam, 2009; Myers, 2000; Stake, 2000). The critique is that if we learn a lot about one particular case, there might not always be sufficient information that can be learned or applied to research about other cases. However, case studies are often chosen because they are very unique or unusual cases (Stake, 2000) and many different cases combined can also be examined to see if they share similar characteristics and extend the generalizability of case study research (Campbell, 1975). The case chosen for this research study is one of the very first CBET projects in the buffer area of Xuan Thuy National

Park, Vietnam, part of the UNESCO Red River Biosphere Reserve. The CBET pilot project in Giao Xuan has been used as a model for ecotourism development in other provinces of Vietnam. Therefore, this case study is significantly important for the long term development of community-based ecotourism in Vietnam and may apply to other cases at least within Vietnam.

Another critique about case study research has to do with the role of the researcher. In particular, some think that case study research is too subjective. Researchers have a strong role in the research and maybe able to make a study's results fit with their expectations. However, it is also argued that the researchers' powerful interpretive role is not more problem for case study research than for other kinds of research (Flyvberg, 2006). Stake (1995) defines several roles that a case study researcher might have: 1) Teacher; 2) Advocate; 3) Evaluator; 4) Biographer; and 5) Interpreter. He mentions that the interpreter role is one of the most important. The researcher is in the perfect position to be able to combine such complex information that they gather from research and communicate the details to readers (Myers, 2000). Interpretive research is seen as "a chain of interpretations that must be documented for others to judge the trustworthiness of the meanings arrived at the end" and concerns arise over how the researcher can provide research results that are "compelling, powerful, and convincing" (Creswell, 2007, p. 206). To promote good qualitative research, Tracy (2010) suggests eight different criteria that help qualitative researchers to obtain good practice in qualitative work. The eight criteria suggested by Tracy (2010) have guided the overall process of conducting this research and include: 1) Worthy topic; 2) Rich rigor; 3) Sincerity, 4) Credibility, 5) Resonance, 6) Significant contribution, 7) Ethics, and 8) Meaningful coherence.

4.3 Research Steps

This section describes various steps that were used to collect data for this study including:

1) Gaining access to the research site; 2) Participant recruitment; 3) Conducting interviews; 4) Conducting observations; 5) Collecting documents; and 6) Data analysis and interpretation.

4.3.1 Gaining Access to the Research Site

Before my first field research trip to Giao Xuan in August 2011, in an earlier trip to Vietnam in the same year, I took a CBET tour in Giao Xuan commune to determine whether Giao Xuan could be a feasible site for my research study. Before this trip, I learned about the Giao Xuan CBET project through the Internet and the website of MCD. The exploratory field trip in early 2011 was an opportunity for me to obtain real experience and a better sense of the project, the community, and community members. After this trip, I made my final decision that I would choose Giao Xuan as the research site for my doctoral research project.

During this exploratory trip I had the chance to become acquainted with many key people in Giao Xuan involved in the CBET project. One of MCD's staff introduced me to the Head of the Giao Xuan CBET Cooperative. With the help of the head of the Giao Xuan CBET Cooperative, I met with some of the local people involved in the CBET project. Because of time constraints, I could only meet with five host family members, two tour guides and three cooperative leaders individually at their houses. At these short meetings, I talked to local people mostly as an ecotourist, but I was also honest with them about my interest in learning more about their community, their CBET project and the possibility of conducting research on this topic. Beyond my expectation for such a short trip, I was welcomed warmly and local people with

whom I spoke all showed their support and willingness to assist if I came back and conducted research in their community. This trip allowed me to gain initial access to the Giao Xuan community. This initial access helped me to obtain rapport with the Giao Xuan community more easily during my fieldwork starting in August, 2011.

Gaining access does not necessarily mean immediately obtaining rapport with study participants. Establishing rapport takes time, respect, sincerity and trust from both researchers and local people. DeWalt and DeWalt (2002) assert that “rapport exists when both investor and informants come to share common goals⁵. The participants in the setting or events under study must come to agree to help the investor, however they understand the project” (p. 44). One of the strategies that I used to obtain rapport included honesty about myself and my research with local people. One task that I did during the “entering the field” phase was being explicit about the purpose of my presence in the community and being explicit about the purpose of my research. To make this happen, I planned to set up a meeting with all of the CBET Cooperative members at the beginning of my fieldwork. However, due to the various daily schedules of community members, it was very difficult to find a time for meeting with all of them as a group. For example, a tour guide who was working at sea did not come back home every day. Some local women had to work at their stores the entire day and did not get home until quite late in the evening. I eventually opted to meet with community members individually depending on their most convenient time and place. In these meetings I introduced myself, learned about the person and his/her family, introduced my research and my plan while I was in Giao Xuan, discussed with them about the possible contribution that my research might make to the CBET project in

⁵ I prefer using the terms “researchers” and “participants” in my research instead of the terms “investors” and “informants.”

their community, and answered all of their questions related to myself and my research project.

Another key principle to help establish rapport is “learning appropriate behaviour in a setting, showing respect for people in a setting, being a good and careful listener” (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002, p. 40). In my case, I needed to keep in mind that even though I am Vietnamese, and I speak the same dialect as people in Giao Xuan, I still needed to learn about Giao Xuan community’s culture and customs, since different places in the same country can be different in many ways. I talked to the CBET Cooperative members, elders and other ordinary local people about their customs and traditions and asked their advice about things that were appropriate for me to do and not to do in their community. I also sought from MCD’s staff, who had worked with local people in Giao Xuan for several years, advice such as how to obtain bureaucratic approval to conduct research in the local community, possible local red tape that I would have to face when conducting research, and their experience in working with local people.

4.3.2 Participant Recruitment

I recruited thirty-one participants for this study; my recruitment process is outlined in the next section. The key research participants were fourteen community members who directly participated in the CBET project. I choose them because the study's main focus was on understanding the learning processes and outcomes of this group of research participants. However, I also included seven MCD staff and consultants in this research study because they worked directly with community members in planning and implementing the CBET project, and thus may have had an influence on community members' learning processes and outcomes. Specifically, I expected to learn about MCD staffs' and the project consultants' expectations for

the development of the CBET project in Giao Xuan commune. I wanted to learn about their thoughts on skills and knowledge that they believed were necessary for the local community members and the local community members' role in the construction of CBET curriculum and its implementation. In addition, I also included ten local people who did not participate in the CBET project in order to obtain their general views toward the CBET project and the impact of educational activities and interventions incorporated in the CBET project on community members.

4.3.2.1 MCD Staff and Consultants

In the exploratory field trip in early 2011, I first visited the MCD office in Hanoi, introduced myself and my plan to conduct a research project on the Giao Xuan CBET project. One of MCD's working agendas was to support research on community development issues in Giao Xuan. Thus, I was warmly welcomed by MCD's director and had a meeting with the staff in the Department of Community Development of MCD. During this meeting MCD staff expressed their strong support for my research project in Giao Xuan.

In my official field trip started in August, 2011, I made another visit to MCD's office. I presented a summary of my research proposal and asked them for their comments and suggestions from the perspective of CBET experts. Mr. Le, Thanh Hai – a CBET expert and the CBET coordinator of MCD was assigned to be my main consultant to help me during the time I conducted research in Vietnam. With the help of Mr. Le, Ms. Nguyen (the director of MCD) and other key project staff such as Ms. Vu and Ms. Tang, I was introduced to other key staff and consultants of the Giao Xuan CBET project.

I had individual meetings with these MCD staff and experts and shared with them the research objectives and my plan for conducting the research. I also explained the reasons why I wanted to include them in the research and answered all of their questions. Fortunately, all MCD staff and consultants enthusiastically offered their help because they saw me as a colleague who shared a common interest in contributing to the community development field in Vietnam. In Table 4.1, I provide some basic information on the MCD staff and consultants who participated in this research study.

Table 4.1

MCD Staff and Consultants

Name	Title	Main Duties
Lam	Project staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Providing support and consultations to community members during the process of CBET skills and knowledge training - Helping with the construction of the Giao Xuan CBET regulations
Ba	Project staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Collaborating with community members to set up Ecolife Cafe and the local Community Learning Centre - Making arrangement and preparations for workshops, meetings, conferences, and other project activities
Nam	Project staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Providing consultations on CBET business skills and organizations - Providing assistance with marketing, connecting with other tourism and business agencies, examining tourism markets. - Connecting with credit sources and other financial sources to invest in and support for the Giao Xuan CBET development - Providing consultations on future development directions for CBET in Giao Xuan
An	Project staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Being in charge of managing general project activities

Name	Title	Main Duties
		including assessing local resources for forming the CBET model, constructing the Giao Xuan CBET model, connecting and inviting ecotourism experts and educators/trainers for the local capacity building program
Phuc	Project consultant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Providing workshops on CBET awareness raising - Providing consultations on setting up plans for CBET development - Providing consultations on constructing ecotourism tours - Reviewing Giao Xuan CBET publications
Vinh	Project consultant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Assessing local potential resources for the CBET development - Providing consultations on constructing the Giao Xuan CBET model and ecotourism products and services - Providing consultations on unexpected challenges during the planning and implementation of the CBET project - Reviewing the Giao Xuan CBET publications - Connecting and introducing tourism experts to the CBET project
Sinh	Project consultant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Consulting on local logistic support and environmental conservation and management - Consulting on eco-tour operation

4.3.2.2 Community Members

Since I had already met with some community members in my previous trip in early 2011, when I returned to Giao Xuan in August, 2011, my access to the local community went very smoothly. I first stayed at Ms. Kim's house. She was one of the host families and also a member of the Giao Xuan CBET Cooperative. Ms. Kim was formerly the Head of the Giao Xuan Women's Association and actively participated in many communal activities. I decided to stay at her house first because one of MCD's staff recommended that she would have knowledge of many community members, especially local women and could introduce me to other local people

in the commune. With Ms. Kim's and Mr. Kha's help (Mr. Kha was the head of the Giao CBET Cooperative at that time), I was introduced to all host families and tour guides in the CBET project. In August, 2011, when I conducted my field work, one host family was not in the commune. Therefore, I was able to approach only eight out of nine host families in the CBET project.

I had individual meetings with the host families at their houses (10 community members in total). Through these meetings, I introduced myself again, talked about my research project and invited them to participate in the research. Before leaving the meetings, I also provided the host families with a written letter of initial contact to ensure that they thoroughly understood the purposes of the project and the treatment and rights of research participants. After the first week of getting to know local people, I started spending time with each host family through the CBET home stay program. I joined host families' daily life activities, got to know family members of host families and also gave them time to better understand me. I made it very clear that community members did not have to make the decisions right away on whether or not they wanted to join the research project, but all of them seemed to willingly join the research without hesitation. They all assured me that they would be very happy to help me with my research.

Ms. Kim and Mr. Kha also helped me to arrange individual meetings with four local guides. In addition to the meetings, I joined all ecotours that were conducted during the time I was doing my fieldwork. Through the individual meetings and the tours, the local guides and I had opportunities to learn about each other. Again, I introduced my research and invited them to be research participants. I successfully recruited all four local tour guides and they were very enthusiastic and happy to join the research.

Finally, I used a network sampling strategy (Merriam, 1998) to recruit local people who were not directly involved in the CBET project. With this group of participants I tried to recruit people who held various positions including local teachers, local administrative staff, farmers, store retailers, and retired people. I also tried to recruit both men and women. I asked the host families and local guides to introduce me to other community members who did not directly participate in the CBET project. In addition, I also took the initiative to meet with local people through participating in local events such as a spiritual ceremony for moving an old tree in order to widen the local road. I met with some other local people by going to their retail stores to buy food or to make copies of some documents. I visited the local secondary school where I recruited four teachers to join my research. After local people already become familiar with my presence in the local community, I approached some of them and invited them to join my research. Again, I very carefully introduced the purpose of my research and the reasons why I was inviting them to be research participants. What follows in Table 4.2 is a summary of information on community members.

Table 4.2

Community Members

Name	Gender	CBET duty/job
* Community members who participated in the CBET project:		
Kim	Female	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Head of the Giao Xuan CBET Cooperative 2013 – present - Host family - Former head of the Giao Xuan Women's Association - Agriculture

Name	Gender	CBET duty/job
Tam	Female	- Host family - Member of the CBET Cooperative Management Board (2013 – present) - Agriculture
Kha	Male	- Host family - Former Head of the CBET Cooperative (2010 – 2012) - Member of the CBET Cooperative Management Board - Food store
San	Female	- Host family - Food store
Long	Male	- Host family - Agriculture
Thi	Female	- Host family - Agriculture
Nga	Female	- Host family - Agriculture - Wet Rice Retail Store - Wage labor collecting marine and aquaculture
Ly	Female	- Host family - Agriculture - Medical herb cultivation - Wage labor collecting marine and aquaculture
Gia	Male	- Host family - Agriculture - Local Security
Thanh	Female	- Host family - Agriculture
Du	Male	- Tour guide - Working on the sea

Name	Gender	CBET duty/job
Minh	Male	- Tour guide - Local Mangrove Forest Guard - Retail Store
Lan	Female	- Tour guide - Member of the CBET Management Board (2010 - 2012) - Agriculture - Wage labor collecting marine and aquaculture
Ha	Female	- Tour guide - Agriculture - Wage labor collecting marine and aquaculture
* Community members who did not participate in the CBET project:		
Na	Female	- Agriculture
Hinh	Female	- Agriculture
Ban	Female	- Retail store
Binh	Male	- Veteran/Elder
Khu	Male	- Xuan Thuy National Park staff
Le	Female	- Xuan Thuy National Park staff
Trung	Male	- Principal of the local secondary school
Ninh	Male	- Vice principal of the local secondary school
Hai	Male	- Teacher of the local secondary school
Tu	Male	- Teacher of the local secondary school

4.3.3 Conducting Interviews

I conducted interviews with all MCD staff and consultants in Hanoi except for one

project consultant, the Director of Xuan Thuy National Park, whom I interviewed in Giao Xuan. The interview times and places were decided by the interviewees. With each MCD staff and consulting expert, I conducted from one to three rounds of interviews depending on the availability of the participants and the needs to have follow-up interview(s) in order to clarify the participants' opinions and obtain a better understanding of the themes arising from the first round. Each round lasted for an hour to an hour and a half. All the interviews were audio tape recorded.

With host families, most of the interview sessions were conducted during the time I stayed at their houses. I joined host families with everyday life activities such as going to church on Sundays. In some other families I went to pagodas. I also helped some local families in the wet rice fields and joined one of the local women in her rice store to sell rice. I became a good friend with one of the local tour guides who was kind enough to show me around the community. She was also the one who let me know when and where there were some social events in the commune such as a spiritual ceremony in the commune, a local funeral, and a local wedding.

I let community members schedule the interview times, dates, and places that worked the best for them. Some people preferred the interviews to be conducted at their house, and some preferred a local coffee shop. In addition to the scheduled interviews, many interview sessions were conducted very spontaneously wherever and whenever both community members and I found convenient (with their permission). Many interviews were recorded or taken notes (with community members' permission) during the tea time after dinner, a break time from working in the rice field, and on the way to some local tourism destinations.

With community members who did not participate in the CBET project, some of them

preferred me to conduct the interviews at the offices where they worked. Some interviews were conducted at their houses or retail stores. Many interviews took place during the evenings when I joined a group of local women to walk every evening after dinner.

I conducted at least two to three rounds of in-depth interviews individually with each community member. In addition, three host family couples were interviewed between two and four times each. Each interviewing round lasted approximately from one to two hours. The first round was unstructured and open-ended so that the participants could freely share their viewpoints and experiences in the CBET project. After the first round, the following round was semi-structured around themes arising from the previous sessions and from my research questions.

In addition to tape recording, I also took my own notes in the interviews. These notes were not a copy of whatever participants said, but notes on some participant quotes that caught my attention, which helped me to form other related questions. I also noted some nonverbal behaviour from the participants which could not be recorded by the recorder; for example, the anger or disappointment of local women when talking about the family violence in the local community, or the excitement or the sense of local people's humour when they talked about their hosting experience. I noted key responses of the participants as well. These notes helped me keep up with the pace of the talk and thus enabled me to have a more consistent and meaningful conversation with the participants.

4.3.4 Conducting Observations

Participation observation is defined as “a method in which a researcher takes part in the

daily activities, rituals, interactions, and events of a group of people as one of the means of learning the explicit and tacit aspects of their routines and their cultures” (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002). In particular, among different strategies of collecting data as an observer, I chose to be an “observer as participant” (Merriam, 1988, Yin, 2009). Being an observer as participant, my observer role was revealed to the local community and all research participants in research and my role as a participant was subordinate to my role of observing. To capture of the strength and limitations of this kind of observation, Merriam (1988) points out that: “Using this method, one may have access to many people and a wide range of information, but the level of the information revealed is controlled by the group members being investigated” (p. 93). When I conducted observations I understood the above limitation from a different perspective. I believed that the participants in my research should have the right to control and share whatever information and experience they were comfortable with and I respected their decisions on what to share. I also took it as a challenge for me to establish a trustful relationship with the participants so that they could share with me their stories, experiences and knowledge in the most comfortable way.

Merriam (1988) recommends that a researcher should first “become familiar with the setting” and “see what is there to observe” before “serious data collection can begin” (p. 91). In the exploratory trip to Giao Xuan commune in early 2011, I obtained a general understanding about the research site, local people, and the CBET project in Giao Xuan. However, during the first week of my official fieldwork, I also intentionally made observation notes to “refresh” this “getting familiar with the setting” stage. Joining local events and local people's daily life activities, the volunteer program, and the CBET tour helped me to see what I could observe and

also let local people become familiar with my presence in their community.

“A checklist of elements” synthesized by Merriam (1998) from different authors was adapted as a guide for participant observations during CBET tours and homestays with local people. This checklist includes the following elements: 1) The physical setting; 2) The participants; 3) Activities and interactions; 4) Conversation; 5) Subtle factors; and 6) Your own behaviour (Merriam, 1998, pp. 97-98).

The participant observation method applied in this research was conducted in many different situations. I took observations in ecotourism tours, through daily life activities during the time I stayed in the host families' houses, and during some local events. Joining CBET tours provided me a chance to observe and explore how local guides interacted with visitors, what type of local knowledge was incorporated in the tours and how local guides introduced such knowledge to visitors. After the tours I often met with the local guides and had conversations with them about things that occurred in the tours as well as their thoughts about their experience in the tours.

Living with local people helped me to observe and learn about traditional local knowledge, practices and culture through their daily life activities. While I was staying in Giao Xuan, several groups of visitors came to visit. This was a great opportunity for me to see how local people set up their place to accommodate visitors and how they interacted with visitors. I could also compare typical daily life with a day when host families had visitors in their house. In addition, I witnessed what men and women in the household did in terms of housework. To my surprise, many men in the household helped quite often with housework. However, I still noticed a typical day filled with the activities that local women had to experience lasted from early

morning until late at night, especially with families whose husbands worked far away from home.

I took notes in as much detail as possible during the observation process. I typed more comprehensive notes later after the observation session was conducted. In some cases, because of the busy schedule of some particular days, I typed a brief summary of my observations and some prominent remarks and filled in the details later.

4.3.5 Collecting Documents

All relevant documents that I could find related to the project were reviewed. This included the Giao Xuan CBET project summary, Giao Xuan CBET periodic progress reports, government documents related to the Giao Xuan CBET project, local, national and international articles, information on the project website, any data on the Giao Xuan CBET project in previous studies, and visitors' and volunteer's reports or feedback on CBET tours. All documents used in the project's CBET curriculum, workshops and training sessions, and any documents distributed to tourists were also collected. These included documents such as brochures, tour programs, and references of local cultural codes. In addition, all the writings related to the project site's location, history, and socio-economic status were included to help contextualize the data.

To help me collect documents for this project, I first searched for documents from all available public sources, like the CBET project website, website of the MCD, local and national journals, and libraries. MCD staff provided me with related project documents. I also reached out for advice from the project consultants. Some of them guided me to very useful resources on ecotourism development in Vietnam.

To help me obtain knowledge of Giao Xuan's social, historical, political, and economic context, I was introduced to the elders of Giao Xuan commune. I talked to six elders in the community. I met them individually at their houses and had informal conversations with all of them. I asked them about the history, traditions and customs of the commune. One of them who was 93 years old and the former head of the commune told me many interesting stories about the history of the commune and about the difficulties that the commune had to face during war. Another elder provided me with a draft of a book that he and some other elders in the commune had been writing about the history and development of Giao Xuan commune.

4.3.6 Data Analysis and Interpretation

The constant-comparative method was used as the main data analysis approach in this research (Merriam, 1998, Yin, 2003). This method emphasizes the iterative process in data analysis. This means that the final research findings are a result of identifying, reflecting, testing, revising, refining, confirming or even discarding data until themes or categories emerge. The iterative process enables researchers to obtain the most significant aspects of the case and to ensure the findings are exhaustively supported by rich data to help eventually constitute grounded theory.

I followed a six-step process recommended by Creswell (2009) as a guide for data analysis of this research. First, all the data were organized and prepared for analysis. In particular, interview transcripts, documents, notes from observations, and stories told by the community elders were sorted into different types based on the sources of information obtained. In the second step, I looked through all the data obtained in order to get a general sense of what

ideas the data told me about and evaluated how deep, credible and useful these ideas were. Third, I coded the data into categories through an iterative process. All of the possible categories were first labelled with a tentative term and were then confirmed, elaborated and revised until solid themes emerged. Fourth, similar to the iterative process applied for coding, I generated and confirmed themes that were substantially supported by different sources of data. These themes were potentially the major findings of the research. Fifth, I identified particular sets of data that were used to represent a narrative of findings. At the last step, I made an interpretation of the data. The interpretation was made based on all sources of data collected in the field, relevant literature and theories on Community-based ecotourism (CBET), non-formal education and informal learning, and environmental adult education (EAE) as well as my own knowledge, background and understanding of the research topic and case.

4.4 The Role of the Researcher

Banks (1998) suggests that there are four types of researchers: “the indigenous-insider,” the indigenous-outsider,” “the external-insider,” and “the external-outsider” (p. 8). Before coming to the field, I envisioned myself as both an “indigenous insider” and an “indigenous outsider.” The reason I envisioned myself as an “indigenous insider” was because I am a Vietnamese person who was raised and grew up with Vietnamese culture, understands and acknowledges Vietnamese values, culture, knowledge, and beliefs. However, since I grew up in a city and I have left my country for several years to study in Canada, the local people in Giao Xuan might have seen me not only as an “indigenous-insider” but also an “indigenous-outsider” who “has experienced an outsider culture” and might adapt to some “outsider” values, beliefs,

and perspectives (Banks, 1998). From my experience in the field, I learned that the role of the researcher is much more complicated than just fitting into either of these roles.

I think that many local people whom I recruited as the research participants in this research study saw me as an “indigenous insider.” But, it took time for them to really consider me an indigenous insider. At the beginning, local host families tried to accommodate me as a homestay visitor. They always asked me if I had any special requests for food. Even though I always said that I would eat what their family had for their regular meals, I noticed that the meals that they prepared while I stayed at their houses were very elaborate compared to what they told me they often had for their lunch/dinner. However, when the local host families were already familiar and comfortable with my presence, they told me that they would prepare simple everyday meals now because to them I was no longer a guest but a family member.

While I was in Giao Xuan, I sometimes made a trip back to Hanoi when I needed to conduct other work (e.g., collecting documents, interviewing MCD staff and consultants). Anytime I made a trip back to Hanoi, community members often sent back with me some local specialities to my family in Hanoi. From my knowledge, local people only did such things to very close friends or relatives. For example, after cooking “nem nam” for me once – a famous local dish in which small pieces of boiled pork are mixed with seasonings and grounded toasted rice – Ms. Kim later made it and asked me to bring it to my father, who is also a fan of this dish. Some other community members would send with me eggs from chickens they raised or herbal tea that they cultivated.

After my stay at Giao Xuan progressed, in addition to sharing their experiences in the CBET project, many community members comfortably shared with me other personal aspects of

their life. Mr. Long told me stories about his children who had to leave Giao Xuan to work in the city. He also told me about his future plans for raising and supporting his extended family. Mr. Kha talked about his difficult time when he was a little kid, how he had to leave the village to work in various cities when he was only thirteen years old, and how he dealt with both evil and nice things in his life. Ms. Ha told me about how she met and fell in love with her husband.

Even though local people who participated in this research might have seen me more as an “indigenous insider,” other local people who did not participate in this research study might have seen me more as an “indigenous outsider” or even “the external outsider.” Possible reasons for this could be that we did not have many opportunities to get to know and understand each other as much as the local people with whom I lived. Or it could also be the local people might just have stricter perspectives toward outsiders' behavior.

While I was in the field, I joined a local spiritual ceremony for moving an old tree to widen a local road. Before joining the event, I carefully consulted Ms. Kim and a local guide about the local dress code for such events. The event took place on an extremely hot day. I wore a short sleeve shirt and an ankle length pair of pants. Before leaving for the event, Ms. Kim approved my outfit. After that I met Ms. Ha, a local guide, who was also wearing a very similar outfit. When I arrived at the local temple, many local people were at the event. I made a quick observation to make sure my outfit was appropriate for the ceremony. I saw many local people wearing short sleeve shirts and some old men had their pants folded high up above their knees. At that moment I thought that I had probably dressed appropriately. Ms. Ha then guided me to a place in the temple where we could light incense, a traditional practice when people go to temples/pagodas. However, while Ms. Ha and I were lighting incense, a local woman, came over

and signaled to Ms. Ha that she should leave. Later on, Ms. Ha informed me that the woman had told her that I should have worn a proper long sleeve shirt and a longer pair of pants when I joined the event. Right after that, I approached the woman to apologize for wearing inappropriate clothes. However, it occurred to me that there are different standards for what “local” people and “outsiders” are allowed to wear to such events. Evidently, the woman did not consider me to be a local person as did Ms. Kim and Ms. Ha.

My experience from the field once again taught me that the role of the researcher is complex and it is always an ongoing learning process of local codes and cultures for researchers when conducting research in local community sites. Different people may have different views towards appropriateness. In addition, different groups of local people might have different ways to perceive or treat you depending on the level of relationship you establish with them.

4.5 The Trustworthiness of the Research Study and Associated Ethical Considerations

Conducting research that involves human participants can raise ethical concerns. If any research methodologies are employed for the purpose of “extracting” information or knowledge from local settings, the research can become intrusive and oppressive. Researchers doing such kinds of research are often more concerned with their own research questions than having a positive impact on the local community (Kindon, Pain, & Kesby, 2007; Stewart & Draper, 2009; Strand, Marullo, Cutforth, Stoecker, & Donohue, 2003).

Ethics is believed to be a critical criteria to increase the quality and trustworthiness of qualitative research (Tracy, 2010). Tracy points out four dimensions of ethics that researchers need to thoroughly consider when conducting research including “procedural, situational,

relational, and exiting ethics” (Tracy, 2010, p. 847). I made the best effort to reflect on these four dimensions of ethical considerations while conducting this research study.

4.5.1 Procedural Ethics

Procedural ethics refer to necessary ethical steps in conducting research that are reviewed by a board of institutional organizations to protect human subjects from harm (Tracy, 2010). This research was conducted only after obtaining ethical approval from the Behavioural Research Ethics Board of the University of British Columbia (BREB). All the steps of collecting data including gaining access to the research site, participant recruitment, conducting interviews, observations, and collecting documents (reported in the previous sections of this chapter) were conducted following the guidelines approved by BREB to avoid intrusive and oppressive research.

In addition, to protect the research participants' privacy and confidentiality, I applied a number of safeguards. For example, all electronic data (audio interview files, electronic transcripts, and electronic photograph files) were stored on my laptop in the field, but encrypted and password protected. Other data on paper (paper documents, and interview transcripts) were kept securely in a locked file cabinet. Moreover, participant anonymity was ensured by using pseudonyms in the presentation of the data in this study.

4.5.2 Situational Ethics

Situational ethics are described as circumstances that occur in the field that researchers should reflect on in order to make ethical decisions based on the nature of each particular

situation (Tracy, 2010). Several unpredictable situations emerged while I was conducting my fieldwork. I carefully considered these situations and tried my best to make flexible and ethical decisions and prioritize the benefits of the research participants.

Among the various meetings when I first entered the field, a meeting with Ms. Ha, a local tour guide, had a powerful influence on me and alerted me to keep reminding myself of the approach that I used to conduct research with local community members. When I first met her at her house, she mentioned that many people had come to Giao Xuan and asked about the Giao Xuan CBET project and their ecotourism jobs. I then told her that I read a news article about her and some other community members. She was very excited but surprised. She told me:

Many people came here and interviewed me. Sometimes I heard the same thing from other people as you just told me 'you were mentioned on the news' or 'I read about you in the newspaper', but I actually never had a chance to read such news and did not know what they said about me. (Ms. Ha)

Ms. Ha's words really affected me and reemphasized to me that I needed to respect participants' rights regarding the handling and reporting of my research data. Since the article I read about Ms. Ha and other community members was written in English, I translated this article and gave both the original article and the translated copy to them in my next meetings with them.

Similarly, when I collected the project documents, I read a report written by an Australian who volunteered in Giao Xuan for four months in which he included many pleasant and unpleasant memories, activities, people, challenges that he faced, and things that he valued during his time in Giao Xuan. In the report, the volunteer also narrated memories of his host family, whom he considered a second, adopted family. He also shared his views about the prospect of the Giao Xuan CBET project. In his report, he thanked the Giao Xuan community, but also mentioned that he knew Giao Xuan people would not be able to read his report (because

it was written in English). Learning from Ms. Ha's concern, I made a phone call to the volunteer (his contact information was included at the end of his report) and asked for his permission to translate the report into Vietnamese and give it back to the local people. The volunteer was very surprised and was truly happy and even thanked me for giving back his report to the local people.

When I gave community members both the original and the translated copies of the article and the volunteer's report, they seemed very excited, happy and grateful. Many of them read the article and the report immediately, and I could sense that some of them were very emotional when reading the volunteer's report. Later, I know that some community members even used the article and volunteering report as a way of introducing their CBET project to other visitors.⁶ I considered what I did as one way of giving back to the community. From the local people's positive reaction, I knew that my time and effort was worth it and that I made the correct decision.

In another situation, I conducted interviews with a community member who did not directly participate in the CBET project, but spent much with foreign volunteerists⁷ since he was keen on improving his English ability. The person did not seem comfortable to be recorded but allowed me to take notes. I respected the person's decision and did not record any interview sessions. He seemed to be very cautious of what he said and corrected himself during conversations with me. For example, he shared a story and right after that he changed his mind and said: "Can you cross it out from your notes?" I did it right away upon his request. Since I could sense his cautiousness and wanted him to be comfortable sharing his experiences, for the most of the interviews, I let him freely share whatever he felt sharing without asking many

⁶ The volunteer's intention was to make his report known to as many people as possible, including other visitors and local people.

⁷ Volunteerists in this study refer to visitors who join ecotourism tours in Giao Xuan and implement various volunteer activities at the same time.

questions. When I gave the transcriptions of my notes back to him, I intentionally emphasized and made it clear that he could feel free to edit/add or cross out any information/stories that he wanted to. However, he was happy with the transcriptions of our conversation and did not edit anything in the transcription.

Considering the existing patriarchal norm in Vietnam, when I conducted interviews about gender issues, I always let participants choose the place for interviews. I thought that some women might not feel comfortable talking in the presence of their husbands. In fact, some women did choose a place outside of their house for the interviews. For example, one woman chose to have interviews in a local coffee shop and another woman chose to talk to me while we went for a walk in the evening. In some cases, I also noticed that women chose to have interviews at their houses, but once their husbands joined the conversation, the husbands seemed to dominate the conversation. In such cases, I subtly chose to talk to these women again another time when their husbands were not around.

4.5.3 Relational Ethics

Relational ethics indicate the importance of researchers' thoughtful consideration of “their character, actions, and consequences on others” as well as the researchers' engagement in “reciprocity with participants and do not co-opt others just to get a 'great stories'.” (Tracy, 2010, p. 847). My experience in this research study is “relational ethics” was the most challenging dimension of ethics that I faced.

Building a trusting relationship with community members was critical for me to conduct my research in Giao Xuan. When I first came to Giao Xuan, I could sense that local people still

saw me simply as a researcher with a higher level of formal education than them. When I invited community members to comment on the objectives, research questions, and methods of conducting the research, most community members told me that they were fine with whatever I proposed. An example of their reasoning was: “You are a highly educated person, you know what you are doing and we just try our best to help you out” (Ms. Nga). I always tried to be explicit that I really wanted this research study to reflect the local authentic perspectives. I also emphasized that local people's opinions and advice on how my research should be conducted in a locally ethical and respectful way would be of a great value for enabling its success.

As my time progressed in Giao Xuan, community members became more open to me. They started giving me ideas and advice on the procedures of conducting this research study. Local community members directed me to meet some respectful elders in the community to ask them advice on local codes such as how to interact with people when you meet them or with whom I should ask for permission to visit some local destinations (e.g., temples, pagodas, churches).

As my time in Giao Xuan progressed more, I even became good friends with some community members and they genuinely treated me as a family member. Such a close relationship might have made them feel more comfortable and became more open about their life and experience in the Giao Xuan CBET project. For example, some local women revealed that they were victims of family violence. They recounted how painful and humiliating it was for them to be physically and verbally abused by their husbands. They also admitted that it was very difficult for them to let other people know since their families would lose face (i.e., it is shameful for local people if such problems in their family are known by other people). However, they

trusted me, wanted me to know and, to some extent, even felt a bit better when they could disclose their experience. Even though I gave them back the transcript of our conversations and obtained their approval to include the family violence issue and their thought of this issue in the research results, there was time when I hesitated to do so. I felt that those local women had told me such a secret and painful aspect of their life because they might have considered me more as a friend than a researcher. Although I was assured by them that it was completely fine for me to report/publish this issue, I still hope that my reporting of the issue will not cause any harm to them.

In addition, since many local people knew me as an educated person who was studying abroad, they seemed to not only see me as a researcher but also as a potential problem solver or helper. During my fieldwork, quite often community members told me about what they or their community needed. For example, a community member told me she joined a workshop on how to cultivate clean mushrooms on dry rice straw. She then told me that she wished I could find funding for the community to implement this clean mushroom cultivation model in Giao Xuan. Some community members often told me how financial issues prevented them from being environmentally friendly. They hoped some organizations would provide funding for large trash bins to put along the local lanes and in other local public places. As one community members told me: “It would be easier to convince people not to throw trash in public places if there are many trash bins available for them to put trash in.” They also wished for a plumbing system from the water company in the local district to their commune so that they could have clean water to use. Local teachers also told me how the limited availability of computers in the school prevented their students from opportunities to practice and master computer skills. Similarly,

they also asked in a very subtle way if I could find donations from any organization to support equipping their school with more computers (even with used ones). Even though I know that it was normal and natural for local people to share with me such difficulties, I also felt a bit obliged in terms of what could I do to help them. However, at the same time, in my position as a researcher, there was no guarantee that I would be able to help the local community with such financial related issues. I did not want to give local people a false hope. Thus, I decided to listen to them with careful attention and respect but gave no promises.

4.5.4 Exiting Ethics

Exiting ethics imply the steps of how researchers share and present the findings after finishing collecting data in order to “avoid unjust or unintended consequences” (Tracy, 2010, p. 847). In this research study, I employed several steps to avoid such consequences and made an effort to bring the best benefits to the local community. These steps include giving back transcriptions to the research participants, discussing the content of our interviews to make sure I understood the research participants correctly, and sharing the research results with participants.

As mentioned in the “Conducting Interviews,” section 4.3.3, I transcribed interviews with the research participants and gave the transcriptions back to them. The research participants could edit anything in the transcriptions as they wished. In addition, to ensure that community members were aware of their rights to make changes in the transcriptions, a week after giving back the transcriptions I met with them individually to discuss the content of the transcriptions to make sure that I understood their views and asked if they wanted to change/add anything. Some community members did make changes to the transcriptions and I respected their decision.

In May, 2014, I made a trip back to Vietnam to share research results with all research participants. I had two meetings with the research participants. One meeting was with the project staff and consultants in Hanoi and another one was with community members in Giao Xuan. MCD took the initiative to hold a meeting between me and the project staff and consultants at MCD's office in Hanoi. In addition to myself, a total of eight MCD staff participated in the meeting, including the MCD director and vice director. I made a special effort to interview project staff and consultants who were not able to attend the meeting. In this meeting, I gave a presentation in Vietnamese to share the research results. After my presentation, each of the participants shared their views toward the research results. The MCD staff and consultants found that the presentation of the research results brought them an opportunity to reflect one more time on their work on the Giao Xuan CBET project. In general, they agreed with the findings, but they were also surprised with some findings. For example, some of them were surprised about the fact that many local people were not aware of the CBET project. Even though it was agreed that keeping all people informed about the CBET project was almost impossible considering the large big population in Giao Xuan, the project staff agreed that this was a possible area of improvement for future projects. MCD staff also showed their concern of the local existing family violence problem. Both MCD staff and the project consultants were interested in further possible steps that could be taken. We all shared our views toward future steps and promised to keep in touch for possible future cooperation in community development not only in Giao Xuan but also in other rural communities in Vietnam.

After reporting the research results to the project staff and consultants in Hanoi, I made a trip to Giao Xuan to share the research results with the local community members. I invited a

total of twenty six community members to the research results meeting. Among twenty six local people invited, twenty four of them were the community members whom I interviewed, one of them was a host family member who left Giao Xuan for a year to live in Hanoi with his son while I was conducting the fieldwork for this research study, and another one was the Director of Xuan Thuy National Park who played a role as a project consultant. A total of eighteen community members participated in the meeting. Later, I managed to meet individually with five of the eight people who could not attend the meeting.

In the meeting with community members whom I interviewed, I gave a presentation on the research results in Vietnamese and asked them if the research results reflected their views and experience in the CBET project and if they wanted to edit or add anything. In general, community members thought that the research results showed the key themes of their experience in participating in the CBET project and did not add anything new. Some community members wondered why I did not include local musical performers, dancers, and singers in the research study. I explained to them about the scope of my study which was to focus on the learning process of host families and local guides who had more direct experience in hosting and guiding visitors. Community members became more involved when we discussed the implications of the research results. One community member wanted to use the research findings in developing a training program for community members to improve their knowledge and skills in providing ecotourism services. Other community members pointed out the importance of the local community in taking the initiative to find ways to promote CBET instead of solely being dependent on assistance from outside agencies. During the meeting, I noticed that only four individuals dominated the discussion including the director of Xuan Thuy National Park, the

principal and vice principal of the local school, and the head of the CBET Cooperative. Thus, the day after the meeting, I visited the community members who were silent in the meeting individually to ask if they had any comments. Most people did not have much more to add. However, some people complained about how some aspects the CBET implementation in Giao Xuan were getting worse, such as the poor long-term vision for future development by the Giao Xuan CBET Cooperative Management Board. In particular, I heard complaints about how local guides did not have many opportunities to guide visitors anymore because a few individuals from the host families just took over the guiding work.

In addition to the presentation on the research results, posters of the research results were displayed at the Ecolife Cafe for any local people who were interested in the research results. I asked the CBET Management Board members to inform local people about the poster and to talk to me if interested. However, during the two days I stayed at Giao Xuan, hardly anybody stopped by and asked about the posters.

Even though the posters of the research results did not interest local people who did not participate in this research study, the research participants showed their great care about the research results and sincere appreciation toward my effort to come back and share the results with them. As the director of MCD said: "I greatly appreciate that you conducted the research in a very careful and thorough way." To the project staff and consultants, the discussion about the research results brought them an opportunity to reflect again on their work in Giao Xuan and see what worked and what needed to improve. To Giao Xuan community members, it was an opportunity for them to be informed of what people studied about their community and their CBET project and to discuss what could be done to improve their CBET initiative. In the past,

there were scientists, researchers, journalists who came to Giao Xuan to collect data but community members did not know in detail about the results of their data collection and did not know what they wrote about their community. As one community member said:

Witnessing a great number of people who showed up at the meeting, I can tell how much you and your work are appreciated by local people. I am telling you, it is not very common for local people to show up at a meeting like this even with a meeting held by the local authority. So, I congratulate you. (Mr. Long)

4.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter introduced the research site, methodology, research steps, and the trustworthiness of the research study and associated ethical considerations. The study was conducted in the Giao Xuan commune, a rural community in northern Vietnam. I chose an interpretive case study approach to generate “thick, rich description” of data about the Giao Xuan CBET project (Merriam, 1998, p. 38). Data collection methods included interviews with MCD staff and community members of the Giao Xuan CBET project, document analysis of the key CBET project and other documents related to the Giao Xuan commune, and participant observation. Data analysis took place in a “constant-comparative” process (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2003; Creswell, 2003). This chapter also highlighted critical ethical issues that I experienced while conducting fieldwork, such as my role as “indigenous-insider” and “indigenous-outsider” in the research project and the four important dimensions of ethics (procedural, situational, relational, and exiting ethics) that help to ensure good research practices and better the trustworthiness of the research study.

CHAPTER 5: LEARNING TO DEVELOP AND MANAGE THE CBET PROJECT

“It’s a process of learning, learning more, and learning forever.” (Mr. Long, a local host family)

This chapter presents findings on: 1) What community members learned in non-formal and informal settings in order to develop and manage the CBET project in Giao Xuan; 2) How the learning processes took place; and 3) The outcomes of the learning processes. Community members experienced ample learning in the local capacity building program provided by MCD and from actually implementing the CBET project. The social context and curriculum content and pedagogies in some areas of the local capacity building program greatly affected community members' learning outcomes.

The chapter includes three sections. In the first section, I describe different non-formal educational activities in the local capacity building program that provided community members with fundamental knowledge and skills for developing and managing the CBET project in their commune. Through different workshops and training, the local capacity building program aimed to raise community members' awareness of CBET possibilities, provided community members with knowledge of CBET planning and management, and equipped community members with knowledge of and skills in providing ecotourism services as well as computer skills and English.

In the second section, I capture the dynamic informal learning processes that community members experienced in their implementation of the CBET project. They learned on the job by leading and managing the CBET project and by providing ecotourism services. They also learned from exchanging knowledge and experience with other CBET colleagues.

In the last section, I synthesize various outcomes resulting from community members’

learning processes including knowledge, skills, and values. Even though there was still room for improvement in some areas of knowledge and skills, in general, community members mastered fundamental ecotourism knowledge and skills in operating their ecotourism project. More importantly, they were able to transfer these knowledge and skills into useful tools that helped to enhance their ways of life. Community members also greatly valued the opportunity of participating in the CBET project. This opportunity helped them to increase their knowledge and boost their confidence in successfully implementing the CBET project and making changes in their community.

5.1 Non-Formal Learning: Fundamental Knowledge and Skills for Doing CBET

Community members engaged in a capacity building program provided by MCD to obtain knowledge and skills needed to develop and manage their CBET project. The capacity building program aimed to “strengthen the capacity of the community and other relevant bodies to conserve the natural biodiversity and culture through developing an ecotourism model as a sustainable livelihood for the community.” (MCD, 2006e, p. 4). The capacity building program, which covers four main components with various activities, are summarized in Table 5.1 below (MCD, 2007b, p. 7).

Table 5.1

Components of the Capacity Building Program to Help Build a CBET Model in Giao Xuan

Component	Activities
Survey and develop project plan	Consultative meeting with experts Assess ecotourism potential Project concept and planning workshop

Component	Activities
	Form the project plan and conduct consultation with stakeholders
Raise awareness for community and stakeholders	<p>Dialogue on benefit of development of ecotourism for environmental conservation</p> <p>Workshops on gender issues and communication skills for conservation of wetlands and development of ecotourism</p> <p>Study tour of other successful community-based ecotourism sites</p> <p>Planning workshop on development of ecotourism</p>
Develop products	<p>Training providing for service skills (homestay, registration, cooking, tour guiding, traditional performance)</p> <p>Support infrastructure and tools (blankets, mosquito-nets, musical instruments, clothes)</p> <p>Building tourism information room in community learning centre</p>
Market and promote ecotourism products	<p>Cooperate with Nam Dinh Department of Trade and Tourism and Xuan Thuy National Park Management Board to create regulations on ecotourism in the area</p> <p>Creating CBET network</p> <p>Cooperate with development organizations involved in ecotourism to share experiences</p> <p>Consult with tourism companies on creating ecotourism products</p> <p>Marketing community-based ecotourism workshop</p> <p>Conduct a pilot tour to introduce the model to tourism companies</p>

This section focuses on synthesizing fundamental knowledge and skills included in the capacity building program that helped community members develop and implement a CBET

model in Giao Xuan: 1) Raising awareness of CBET possibilities; 2) CBET planning and management; 3) Skills and knowledge to provide ecotourism services; and 4) Computer skills and English.

5.1.1 Community Needs and Local Ecotourism Potential Assessment, an Inception

Workshop and a Study Tour to Raise Awareness of CBET Possibilities

When the CBET project was first initiated in Giao Xuan in 2006, CBET was still a very new concept in Vietnam. According to Ms. Lam, one of the CBET project's staff, when the plan of developing a CBET project in Giao Xuan was first shared with the local community, many community members expected a large financial investment. They thought that in order for them to develop a CBET project, they would receive enough money to build a nice resort in their commune. They were not aware that the nature of CBET was keeping what they had and providing visitors with an experience of rural life with unique natural resources in their commune. Therefore, the first and very fundamental step of developing a CBET project in Giao Xuan was to raise local people's awareness on the nature of CBET so that they could actively get involved in the development of the CBET project in their commune.

In 2006, MCD conducted a survey on the local potential resources on developing a CBET project in Giao Xuan. Approximately 30 community members participated in the dialogue and local survey with a group of MCD staff to assess the current social, cultural, environmental, and economic status and potential resources for developing a CBET project in Giao Xuan (MCD, 2007b). Community members were also asked about their expectation for the development of a CBET model in their commune as well as possible roles that they thought they might take on

(e.g., host families, tour guides, leaders, transporters) if they joined the CBET project. This survey helped community members to obtain some general ideas of basic CBET services. Mr.

Gia commented on the helpfulness of participating in the survey:

At the beginning, we had no clue what we could/needed to do in order to run a CBET project. Things became clearer to me when we joined the survey on local potentials for developing CBET. They (MCD staff) pointed out and explained several categories of services in CBET such as tour guides, host families, transporters and musical performers. After that, we had a better idea of what it was that we needed to do and could do.

The CBET project's consultants and staff also saw that this assessment phase was helpful not only for them but also for local people. It helped the CBET project's consultants and staff to understand the local context and become aware of local needs. It also helped local people become more conscious of their local issues and potential resources to develop a CBET project in their commune.

In the same year (2006), a CBET awareness inception workshop was provided to Giao Xuan community members and attracted forty four participants. The workshop participants were Giao Xuan community members, MCD staff, tourism experts, representatives of local government agencies including the Department of Trade and Tourism and the Department of Natural Resources and Environment, and representatives of research institutions such as Vietnam National University and Maritime Anthropology Research Group of the University of Amsterdam (MCD, 2007b).

Seven presentations were delivered in the workshop by MCD staff and consultants, representatives of Xuan Thuy National Park, tourism and sustainable development experts, and Giao Xuan community members. The presentations covered several main topics including: 1) General information on the Giao Xuan CBET project such as the project's objectives, target

beneficiaries, proposed activities, implementing approaches, and expected outcomes; 2) Sustainable livelihoods, community development in the coastal wetlands areas, and the integration of gender issues in coastal resources management; 3) General concepts of ecotourism; 4) Giao Xuan socio-economic context and Xuan Thuy National Park development; and 5) Experience and lessons learned from the implementation of a CBET model in Cuc Phuong National Park (MCD, 2006f).

After each main section of the workshop, discussion was facilitated by the CBET project's manager (MCD staff) and the director of Xuan Thuy National Park. The discussion focused on obtaining input from the workshop participants on the proposed Giao Xuan CBET project's objectives and activities and identified community members' views towards the formation of a CBET model in their commune. The workshop participants also discussed the role of community members and other stakeholders in the establishment and implementation of the CBET project. Questions and concerns were raised during the discussion section. For example, concern was raised over the need of evaluating possible negative impacts on local culture and environment. A call was made for consideration of the project's timing and funding, and the project's scope and expected outcomes. It was also pointed out that Xuan Thuy National Park was funded by different organizations for sustainable initiatives, and thus it was necessary to have coordination between the Giao Xuan CBET project activities and Xuan Thuy National Park's activities to avoid duplication (MCD, 2006f).

The workshop ended with a study tour that took place at Xuan Thuy National Park. All the workshop participants had an opportunity to learn about the local coastal wetlands biodiversity and natural beauty. In addition to the study tour, the participants also met with local

community members and participated in a traditional music show performed by Giao Xuan community members. (MCD, 2006f). The study tour at Xuan Thuy National Park and the meeting with community members helped the workshop participants see the potential for CBET model development in Giao Xuan.

In this workshop, community members obtained basic knowledge of CBET and the possibility to develop CBET in Giao Xuan. The workshop obtained support of the project from local community members and authorities. It also initiated a plan and set up a network among different stakeholders for CBET development in Giao Xuan (MCD, 2007b).

In addition to the inception workshop, to help local people obtain hands-on experience with a CBET project, a study tour to a successful CBET model in Ban Ho, Sa Pa, Lao Cai was conducted in July, 2006 for local CBET participants and local authorities (MCD, 2007b). In this visit to Ban Ho, the participants had the chance to observe how community members in Ban Ho implemented and managed their CBET project. The interviews with community members showed that they found the study tour to Ban Ho very practical and helpful for them.

Afterwards, they had a much clearer concept of what a CBET initiative was and how it was managed. They also pointed out what resources/services in Ban Ho were better than their own community and vice versa, and what they could learn from Ban Ho community in terms of CBET management. One of the study tour participants, Mr. Du, shared his thoughts:

After joining tourist services in Ban Ho, Sapa and witnessing how local people in Ban Ho managed their CBET project, I found that they had very distinctive ethnic minority culture, but I also recognized that Giao Xuan could also attract visitors with many other unique resources. I noticed that they were very professional in the way they managed and organized their CBET project – which we should definitely learn from them. However, to me, they were not friendly and hospitable enough with visitors and I thought Giao Xuan people could do better in this sense.

5.1.2 CBET Planning and Management Workshop

To assist the community members to obtain knowledge of CBET planning and management, a workshop on CBET planning and management was conducted in September, 2006, in Giao Xuan. Fifty representatives from the government, environmental conservationists, research institutes, and Giao Xuan community members attended this workshop. The workshop aimed to:

- 1) Provide basic concepts, tools, and methodologies for CBET development planning; 2) Practice skills to assess and develop potential products of CBET and practice designing pilot tours; and 3) Discuss and analyze the role and responsibilities of stakeholders in CBET planning, development, and marketing (MCD, 2006e, p. 4).

Three main sections were included in this workshop: 1) Conceptualization of CBET planning and management; 2) CBET product development; and 3) CBET marketing strategies. In the first section, two presentations were delivered in order to help the workshop participants understand the local context for developing CBET. The first presentation on the tourism development plan of Xuan Thuy National Park was given by the director of Xuan Thuy National Park. After that the CBET project's manager presented the main findings of the assessment on the overall status of Giao Xuan and its potential for CBET development. Following these two presentations, a tourism expert conducted a session on fundamental concepts of CBET and CBET planning and management (MCD, 2006e), including the development of international trends of sustainable tourism and key concepts of CBET such as definitions and objectives of CBET, ecotourism codes of conducts and guidelines, and CBET planning principles and components. The presentation also emphasized the roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders in CBET planning and development such as community members, the local authority, donors, Xuan Thuy National Park, tourism agencies, and MCD. After the presentation,

the CBET expert facilitated a discussion among the workshop participants to encourage them to raise questions or concerns for clarity (MCD, 2006e). The workshop also indicated potential benefits that CBET could bring to Giao Xuan if operated appropriately and possible environmental, social, cultural, and economic impacts of CBET on the local community. A discussion session on the planning and management of a successful CBET model in Sapa where community members previously had an opportunity to visit through a study tour was also facilitated (MCD, 2006e). Some community members recounted their experience in this discussion:

We talked about what we liked about our trip and what we could learn from their model. Most of us agreed that things were so organized there. They seemed to know what they are doing. They have different methods of management from our project. Host families are more independent in terms of receiving visitors. Visitors can go to any host families that they like. In Giao Xuan, visitors are distributed by the Management Board of the CBET Cooperative. (Mr. Long)

Safety issue as well. They can let their house door open the whole night and it is safe. That's very impressive. (Ms. Gia)

In the second section on CBET product development, a tourism expert introduced key concepts and approaches of tourism products development. Examples of CBET tours with different activities were introduced, including: 1) Special tours (bird watching, local herbs as medicine, handicraft study tours, and humanitarian tourism); 2) Adventure tours (trekking, rowing boats, swimming and snorkeling/diving); 3) Rural village tours (staying with local host families, joining local daily activities); 4) Eco-agriculture tours (visiting plantations and fields, participating in local agricultural activities, learning local knowledge of agriculture); 5) Waterway tours (staying overnight on local boats, enjoying traditional music); and 6) Cultural exchange and study tours (learning and exchange knowledge of cultures and traditional values)

(MCD, 2006e).

To help participants practice skills of developing potential CBET products, participants were divided into two groups and worked on designing activities for CBET tours that took place in Giao Xuan commune and Xuan Thuy National Park. In addition, participants also discussed which local products should be introduced and sold to visitors. After working in small groups, participants presented their group work for all participants. An experiment tour developed by participants was implemented the next day in Giao Xuan and Xuan Thuy National Park (MCD, 2006e). Community members found this activity was very practical and helpful. They obtained hands-on experience in developing a CBET product using what they learned in the workshop and their local knowledge.

We know different possible spots in our commune that can attract visitors, but we needed to consider how to make the route convenient. For example, we had to think of the order of destinations to take visitors to, so we drew a map of different destinations and discussed with each other in order to connect destinations to make a complete tour. (Ms. Lan)

After the workshop, a competition on the construction of Giao Xuan CBET tours was held among the community members who participated in the CBET project. Individuals participated in this competition had to design a tour and write their introduction to each destination in the tour as well as activities included in the tour. The person who obtained the first prize in this competition is now working as a local guide.

In the last section, on CBET marketing strategies, the workshop participants were introduced to basic knowledge of CBET products promotion. Key approaches to sell tourism products were introduced such as the direct marketing channel (from suppliers at the destination to tourists), partnership marketing channels (an intermediary that may be travel agencies), and

through other promotional tools. Some examples of promotional tools included destination management organizations, travel agencies, tourist manuals, holiday fairs, online retailers, and mass media (MCD, 2006e). After the introduction of concepts of CBET marketing strategies, a presentation on practical experience in CBET product development and marketing was given by a representative of a Hanoi travel agency. A discussion on marketing strategies that are specifically appropriate and feasible to the context of Giao Xuan CBET development was facilitated among the workshop participants.

The workshop both provided fundamental concepts of CBET planning and development to community members and fostered community members' participation in and contribution to the planning of the CBET project's operation and management. Local people were encouraged to share their knowledge and voice their needs and expectations for how the CBET project should be operated. Explaining the effort of encouraging local people to actively participate in the development of the CBET initiative, Mr. Phuc, one of the CBET project's consultants, affirmed that the development of the CBET project must be rooted in Giao Xuan community's needs and visions. In order to make this happens, Mr. Nam, a staff of the CBET project, thought that local people needed to get involved in every single step of the CBET project development.

In this phase of the project, a core CBET group with 25 members was formed. This core group was then upgraded as a legal entity - the Giao Xuan CBET Cooperative in 2010. The core group members also voted three members of the CBET Cooperative into the CBET Cooperative's Managing Board. The Managing Board was responsible for the general planning and management of CBET activities. Later, community members were also provided with some extra training on business development skills, leadership and management skills, and strategic

planning skills.

5.1.3 Training in Skills and Knowledge to Provide Ecotourism Services

From the end of 2006 through all of 2007, MCD focused on developing community members' knowledge and skills in providing ecotourism services. Again, at this phase, MCD made an effort to create space for community members to get involved in the process of deciding on the curriculum needed for training workshops. Before the workshops took place, community members had the chance to discuss with MCD staff and voice their needs and expectations for needed knowledge and skills. Even though space was created for community members to participate in constructing the curriculum of the training programs, some community members were not confident of their capacity and thought that MCD staff should be the ones who decided what they needed to learn. Mr. Kha articulated his assumption of local participants' capacity and roles in the decisions on the CBET workshops:

I did not think that CBET local participants should request MCD to provide this or that training workshop. Our knowledge and vision were not good enough to decide such things. We just thought that the Project would know and provide us with training workshops that would help raise good awareness for local people.

However, the majority of local people in Giao Xuan appeared to understand the opportunity to participate in the construction of curriculum for the training programs and were very active in voicing their needs. According to Ms. Kim, after setting up the plan to develop the CBET initiative with MCD, local people had meetings without MCD's participation to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of Giao Xuan commune. They also identified the knowledge and skills that they lacked to implement the CBET initiative. After the meetings, the CBET core group (local host families and guides) proposed their ideas to MCD. Ms. Kim described how

local people and MCD collaboratively identified the knowledge and skills needed for hosting visitors:

We knew that we could not host visitors right away without training. For example, to cook a regular meal for our family was simple and easy, but in order to cook a good meal for visitors we needed more cooking skills; we also needed to improve our communication skills in order to host visitors at our home. In general, MCD's objective was to successfully develop a CBET initiative in Giao Xuan, therefore, they (MCD's staff) provided us with some directions, listened to our proposal and needs, and developed the CBET initiative based on our community's requests. (Ms. Kim)

The CBET skills training workshops took place in Giao Xuan and were attended by 50 local participants and lasted for a total of 14 days (MCD, 2007b). Community members learned new skills including: 1) Hosting; 2) Tour guiding; and 3) Professional techniques on traditional opera performance. Below is a summary of requirements and expected outcomes for skills and knowledge that local people obtained from the training workshops (MCD, 2007b):

Table 5.2

Skills and Knowledge for Providing Ecotourism Services

CBET group	Skills and knowledge	Expected outcomes
Host families	Cooking and kitchen management	Master basic knowledge and principles of kitchen organization; Hygiene in cooking, cooking techniques, nutrition and food safety.
	Hospitality and homestay preparation	Master basic knowledge and skills on rearranging traditional house to be a homestay place and on hosting visitors.
	Basic English	Be able to have basic conversations with visitors.
Tour guides	Communication and interpretation skills	Articulate and be able to provide information to visitors.
	Local knowledge	Master local cultural, historical knowledge; local codes and principles.

CBET group	Skills and knowledge	Expected outcomes
	Organizing skills	Master basic steps of welcoming, guiding, and seeing off visitors.
	Problem-solving techniques	Master basic skills to react to challenging situations and needs during tours.
Musical performance	Knowledge on the historical and cultural significance of the traditional opera; professional techniques on <i>Cheo</i> opera performance	Be able to perform traditional opera to visitors.

All of the training workshops contained both conceptual and practical parts. After the workshops on skills and knowledge of CBET were finished, a pilot tour, Hanoi – Giao Xuan (2 days and 1 night) was implemented with the participation of representatives of 21 tourism companies. In this pilot tour, the CBET core group members had a chance to apply what they had learned and received on-site feedback from the participants in the tour for the development of actual tours in Giao Xuan later. Community members found that the training was helpful and provided them with basic knowledge and skills that they needed to provide ecotourism services. However, in order to apply such new knowledge and skills in hosting visitors in their commune, community members' ways of life required adaptation and change (as described in section 5.2 of this chapter).

5.1.4 Computer Skills and English Training

A workshop on computer skills was provided to community members. The workshop provided a brief introduction to the Internet, how to get access to Internet, and how to set up an email account (MCD, 2006b). In general, all of the community members claimed that the

workshop was too brief. In addition, since computer skills and the Internet were completely new to them, they were not be able to master knowledge and apply what they had learned in the workshop. A few community members were greatly determined to master computer skills, and thus were very dedicated and creative in mastering this new area of skills.

Some community members reached out for different learning resources including both learning in the workshop and learning from other people. For example, Ms. Kim joined the CBET project as part of a host family and one of the members of the managing board of the Giao Xuan CBET Cooperative. She was appointed as a chief liaison between the local community and MCD. Her position required computer skills for composing documents (e.g., reports, meetings minutes) and communicating with MCD staff via email. She was provided with an old computer by MCD to support her job. Ms. Kim attended a training workshop on computer skills and using the Internet provided by MCD. However, the workshop lasted only a few days and was too short to help her master all the computer skills necessary for her job. Because of her job's requirement, Ms. Kim kept herself motivated and tried her best to learn more after the workshop finished. She asked for help from anyone who was better at computer skills than she, including MCD staff, visitors or even school students in the commune.

Ms. Kim was also very creative and dedicated in learning this new skill. She recalled that at the beginning it took her a very long time to compose a Word document. She was very frustrated but did not give up. She discovered a way that helped her to become faster at typing. Instead of typing handwritten documents related to the CBET project, she decided to practice typing her favourite poems and songs. This task did not take much time because she already knew all the words by heart. Ms. Kim also found it fun and more enjoyable than using

administrative documents to practice her typing. Once she was more familiar with typing she drilled herself daily until she became adept at it. At last, she was successful in mastering word processing and spreadsheet skills. She then put her computer skills into practice by using them daily in her administrative job, which in turn helped her improve her new skill. According to Ms. Kim, a key to her success was motivation to learn, finding an effective way of learning, and the opportunity to practice what she had learned.

English was another new area of knowledge for many community members. With the cooperation between MCD and volunteers, English training was provided to community members by English speaking volunteers. Many English classes were offered to both people who participated in the CBET project and people who did not. Similar to learning computer skills, community members faced many challenges in learning English. However, many of them were very hard-working and self-directed in learning. They employed a wide variety of learning resources and techniques in the process of learning English and found ways of learning that seemed the most appropriate and effective to them.

Some community members claimed that inappropriate teaching methods and curriculum content prevented them from learning English. They found that what they learned from English classes was not practical. In addition, they did not have many opportunities to practice and as a result, eventually gave up. Ms. Tam provided reasons why she dropped out of an English class:

The class (English class) would be appropriate for school students. Lessons were taught systematically from very basic knowledge. We learned from a, b, c. We learned how to count in English. But visitors who came to my house did not ask about such things. They asked about my family's livelihood activities, about my work in the rice field, and if I farmed fish in my pond...

In addition, other community members pointed out that the organization of a class with

mixed learners of different ages was a barrier for them to learn. The class was offered to all community members, so anyone could join. CBET participants complained that secondary school students sometimes were too noisy in the class and it affected their concentration. Moreover, since the secondary school students had had a chance to learn English in school, they already knew much more than CBET participants. Thus, it made the learning atmosphere uncomfortable for older community members. Local tour guides Mr. Du and Ms. Nga were hoping that there would be another English class only for community members who participated in the CBET project. According to them it would be a much more effective way for them to learn.

Even though there were many barriers that prevented community members from learning English, some of them still had a strong motivation to keep trying. Community members learned in English classes taught by volunteers, they asked tour-guides from tourism agencies to teach them English whenever they had the opportunity, and they also learned from visitors. Community members employed various effective learning techniques that helped them to learn English and have conversations with visitors. These techniques were: creating their own English-Vietnamese bilingual notebooks, practicing English with visitors, learning English visually through pictures and their own signs, and using body language to have conversations with foreign visitors.

Mr. Long and his wife (Ms. Thi) saw the advantage of knowing how to communicate even in very simple conversations with visitors. Mr. Long described language as a “bridge” in the relationship between visitors and host families. He explained, “If we can speak even just a bit of the visitors' language, they will have a good impression of us and will be likely to enjoy their

stay more.” Mr. Long and Ms. Thi had a small notebook in which they wrote down words and phrases for everyday conversation in English. They also had a notebook for learning Japanese because there were many Japanese visitors who came to Giao Xuan. Some other community members (e.g. Ms. Ly and Ms. Nga) also created their own bilingual notebooks with basic conversations in English and Vietnamese and used them when asking visitors about basic needs. Mr. Long and Ms. Thi reached out for every opportunity to learn English. They attended evening English classes offered in the commune by volunteers. Whenever there was an outside tour guide who took foreign visitors to the commune, they asked for help with teaching them basic conversations in English. They then tried to practice when hosting visitors at their houses.

Mr. Long mentioned that his age (66 years old) was a barrier for him to learn a new language, but his key to success was finding a comfortable way to learn. Mr. Long found that visual learning was one of the most effective ways for him to learn English. He labelled things in English, learned new vocabulary through pictures, and wrote words in Vietnamese phonetics to approximate the English pronunciation. For example he wrote “bét rum” close to the bedroom area or “kít chùng” on the wall of the kitchen or “bát rum” in “an unnoticeable place” in the bathroom so that he could see them but visitors may not notice it. Mr. Long accepted that he forgot things quite quickly but he also emphasized that “if we have a good incentive and motivation and keep trying to do something, we can do it.”

Mr. Long's incentive to learn English was not only for hosting and communicating with visitors, but was also for being “a role model” for his colleagues in the CBET cooperative and for his grandchildren to learn. Many foreign volunteers came to Giao Xuan and taught English to community members. Mr. Long's grandchildren also participated in English classes offered by

volunteers in Giao Xuan Community Centre. Therefore, he thought that his continuous effort to learn would encourage his colleagues and set a good example for his children and grandchildren.

For most community members, it was still almost impossible for them to have conversations in English with visitors without the assistance of an interpreter. However, they always tried their best to find a way to communicate with visitors. Body language was used very frequently by community members to communicate:

Even though I cannot communicate with visitors in English, I have still found another way to communicate with them. Even without words, you can still express your care and hospitality to visitors with your actions. It is just more challenging for me when I can't communicate with visitors in their language, but it doesn't mean that it is impossible. (Ms. Tam)

For many community members, learning visitors' language was not simply for the purpose of communicating with visitors, but was a way of building relationship with visitors, and making them feel at ease in host families' houses. Many community members took meal times as a chance to learn visitors' language:

During the meal time I would pick up a piece of cucumber and talk to visitor: It is “dua chuột” in Vietnamese, what is it in English? Or show them a banana and ask: Is it a banana? (Ms. Kim)

I tried to ask about different kinds of foods in English when I shared meals with visitors. Many visitors also wanted to learn Vietnamese and I taught them. They often did not say the tone correctly, so I helped them to correct it and it was fun. (Ms. Nga)

Even though community members faced challenges in learning new knowledge and skills, they had their own goals and motivations to keep trying to learn. Community members actively searched and reached out for various sources of assistance in order to learn and practice the new skills and knowledge that they acquired in the capacity building program. I recorded similar observations on how local people reached out for various forms of assistance in order to

improve their computer and English skills. While I was conducting my field work, I was asked by local people to show them how to set up an email account or quite often I was asked to teach English vocabulary for different kinds of food and basic conversation.

Community members agreed that the capacity building program provided them with a good foundation for CBET; however, how they learned the most was through their actual hosting practices in the CBET project. The next section focuses on how community members learned from doing their ecotourism jobs.

5.2 Informal Learning

The learning processes took place not only in the local capacity building program but also through the implementation of the CBET project. This section describes the learning processes of community members including learning on the job and learning through exchanging knowledge and experience with other CBET colleagues.

5.2.1 Learning Leadership, Hosting and Guiding on the Job

Learning on the job was an important learning process that gave community members an opportunity to obtain hands-on experience. The process of implementing ecotourism jobs provided local CBET Cooperative's leaders, host families and tour guides an incentive to learn more and become more knowledgeable and experienced in doing CBET. As this experience accumulated, it helped them to better fulfill their ecotourism jobs.

5.2.1.1 Leadership

Leaders of the CBET Cooperative played a critical role in the development of the Giao Xuan CBET initiative. The CBET Cooperative's management board was responsible for managing general activities in the Cooperative, distributing visitors to host families, assigning tour guides to eco-tours, planning the CBET development, and collaborating with outside tourism agencies on behalf of the CBET participants. According to managing board members, leading a group of community members to develop a new livelihood was not an easy task. As Mr. Kha - one of the CBET Cooperative's management board members commented, “learning to be a leader is an ongoing learning process.” Board members shared their learning processes as leaders and challenges that they faced in their positions, and also showed how they handled difficulties when leading the Giao Xuan CBET Cooperative.

The management board members brought different life experiences to their work as leaders in CBET. Ms. Kim used to work as head of the Giao Xuan Women's Association. Even though the nature of her job in the Giao Xuan CBET Cooperative was different from her former position, she found that her previous working experience helped her with her role in CBET. For example, working as head of the local Women's Association required good promoting skills for gender equality in the commune. This experience helped her with promoting local environmental conservation and the advantages of developing CBET as a sustainable livelihood.

Even though Ms. Kim had experience working as a leader, she claimed that being a leader in the CBET Cooperative had its own challenges. She had to make sure fairness was ensured among all the participants – which was sometimes impossible. She gave the example of distributing visitors to host families. Visitors often times wanted to live in the centre of the

commune. As a result, host families located far from the commune centre often had fewer visitors. This made the equal distribution of visitors to host families very difficult. Ms. Kim also needed to negotiate with outside tourism agencies regarding the distribution of profits, of which she had no previous experience. Ms. Kim discussed the challenges that she faced while she was working as a leader of the Giao Xuan CBET Cooperative:

It is difficult. CBET has a direct financial impact on people, so it is more complicated. You need to ensure the fairness among all the CBET participants, and sometimes it is impossible. It is not because of you as a leader, but because of other objective reasons. However, the most important thing when work as a leader is you need assistance and support from other community members.

Mr. Kha, who previously did not have leadership experience, believed that at present he is on track in terms of leading the CBET Cooperative, but he admitted to making many mistakes at the beginning. However, he was not discouraged by such mistakes and learned much from them. For example, when Mr. Kha was first voted in as a leader of the CBET Cooperative, he wanted to prove to local people that he could perform well. So, immediately, he decided to make some changes to try to improve ecotourism services. He expanded the number of host families in order to meet the demand of an increase in visitors. However, his decision was strongly opposed by those host families who had participated in the CBET project since its inception. The number of visitors coming to the village was inconsistent. Increasing the number of host families also meant that the current host families would host fewer visitors. His decision directly affected the income of the original CBET participants. Mr. Kha admitted:

It was a mistake and I recognized that as a leader, I need to listen to other community members, understand them, and see them as my left hand so that they can trust and support me. Unity among participants is the most essential thing for the success of the communal work.

Mr. Kha constantly related his life experiences (when he worked away from his village)

to what he is currently doing as a leader. He considered his experience in dealing with life's difficulties and challenges during his youth as a good foundation for himself for cases where “no books can teach you.” Mr. Kha greatly valued what he learned from his former boss in a private beer company and saw his boss as a role model:

I admire the way he (my boss) lives. He earned money from his hard work and effort. He has a similar family background to mine. He was born and raised in a very poor family. He became a successful man from his “empty hands.” But the most important thing is even when he is already very successful and rich, he treats his employees with fairness and kindness. I often reflect on what he did and apply it to my own job as a leader in the CBET Cooperative. (Mr. Kha)

Mr. Kha treasured the skills and knowledge that he obtained from participating in the CBET project. Conflicts among community members taught him to listen to other people's views, find solutions in the root causes of problems, and think thoroughly before making any decisions. From study tours to other provinces, he learned about the failures of other CBET projects. He also opened his mind to new viewpoints and ideas from visitors. Visitors to the village often went to Mr. Kha's Ecolife cafe located at his house. Mr. Kha shared how he valued the opportunity to meet with visitors and learn from them:

I like talking to visitors. I learned a lot from them. I shared with them about my life and they shared theirs with me. Many educated, successful people came here and we could learn from them. Poor countryside people like me did not have a lot of opportunities to approach new things, so it is a unique opportunity. Knowing their success could be a great motivation for people like me to keep trying until we achieve our goal in life.

Mr. Kha's morning routine is to wake up very early when all his family members are still asleep, make a cup of coffee, relax, and think. He calls this time of day “his own time and space” where he can reflect on what he has done and plan on things to do in the future.

Linh: So, what do you usually do during this time?

Mr. Kha: Think about what I have done, what mistakes I have made, what should I do differently and better...

Linh: You mean, think about general things?

Mr. Kha: General things, but mostly about the CBET stuff. You know, doing CBET is the main work in my life now.

Linh: So, what did you learn from your “own” time?

Mr. Kha: Among all the things that I have done with CBET, I might have done well, I might have made mistakes, but I learned lessons from such mistakes, avoided those mistakes and applied what I thought is good to the work that I am doing.

Reflecting on experience and coping with mistakes and challenges seemed to be critical to Mr. Kha's learning process as a leader. He kept telling me how he has changed from making mistakes since he worked as a leader of the CBET project. For example, he used to react immediately if any local people disagreed with him. But gradually, he learned how to control himself, step back, and try to understand other people's reactions first before responding to them. He also emphasized the importance of embracing mistakes and failure because “if everything is good, everything runs smoothly, then you cannot see the bad parts and difficulties.”

5.2.1.2 Hosting

When hosting visitors in their community, community members' ways of life required adaptation and change. One of the changes required of community members in hosting visitors was learning to adapt to a new living situation with the presence of visitors in the house. Local houses were not traditionally designed to accommodate guests. A traditional house often includes a large main room which is used as a living area and sleeping area. There are no private bedrooms in the house, and people sleep in an open space in the living area. There is often enough space for three double-size beds in each house. Community members did not often have guests stay overnight because most of their relatives or friends lived either in the same commune or in nearby communes. Therefore, they were not familiar with guests staying at their house.

Figure 5.1

A Local Traditional House



Figure 5.2

Inside Layout of a Local Traditional House with an Open Space and No Private Bedrooms



Ms. Nga's husband worked at sea and only occasionally returned home. Her daughter studied in Hanoi. Therefore, most of the time only Ms. Nga and her son stayed at home. However, when visitors came at the same time as when her husband and her daughter were home, they sometimes had to move to a small storage room next to their kitchen and leave the main room for ecotourism visitors to sleep:

It is quite a change...Sometimes it could be really crowded (laugh), but you learn to adapt to it. I wish that I could have enough money to build an extra living area for hosting only visitors, separately from our family's living area. (Ms. Nga)

Our main livelihood is still wet rice cultivation, so often times we need to get up very early in the morning to work in the rice field. However, because we share our house with visitors, sometimes our routine could be off. We might have to stay up late because visitors often stay up very late, but still need to get up early the next day. It could be quite tiring, but you need to get used to it. (Mr. Long)

Community members sometimes had to be flexible regarding keeping their customs while hosting visitors. According to local customs (mostly in Buddhist families), if a strange couple sleeps in a local house, they are believed to bring bad luck to the host family. However, once community members joined the CBET project, they needed to be more open and flexible to this norm and also be comfortable letting couples sleep in their house. Some community members adapted to this new change, but some were not very comfortable about it even though they still hosted such visitors in their homes.

Several years ago, Ms. Kim hosted a British couple in her house. They had come to Vietnam for their honeymoon and stayed at Giao Xuan to teach English for local people for a few months. Ms. Kim asked, "How could you let a couple who came here for their honeymoon sleep separately? It is unreasonable." According to Ms. Kim, "Once you provide services to visitors, you need to be flexible and comfortable with certain changes." Likewise, some host

families even created a more private space by hanging a big curtain in front of one of the beds in their house and saved this particular bed for couples.

Figure 5.3

A Bed with a Curtain to Create a More Private Space for Visitors



In some cases, community members needed to learn to accept visitors' “unfamiliar” behaviours or habits. Some community members were concerned over the affectionate expression between male and female visitors in public. Ms. Lan commented on this issue:

Foreign visitors seem to be very comfortable in expressing their affection in public. Sometimes they kissed and hugged each other in front of other people. We don't do it here. At the beginning, we were concerned and worried that our children may learn such

things, but we also need to respect them because they are guests and have their own culture.

Ms. Kim also recounted her similar experience. She told a story of a group of foreign female young visitors who showered in the rain in their underwear in her front yard. She spoke of this event:

All of them were just in their underwear, ran to the yard, and showered in the rain. They laughed and screamed excitedly. It was unfamiliar behaviour to us. I told the guide who was also the translator of the group to tell them that they might get a cold if they showered in the rain for a long time. I needed to say it in a subtle way because they are guests. But, in fact, I was worried that if other people in the commune happened to see them in that situation, they might find it weird.

Learning to adopt new household hygiene practices and provide amenities was another part of community members' learning to change. Before the CBET project started, not a single host family had a flush toilet. Only a few families had pit squatting style toilets with shallow holes in the ground. The lack of toilets in the commune was explained by community members as due to poor living conditions in the past, poor hygiene awareness in rural areas, and human and animal excrement used as a source of fertilizer. According to community members, the pit squatting toilets that they had before were very dirty and produced really bad odours. Even then there were few families that had money to build a pit squatting toilet. Since joining the CBET project, some families have had a chance to renovate their house and install flush toilets. Switching from using squat toilets to flush toilets was a big change for many community members. Some community members noted that it took them a while to get used to using flush toilets. At the beginning, some very old people did not like the seated posture on these toilets, and as a result they sometimes still urinated and defecated outdoors. However, after becoming acquainted with flush toilets, community members saw the benefits of using them and embraced

the change. Many community members commented that they found it more convenient, cleaner, and safer healthwise to use flush toilets.

Community members also learned to keep their living environment clean so that they could host visitors in their houses. Every household needed to have garbage bins. Community members had to sweep their houses often and keep household utensils organized. They also needed to make sure that there were no insects (e.g., cockroaches) in their houses and to clean up hairs in their bathrooms, as evident in the following quotes:

I used to sweep the floor once a week only. However, since I hosted visitors at my house, I sweep it more often. When you host visitors at your house, you need to keep things clean. (Ms. Tam)

If it's just my family, it's not that important to keep our ceiling clean from spider webs all the time. But since we hosted visitors at our house, we needed to pay attention to such details around the house. We have gotten used to such things (spider webs on the ceiling) and find them okay, but many visitors don't like them. Generally, things need to be clean and tidy. (Ms. Kim)

We need to pay more attention to many things in terms of keeping our house clean and organized. In the past, we did not have the habit of keeping household utensils organized, but now we do. For example, where to put the cooking knives after using them. Or if visitors ask for something like a pair of slippers, you need to know right away where they are. (Mr. Long)

When I was staying at local host family houses, I noticed that even though their living conditions were still poor, host families tried to keep things in their houses organized, clean, and tidy. It was more noticeable when comparing houses of local people who participated in the CBET project and houses of those who did not participate in the CBET project.

Community members also recounted how they needed to pay more attention to their personal hygiene when hosting visitors. According to some community members, because of their hard lives they did not in the past pay much attention to the clothes that they were wearing.

However, now they at least needed to put on clean and untorn clothes when hosting visitors. Ms. Thi affirmed: “Hair and clothes need to be neat. Even small things like fingernails need to be cut and kept clean.”

Hygiene and food safety was another aspect that community members needed to learn about and change. Community members had to pay attention to the freshness of food that they served visitors. They also had to be aware of many new hygiene requirements such as using food preparation gloves when mixing certain foods (e.g., salad), soaking vegetables and fruits in salt water, covering food with plastic wrap, and cleaning the kitchen every time after cooking. These hygiene practices were new to many community members; before the CBET project, they hardly did such practices. Community members found these practices were time-consuming but necessary:

Even though it might be tedious to keep up with all these hygiene practices, we needed to follow them for the sake of visitors' safety. We even need to be extra careful in preparing food for visitors, even more than for our own family, because if anything happens to them, it is our responsibility. (Mr. Long)

If you want visitors to be happy and come back, their safety is the critical thing. You don't want visitors to have stomach illnesses because of the food you serve them. So even though you did not do such hygiene practices before, now you need to follow them. (Ms. Nga)

Local host families had many opportunities to interact with visitors, but it was hosting visitors at their houses that brought them the most practical experience and knowledge. Community members asserted, for example, that cooking class provided them with basic cooking skills and knowledge on new dishes. However, making a decision on what dishes to cook for visitors was an experiential learning process facilitated by actually hosting visitors. Often times, community members asked visitors for their feedback on the food that they served. From visitors'

feedback, community members tried to adjust and improve their cooking skills. However, community members also noticed that:

Sometimes visitors do not tell you directly what they think about food that we serve them (especially something that they don't like), but we need to observe and sense it. If you cook something and they eat a lot, it means that they like it. If they don't eat much, we need to find the way to adjust it or change to other dishes. Cooking our traditional Vietnamese dishes (is fine,) but we need to know some particular things that Western visitors don't like to eat like fatty meat or meaty bones. Such things can only be learned through hosting visitors. (Ms. Kim)

Ms. Nga echoed this experience:

The actual hosting experience taught me how to cook and what to cook for different groups of visitors. It is easier to host Vietnamese visitors because at least we shared similar tastes. It took me a while to figure out what kind of food Western visitors like. From my experience, they don't like fatty meat, but they do like deep fried dishes.

Part of community members' learning process was learning to make their own judgements on what knowledge was important for the implementation of CBET. Because food is an important aspect of hosting visitors, community members seized every opportunity to learn more about cooking, practicing what they learned from cooking classes, watching shows on television, questioning visitors, and reading all the cookbooks they could get their hands on. They needed to decide what foods would be the most appropriate to serve visitors considering particular groups of visitors' taste (Western or Vietnamese) as well as the community members' budget, and availability of time and local ingredients. Community members commented that they were taught to prepare many fancy dishes and ways to display food in cooking classes. However, Ms. Nga noted that community members' simple eating habits as well as time constraints and limited budget made it difficult for them to keep up with new dishes, new ways of displaying food, and restaurant-style table setting for guests. But more importantly, their experience from hosting visitors taught them that most visitors seemed to enjoy the traditional local food. Mr. Kha

shared the reason why he often chose local dishes to serve visitors instead of dishes that he learned from cooking classes:

Visitors often come from urban areas. They have already eaten all kinds of fancy dishes in cities. If you try to cook the same fancy dishes for them, it would be nothing special, even boring. We try to keep our local dishes and introduce them to visitors as a way of introducing our local culture. In fact, many of them (visitors) liked local food.

Ms. San sometimes tried new recipes that she obtained from the Internet. However, she found that not all such recipes turned out well. She relied on her own sense of taste to determine which recipes to serve to visitors. Mr. Long also shared a similar experience:

We have our own recipe for roasted chickens. From cooking classes or on TV we learned other ways to roast chickens, and visitors from different countries shared their own ways of doing it. So, we need to 'filter' the information and ways of cooking and choose the best way to do it. It takes time to try out different ways and choose the best one.

In addition to cooking classes, the local capacity building program provided community members with technical knowledge on accommodating visitors such as how to prepare bedrooms, bathrooms, table services skills, and basic conversations with visitors. Even though such technical knowledge was very important to community members, they faced many challenges in hosting visitors from different cultures. Community members' concrete experiences with hosting visitors helped them obtain more understanding of visitors' cultures and customs. As a result, they found more appropriate ways of interacting with visitors and hosting visitors in their houses.

There are certain aspects about visitors' customs and lifestyles that community members also learned as a result of observing visitors' attitude during homestays. For example, some community members mentioned that they were used to taking food from serving dishes and putting it directly into visitors' bowls instead of letting visitors serve themselves. According to

local custom, serving food to visitors in this way shows hospitality. However, community members learned that visitors, especially Western visitors, often did not seem to be comfortable about this. Therefore, community members stopped serving food to visitors and let them serve food for themselves:

Visitors' eating manners and cultures may be different. Also, there are certain local dishes that we think are delicious, but visitors may not like them. So, sometimes we tried to show our hospitality but it turned out to be impolite. All of these things we need to pay attention to and draw out some lessons from our experience in hosting visitors. (Mr. Gia)

Cultural misunderstandings between host families and visitors also became lessons for community members to learn more about other cultures and lifestyles. Ms. Nga, Mr. Gia, and Ms. Thanh shared stories of being misunderstood by visitors. Ms. Nga is a neat type of person and often tries to keep her house clean and tidy. She mentioned that if her kids did not put their dirty clothes in the right place, she would clean them up. When she started hosting visitors at her home, she tried to do the same thing with visitors. She remembered that one time a group of foreign visitors stayed at her house and they left their dirty clothes all over the floor. Ms. Nga picked them up and put them in a pile. However, later on she was informed by a translator of the group that the visitors were not happy about this. Ms. Nga was told she was being disrespectful of visitors' privacy. Since then she never touched anything that belonged to visitors even if they made a mess in her house. She only cleaned up after visitors had already left. Ms. Nga said: "It was kind of bothering me at the beginning because of the mess that visitors made, but then I got used to it and just learned to accept it."

Echoing this experience, Mr. Gia and his wife (Ms. Thanh) also pointed out that they learned the difference in interpreting the same behaviour between local host families and visitors (especially foreign visitors). He explained that sometimes their care and concern for visitors was

not appreciated but was instead considered disturbing or disrespectful of visitors' privacy. They recalled a time when a group of visitors held some kind of religious ceremony in their house, and Mr. Gia noticed that one of the visitors in the group sat on the floor to write something. Mr. Gia picked up a stool and gave it to the visitor because he thought that it might hurt her back to sit in that position. However, the visitor did not seem to be happy about it and shooed him away. In retrospect, Mr. Gia and his wife realized that a religious ceremony was something very holy to the people involved. Therefore, the visitor shooed him away because she misunderstood Mr. Gia's intention. Visitors might have felt uncomfortable because they thought that their privacy was not respected and they needed their own space. Mr. Gia thought that his actions might have been at an inappropriate time or context. After this incident, Mr. Gia and his wife reminded each other of being more careful when making a stop at visitors' rooms.

5.2.1.3 Guiding

Not only did host families find it very productive and useful to learn from actually hosting visitors, local guides also learned tremendously from the practical experience of tour guiding. The learning process of local guides was multifaceted in its nature. Even though their learning was mostly informal and incidental, resulting from their activities related to their guiding jobs, some of them did have a more purposeful and self-directed plan for learning new knowledge. They systematically took notes on visitors' questions and reached out for local wisdom and other sources of knowledge.

Local guides received a number of questions from visitors related to different aspects of their local community. Even though all current local guides have a rich knowledge of their

commune, sometimes they still could not immediately answer all visitors' questions. Local guides took unexpected questions from visitors as an incentive for them to improve their knowledge and learn more about their commune. They looked for different resources to enrich their knowledge including colleagues, elders, relatives, and other members in the commune.

In a conversation with me, Ms. Ha discussed her ways of enriching her knowledge:

Linh: What kind of questions from visitors did you not have the answers for?

Ms. Ha: It varies...some questions about a certain livelihood activities that I am not familiar with or questions about churches, you know...I am not Christian, so...

Linh: How did you find out about the answers for such questions?

Ms. Ha: It depends. I often take notes of questions that I do not have answers and after the tour, I would ask around for help.

Linh: Ask around? Such as...?

Ms. Ha: For example, if questions pertained to a particular livelihood activity, I asked local members who do such a livelihood activity and know about it. If questions were related to local history I would ask the Elders in my commune.

Linh: How about questions related to churches?

Ms. Ha: I just went to churches again after the tour and asked the priests. They are nice and want to share their knowledge.

Linh: So are there any other resources that you learned from?

Ms. Ha: Yes, I tried to take any chance I could to learn more about my community and improve my knowledge in general. I watched the knowledge channel on TV, I read magazines and newspapers, I learned from other tour guides in other provinces when we went on study tours as well. In general, every single chance that I had I would take and learn about something. They all became helpful for my job as a local guide.

When I was doing my fieldwork in Giao Xuan, Ms. Ha took me to many different Elders' houses. She also took me to hear many different stories from the caretakers of various temples in the village. From those trips we both learned about the history of those temples and their connection to the local community. Talking to Ms. Ha, I found she had a real thirst for knowledge. However, her habit of searching for information about her village's traditions and culture is no longer just for the sake of her own interest; it has now become more purposeful and is tied to her current job as a local guide.

Learning on the job was a critical learning process which created an opportunity for community members to apply the skills and knowledge that they learned from the community capacity building program to their actual jobs. More importantly, from implementing their ecotourism jobs, community members obtained a deeper understanding of the knowledge areas that they had learned in the capacity building program as well as learning new knowledge and skills that could help them to enrich their experience in doing CBET. Next I describe another process of learning that community members also greatly valued: learning from sharing and exchanging knowledge and experience with other CBET colleagues both within and outside the Giao Xuan community.

5.2.2 Learning from Exchanging Knowledge and Experience with Colleagues

Even though local CBET leaders, host families, and tour guides learned a lot individually on their jobs, they understood that in order to successfully manage and develop the CBET initiative in their local community, they needed to work together. Unless there were some issues that needed to be discussed immediately in an ad-hoc meeting, community members had regular meetings every three months. In these meetings, community members assessed all ecotourism activities in the past three months. They also exchanged feedback about their job experiences. For example, tour guides talked with their colleagues about unexpected problems on their tours and how they solved these problems. They also consulted each other about visitors' questions raised during the tours:

Visitors often ask many questions and if I cannot answer certain questions, I'll bring those questions to the meetings with other tour guides and together we try to find out the best answers for those questions. (Mr. Du)

Host families likewise shared their experiences in hosting visitors at each household - what kind of food visitors liked, what sorts of things made visitors happy or unhappy. They shared feedback from visitors and reminded each other of things that they needed to avoid when hosting visitors:

If I noticed that there were certain dishes that visitors who stayed with me really enjoyed then I would share this with the rest of the host families so that they could cook for future visitors...or anything that visitors didn't like I would also share with them. (Ms. Tam)

Community members were aware that if one host family did not do a good job hosting visitors, then it might influence the entire CBET business. Some community members thought CBET was more than just simply providing ecotourism services but it was the way to present their local and national identity to outsiders. Thus, during meetings, they were sure to remind each other of the collective responsibility for maintaining their shared principles and goals in hosting visitors:

We host visitors from different countries. We are representatives not only of Giao Xuan, but we are the face of Vietnam. So, we try to remind each other about this. We not only have to exchange experiences in hosting visitors and ways of making them comfortable and happy, but we also remind each other of protecting visitors' belongings to avoid loss. If visitors' belongings are lost, what would they think of us? We need to keep our reputation. It is about trust between visitors and host families and we need this trust. (Ms. Tam)

In addition to exchanging knowledge and experience with local CBET colleagues, Giao Xuan community members also had opportunities to learn from other communities on how to manage a CBET initiative. Community members joined study tours to Ban Ho and Thai Binh – two other CBET sites in the North. Before each study tour, community members had a meeting with MCD staff to discuss specific goals and activities for their visit.

In their study tours to other CBET sites, Giao Xuan community members stayed as

visitors and used all ecotourism services provided. Thus, they could observe firsthand how community members in other CBET sites operated their CBET initiatives. Moreover, they had official “experience exchange” meetings with local people at the Ban Ho and Thai Binh CBET sites during their study tours. Through these meetings, Giao Xuan community members talked to, shared experience with, and learned informally from local people's experience in other CBET sites. Importantly, after each visit, community members organized meetings and shared their experience and thoughts with other CBET members.

For example, after the study tour in Ban Ho, some of the Giao Xuan CBET core group members liked the household-based management approach in Ban Ho. This approach allowed visitors to choose any host families that they wanted to stay with during their trip. Meanwhile, the current management approach in Giao Xuan was to have the Management Board assign visitors to a host family, which some host families thought was unfair. Meetings were then held among the CBET core group members after the study tour in Ban Ho to discuss about the management approaches in Giao Xuan and Ban Ho. Some members wanted to replace the current management approach in Giao Xuan with the one in Ban Ho. However, after discussion, a majority of the CBET core group agreed that CBET in Giao Xuan was still at its early stage of development and the number of visitors coming to Giao Xuan was still very limited, thus the current management approach would be more appropriate.

Even though it is unclear which management plan would work better for the CBET initiative in Giao Xuan, community members showed that the learning experiences in study tours could help them learn from other people's experiences. This also showed that community members practiced democracy by voicing their perspectives and proposing a new practice that

they thought would work better. In addition, even if community members held opposing viewpoints on the CBET initiative and its management, the process of sharing still helped them learn collectively. They learned to listen to other people, and negotiate and compromise with each other about the best solution for their current conditions.

Giao Xuan community members also shared their knowledge of and experience in initiating a CBET project in local and national workshops on the development of CBET. For example, representatives of the CBET core group participated in the Coastal Community Ecotourism Introduction workshop in Hanoi. In this workshop, three model ecotourism tours from the Giao Xuan CBET project were introduced. Representatives of the CBET core group had a chance to discuss these three ecotourism tours and receive feedback from representatives of Hanoi based tourism companies and experts in CBET field.

People from other CBET sites both in the North and South also visited Giao Xuan commune, learned about the CBET model in Giao Xuan, and provided feedback to Giao Xuan community members. This provided a chance to exchange experiences in managing the CBET project, and helped community members boost their confidence in conducting CBET. Many community members expressed their pride in this:

Before CBET started, who would have ever thought that people from other places would come here and even would come here to learn from our experience. Some of them came from close-by communities, some others were from far away in the South. It made us feel so proud. (Ms. Nga)

Participating in the Giao Xuan CBET project, community members experienced various processes of learning. The processes of learning to develop and manage the CBET project is best described as planned, incidental, participatory, experiential, and social learning. In what follows, I present the outcomes of Giao Xuan community members' learning processes.

5.3 Learning Outcomes: Beyond Doing CBET

Community members' learning resulted in different outcomes for both their ecotourism jobs and other aspects of their life. Community members obtained needed ecotourism knowledge and skills to implement the CBET project. More importantly, these knowledge and skills have become very hands-on for community members in managing their family's finances as well as enhancing their ways of life. Different learning processes also helped community members enrich their knowledge of their own community, and obtain new knowledge about other cultures. Notably, the experience of doing CBET made community members become confident in their own knowledge and capacity.

5.3.1 Mastering Ecotourism Knowledge and Skills

In general, community members were successful in mastering basic knowledge and skills which helped them to implement the CBET project. When outside support of the CBET project ended in 2011, community members were able to continue providing ecotourism services to visitors (e.g., guiding, hosting, transporting). Local guides had mastered key principles of welcoming, guiding, and seeing off visitors. They also had a rich knowledge of their commune and local cultural codes and principles. My experience from the CBET tours that I joined showed that local guides appeared to be very articulate and became active and experienced in reacting to unexpected circumstances that occurred during the tours. Local host families demonstrated good basic cooking skills and could provide appetizing and nutritious meals to visitors. When I stayed with local host families, I sometimes joined them in preparing meals. I was surprised of their cooking skills and enjoyed the local food. They mastered and at least tried to apply key

principles of food safety and hygiene. However, their living conditions were still very poor (e.g., no clean tap water), therefore, hygiene standards could be different between local people and visitors. For example, some host families still wash dishes in a nearby pond. They also became experienced in arranging their houses to accommodate visitors, mastered customer care and hospitality skills.

Community members were also capable of managing and planning the ecotourism business, including pricing local products to sell to visitors, calculating business efficiency, budgeting ecotourism income and expenses to ensure that visitors were well hosted and that families could still make a profit. This situation has been made worse by economic conditions in Vietnam that have also increased the living cost in rural areas like Giao Xuan:

Living cost keeps increasing everyday: food, electricity, etc. We need to carefully budget the money that we spend on hosting visitors. We want to serve them well, cook delicious meals for them so that they can enjoy their stay, but we also need to ensure that after all expenses including money for food and money for paying tourism agencies/organizations that brought visitors to us, we could still obtain some money for our work and time. It is a challenge. (Ms. Kim)

Some community members even decided to sacrifice their short term benefits by accepting a lower profit from hosting visitors by making sure to buy high quality and nutritious food to cook for visitors despite the increase in market food prices. However, they were hoping that at this stage of the project it would be better for long-term development if they could make visitors satisfied with their trip, which may then mean they would return or introduce other people to the project.

In addition, community members were successful in cooperating with other stakeholders in the commune to run their ecotourism business. For example, they cooperated with the local authorities to ensure security for visitors. They were capable of convincing owners of local

traditional style houses or owners of different livelihood areas such as large-scale aquaculture farming, bonsai gardens, local fish sauce producing households, and rice wine producing households to allow visitors to visit. They also created a good relationship with Xuan Thuy National Park staff in order to take visitors to the Park.

Although community members mastered needed ecotourism knowledge and skills, their English and computer/Internet skills were still very poor. Even though all community members who participated in the CBET project had a chance to attend the workshop on computer skills, some situational barriers or other societal conditions prevented many of them from mastering the computer skills. These barriers included lack of money, time constraints, and lack of opportunity to practice or apply what was learned. Ms. Kim discussed these barriers:

Many community members attended a workshop on computers and the Internet, but not many of them could master skills and knowledge learned from the workshop. The reason was they either did not have enough money to afford a computer or they did not have chance/time to practice/use it. I was lucky to be provided with an old computer by MCD. In addition, my position as an administrative staff in the Commune People's Committee and a liaison person for MCD and other community members in the CBET project provided me more opportunities to work on a computer. Thus, I had a chance to practice and improve my computer skills.

This fact was confirmed by other community members. For example, Ms. Ha said:

I really wanted to practice how to use a computer so that I could obtain and update more information from the Internet or keep in touch with visitors via email. However, I did not own a computer so I could not have a chance to practice my computer skills and I just forgot what I learned.

Similarly, other community members also confirmed that because the workshop was too short and they did not have a computer to practice, they now felt computer illiterate. Among all 14 community members of the Giao Xuan CBET core group interviewed, only Ms. Kim and Mr. Kha and his wife (the owner of Ecolife Cafe) own a computer. In fact, their computers were

provided by MCD because their positions in the CBET project require a computer. They must use it to keep in touch with MCD staff and other tourism agencies, and have it available for visitors to use when they are at the Ecolife Cafe – which doubles as the local “Centre for Tourism Information and Community Climate Change Adaptation.” This shows that social class and social status could be a barrier for community members' learning. Those community members who did not have enough money to buy a computer to practice their computer skills were left behind in the process of learning new knowledge and skills.

At present, Giao Xuan community members are still dependent on outside tourism agencies to do much of the marketing for the CBET initiative, partly due to local people's lack of sufficient computer skills. In the first few years after the Giao Xuan CBET project started, a website about the project was designed and maintained by a volunteer organization in Vietnam. However, since this volunteer organization no longer sends volunteers to Giao Xuan, this website has been closed. Therefore, it made it very difficult for people who are interested in visiting Giao Xuan to obtain detailed information on the CBET site. Visitors interested in obtaining information on visiting Giao Xuan directly from local people could not do so without using a telephone. Only one or two of the CBET core group's members had an email address but they hardly used it.

Regarding English skills, most of the CBET core group's members were not able to hold simple conversations in English with foreign visitors. There was always a tour guide from an outside Tourism agency who accompanied foreign visitors to Giao Xuan and worked as an interpreter. However, a host family usually could only accommodate 3 to 5 visitors, therefore, if a large group of visitors came to Giao Xuan, the tour guide usually stayed with one small group

in one host family, and thus could not interpret for other members of the group. This language barrier made it difficult for foreign visitors and host families to interact with and understand each other, which then made the homestay's initial objective of promoting cross-cultural understanding much less possible.

5.3.2 Applying Ecotourism Knowledge and Skills in Daily Life

Knowledge, skills, and experience that community members obtained from participating in the CBET project was also applied to community members' daily life. Community members applied their ecotourism business budgeting and planning skills in managing their family's finance. Many of them now have a budgeting notebook for the income and expenses of their family, which has helped them to better control their family's financial situation. Some local households even reported saving money for unexpected circumstances – an occurrence which was rare in the past.

In some cases, the knowledge of management and planning obtained from participating in the CBET project even helped local people make better decisions on their family's financial investments. For example, Ms. Lan successfully advised her husband on his business. Her husband wanted to invest money with his friends to buy a machine to take up sand in the sea to help set up clam farming areas. He wanted to invest money in this business so that he could be hired by clam farming families to take up sand. After calculating and pointing out how much her husband could earn per month, how much he would have to pay for the machine and maintenance, and what might be unexpected circumstances, Ms. Lan convinced him not to invest money in starting this business. Later, some local people who invested money in setting up clam

farming areas like Ms. Lan's husband ended up losing their money for many unexpected reasons. In this case, with her new knowledge, Ms. Lan helped to avoid financial risk for her family.

Community members learned to change their living habits, including keeping their houses clean and applying new hygiene practices in cooking for the sake of hosting visitors and making visitors comfortable, satisfied, and safe. The process of changing was initially a simple change in behaviour. However, this simple change in behaviour gradually turned into a deeper understanding of how such changes could benefit their own health and living conditions.

Consequently, these new habits at last became part of their life:

The change of keeping everything in your house clean has slowly absorbed into me and my wife and we don't even notice it. It is now no longer only for the purpose of hosting visitors but we are aware that it is also good for the health of all people in the family. (Mr. Kha)

You kept your house clean to host visitors and then you got used to living in a tidy and clean environment. Sweeping the floor has become a habit and a routine now. I sweep the floor every other day. Before I only swept it when I saw it was dirty, but now, even when it doesn't look dirty, I still sweep it. I feel uncomfortable to live in an untidy place now. (Ms. Kim)

Ms. Kim also shared that she has even influenced her neighbours in the habit of keeping their house clean. Whenever she came over to her neighbours' houses, she often encouraged them to clean up their house. She even encouraged children to help their parents to clean up. She recounted how she made children of her neighbours to clean up their house:

I came over and saw their front yard was dirty. I asked the children to clean it up and at the same time I just started sweeping it...With children, we need to teach them by doing things ourselves, words are not enough.

Regarding the application of hygiene practices, many community members came to realize that their change in hygiene practices was not only good for visitors but was also good for their own family's health. They applied such hygiene practices in their daily life and even tried to

encourage other people to follow those hygiene practices: “We don't have visitors to host everyday, but we do cook for our family everyday. So, such practical knowledge of food safety and hygiene has become very helpful for ourselves.” (Ms. Nga) This realization was echoed by Ms. Tam:

It might be difficult for some people to follow all those hygiene practices all the time in their daily life, but I saw the immediate benefit of applying them. I have been applying those hygiene practices to preparing and cooking food for my family. In a family gathering, some of my relatives (who do not participate in the CBET project) even noticed such changes in my cooking practices. I then instructed and encouraged them to do the same things. It just needs a bit more time to do such practices, but for the sake of your health, it is all worth it. (Ms. Tam)

5.3.3 Becoming Lifelong Learners

For community members, jobs in the CBET project motivated them to become active lifelong learners. Both local guides and host families had to keep gaining knowledge of their commune's historical, cultural, and socio-economical context in order to answer questions of visitors. Even though pre-designed tours were put into practice and introduced visitors to different local destinations, local guides constantly searched for different possible historical and cultural spots in the commune and other neighbouring communes that they thought would be interesting for visitors to see and learn about their village. In order to come to the final decision on what would be included in the tour, where to take visitors to, and what to say to visitors about different locations and activities of Giao Xuan and Giao Xuan's people, local guides had to systematically compare the characteristics of all possible tour destinations.

Most local host families lived on wet rice cultivating before participating in the CBET project and did not have thorough knowledge about other local livelihood activities. Since they began hosting visitors, they learned more about other local livelihood activities from their fellow

villagers and became much more knowledgeable of other local livelihood activities. Mr. Gia provided the reasons why he needed to learn more about other local livelihood activities besides his family's main subsistence:

In the past, I usually just paid attention to my work (wet rice cultivation). I know generally about other local existing livelihood activities, but did not have thorough knowledge on them. Since I hosted visitors, I received many questions from visitors about everything related to our village and people. Thus, I started having to pay closer attention to other livelihood activities and now I know much more about them.

In order to obtain more knowledge on different aspects of the local community, local tour guides and host families had to build a closer relationship with fellow villagers, which helped to promote a stronger sense of solidarity among local people in Giao Xuan. For example, the CBET core group members often asked local Elders for consultation on knowledge of local history, customs, and traditions. They also learned from large-scale aquaculture farming owners, bonsai garden owners, the local fish sauce producing household owners, and rice wine producing households about other local livelihood activities. In some cases, local Buddhist and Christian community members developed more understanding and tolerance of the religion of the other group within the community when they tried to obtain more knowledge of Buddhism and Christianity to answer visitors' questions about local religions.

Hosting visitors also helped community members gain new knowledge of other international cultures and enrich local people's spiritual and cultural life. Community members had both positive and negative experiences with visitors, but they all valued their opportunity to join the CBET project because it helped them to widen their outlook and open up to other cultures and values. As Mr. Kha said: "It is not just about money anymore, it is about a unique opportunity where local people can learn many things that no books can teach and no money can

buy.”

Similarly, Ms. Thanh compared hosting visitors from different places as going on a tour where she could meet foreign people in person, and witness their lifestyles and daily routine. Ms. Thanh recalled how Islamic visitors did their daily praying routine in a group before going to bed or how other groups of visitors from Japan did some spiritual activities that she had never seen before. Ms. Thanh shared her thoughts of her experience with other religions:

I am Christian and I obtained all of my knowledge about other religions from TV. But hosting visitors gave me a chance to witness how people from other religions do their ritual in person. It is interesting. It is very different, but I respect it.

5.3.4 Non-Financial Benefits from New Relationships

Community members greatly valued new relationships that they established with visitors. In some cases, the relationship between local people and visitors went beyond the relationship between host families and visitors. For example, after staying at Mr. Long's and Ms. Thi's house for 4 months, a volunteer from Australia wanted to be an “adopted son” of their family. After that the volunteer came back to visit his “adopted” parents several times, and brought his biological parents and close friends back to visit them. This volunteer even started a social enterprise which sent volunteers around the world to Vietnam.

Community members also showed me various souvenirs given to them by visitors which symbolically represent part of visitors' homeland cultures, such as kangaroo photo mugs from Australian visitors, paper fans from Japanese visitors, China tea pots, coins from different countries, and music CDs. Mr. Long showed me a set of 100 CDs of musical dance hits which were a gift from a European visitor. He exclaimed:

Young and old people are different. I am an old man now. I never danced or learned how

to dance before. But since I hosted visitors, I wanted to mingle with them. I joined them when they danced and sang. It was fun and I enjoyed it.

While in the field, I joined a group of Japanese students to visit Mr. Long's house and saw how Mr. Long greeted students in Japanese and how surprised and happy the students were when they were greeted in their mother tongue. They also started asking Mr. Long how to say hello in Vietnamese so that they could greet Mr. Long and his family. Mr. Long then turned on his dance hits CD and all of us started dancing together merrily. Being in such a moment, I can see no boundaries between host families and visitors, old and young people, and people from different cultures.

Local people valued the sincerity of visitors when receiving gifts. According to local people, the gifts were not expensive, but they showed visitors' care and feelings:

We hosted them (visitors) at our home and we tried to make them feel comfortable and happy. Most visitors were very nice and polite. When they were here, we were very happy, and when they left we missed them a lot. (Ms. Thi)

5.3.5 Increased Self-Confidence

It is notable that the knowledge, skills, and experience that community members obtained from doing CBET also made them discover themselves and their capacity, thus became more confident in all they were pursuing. Many community members became socially and professionally confident. For example, Ms. Ha, a local guide, recounted that she used to hesitate to participate in social activities because she was worried that she would not be able to do them or even if she could, she might do them badly. But after she joined the CBET project, participated in different workshops, obtained more knowledge and skills, she found herself more confident. She recalled her experience in one of the workshops that she participated in:

When I was a representative of Giao Xuan commune and gave a presentation in a workshop in Nam Dinh city, I was surprised about my self confidence. I found out that I have a rich knowledge of and understanding about my village.

Participating in many activities in CBET also made Ms. Ha recognize that she might have been able to obtain a higher level of education. She expressed her plan to enrich her knowledge for her job as a tour guide:

Having a chance to know different kinds of people, sometimes I feel regretful. I regret that my family did not have enough money for me to learn higher; I regret that my understanding was limited and nobody gave me any guidance about educational choices. Right now I have been trying to improve my knowledge in my own way. I have joined different training programs whenever I have a chance and I have accumulated my knowledge by learning from different people: local elders, colleagues, and visitors.

Even though many host families admitted that it took them some time to master hospitality skills and become familiar with having visitors living in their house, they became more confident and embraced their new roles as ecotourism service providers. Ms. Nga recounted her experience:

When one of my relatives told me about the CBET project in Giao Xuan and encouraged me to participate in the project, I hesitated to join the project. During my whole life I have just cultivated rice and sold rice at a retail store. I hardly had any guests, even my relatives in my house. I was even too shy to talk to neighbours sometimes. And when I heard about hosting strangers in my house, I was nervous. But once you started, you became more familiar with everything. And I think I know better with what I am doing now in terms of hosting visitors. More than that it brings you extra money, so why not? (laugh).

Mr. Long also shared his thought of his learning process to do CBET:

There is a saying: “Learning how to eat, learning how to talk, learning how to wrap, and learning how to unwrap things.” Learning how to do CBET is similar. You have to learn from the smallest things. But once you are determined to do something, you eventually can do it.

In a similar vein, Mr. Kha, a member of the Giao Xuan CBET Cooperative Managing Board, was surprised at his new leadership capacity and saw progress in his learning as a leader.

For all of his life, he had done various jobs like farmer, worker and small trader, but had always worked under other people's management. Now working as a leader, he found himself more confident and envisioned himself moving up in the Tourism field:

If you ask me to write your doctoral dissertation, I can't. But if I give you my current job, you will probably not be able to do it, either (laughed)...I want to change. Social status is very important to me. If you want to obtain a good social status, you need to do well. The community's success is your success. My hope is that I can lead this community to find our own ways, to stand on our own feet, and move forward. It is challenging, but up to now, I can tell that it is hopeful. (Mr. Kha)

5.4 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I described how community members learned the skills and knowledge needed to help them develop and manage the CBET project in their commune. Learning new knowledge and skills helped community members raise their awareness of the nature of CBET, and provided them with a basic foundation to manage and implement the CBET project. Community members learned in the local capacity building program, on the job, and from exchanging knowledge and experience with other CBET colleagues. Their learning was a creative, experiential, and ongoing process. They approached new knowledge and skills with various motivations, strategies and feelings that originated in different ways across different individuals. Community members' learning resulted in mastering basic knowledge and skills to provide ecotourism services. More importantly, these knowledge and skills were transferable and were applied in local people's life to enhance the quality of their lives. In addition, participating in the CBET project also provided opportunities for community members to create many new relationships which widened their outlook, enriched their knowledge, and enhanced their confidence.

In this CBET project, MCD created an extensive space for community members to actively get involved in the CBET project and work collaboratively with different stakeholders to initiate and implement the CBET initiative. Specifically, the “raising awareness of CBET possibilities” program brought an opportunity for local people to share their knowledge of local resources and issues. It also provided an opportunity for local people to voice their needs and participate in making decisions on what should be included in capacity building education. However, they believed there was room for improvement in curriculum content and pedagogy in the local capacity program to bring better benefits to all local participants in the CBET project.

Before participating in the CBET project, community members played various different roles in their families and community. They were farmers, small business traders, seasonal workers, and administrative staff. Once they participated in the CBET project, many of them took on and embraced new roles, including CBET service providers, CBET leaders, and lifelong learners. More importantly, with these new roles community members learned to act for change in their community. Community members' learning to act for change will be analyzed and reported in detail in the next two findings chapters, beginning with the next chapter.

CHAPTER 6: LEARNING TO PROTECT AND CONSERVE THE LOCAL ENVIRONMENT

Promoting local environmental protection and conservation was one of the CBET project's objectives in Giao Xuan. This chapter reports findings on: 1) Non-formal and informal environmental learning activities that took place in the Giao Xuan CBET project; 2) How these environmental learning activities took place; and 3) The impacts that these environmental learning activities had on local community members' environmental knowledge, attitudes, and actions.

The chapter is divided into three sections. In the first section, I present the different non-formal environmental education activities incorporated into the local capacity building program of the Giao Xuan CBET project. The first set of activities included workshops on the importance of wetland resources to the development of CBET and sustainable development in Giao Xuan. The second activity was a social exchange between Giao Xuan community members and local community members of another CBET site in Thai Binh province. This activity aimed to promote an exchange of knowledge and experience between community members of the two CBET sites in protecting and conserving the environment as well as developing CBET. The last activity was a competition that helped to raise Giao Xuan community members' understanding of the benefits of developing CBET as a new sustainable source of livelihood for Giao Xuan commune.

In the second section, I describe informal environmental learning activities that took place in the Giao Xuan CBET project, including an environmental awareness program and the establishment of community environmental learning spaces. These learning activities suggest that in addition to non-formal environmental learning activities in the local capacity building

program, MCD created opportunities for local community members to actively and experientially promote environmental activities in their commune. Moreover, community members also informally learned from visitors' environmental actions.

The last section of this chapter shows that both non-formal and informal environmental learning activities in the Giao Xuan CBET project had positive impacts on community members' environmental knowledge, attitudes, and actions. Through non-formal and informal environmental learning activities, community members had a chance to share their knowledge of local environmental resources. They could also obtain a deeper understanding of the importance of local wetland resources as well as feasible solutions for the sustainable development of their commune. However, certain learning activities that aimed to promote community members' environmental knowledge did not meet the project's initial objectives. But the findings did suggest that both non-formal and informal environmental learning activities had a positive influence on community members' attitudes towards the environment. Community members showed their concern and motivation in the protection and improvement of the local environment. Some individuals even switched from being natural resource “exploiters” to natural resource “protectors”, and showed a commitment to the promotion of local environmental conservation activities. Finally, as a result of changes in local community members' environmental knowledge and attitudes, they took action to rehabilitate the local environment and made changes in local environmental practices.

6.1. Non-Formal Learning: Raising Community Members' Environmental Knowledge

The objective of environmental education in the Giao Xuan CBET project was to raise

local community members' awareness of the importance of local wetland resources for the development of CBET and sustainable development of the local community. Various environmental non-formal learning activities were included in the local capacity building program. These included workshops on the importance of wetland resources for local development, a social exchange with another CBET site on environmental knowledge and experience, and a local competition on the understanding of wetland resources in the development of CBET.

6.1.1 Workshops on Local Wetland Resources

MCD's staff and consultants shared the view that local people know best about their surroundings; thus MCD's role was to support local people and empower them to protect the local environment by themselves. Some of the project's consultants emphasized the importance of identifying the purpose of conservation before introducing any awareness raising programs to local people. For example, MCD staff member Mr. Vinh believed in an “inseparable link” between nature and human beings. He commented: “Conservation should not be purely for conservation. Conservation does not mean 'don't touch.' It should be conservation for humanity, society, and human beings.” Thus, he underscored that educating local people in Giao Xuan about environmental conservation was not just about asking local people to stop cutting trees or stop using destructive fishing practices, or to move out of the core zone; more importantly, it was about helping local people recognize that they are part of nature and that they can take a critical role in managing their own natural resources responsibly.

MCD provided a variety of workshops at Giao Xuan commune to create awareness

among local community members about the importance of wetland biodiversity, its conservation, and the consequences of its destruction. Different possible alternative livelihood activities, including CBET, were introduced and discussed as strategies that could help to reduce pressure on local natural resources. Approximately 50 representatives of local social organizations such as the Women's Association, Farmers' Association, Youth's Association, and local secondary schools participated in these workshops and training programs (MCD, 2007b). A study tour to Xuan Thuy National Park was conducted in which local participants learned about key species of the Ramsar international wetland site - birds, mangroves and fish species - and discussed the importance of protecting these species. Furthermore, community members learned skills in leadership, management, and communication that would help them effectively deliver messages on environmental issues and conservation to other community members.

Workshops were conducted using group work, discussion, presentations, role playing, and games. These activities were undertaken with the support of visual aids such as PowerPoint presentations, flip charts, and videos. Through these activities, workshop facilitators encouraged community members to share environmental concerns and needs which had direct impacts on their life. Project staff and consultants also paid attention to creating a comfortable and joyful learning atmosphere for local people. One of the project consultants, Mr. Phuc, explained the importance of the learning atmosphere to the success of attracting local people to the environmental workshops:

They (local people) care about their main jobs like wet rice or shrimp cultivation. If you gather them in a room and lecture them about environmental protection, they would not yet care about it. In reality, at the beginning, we needed to 'buy' their participation (there was small token money for participants). But once local people participated, felt comfortable, and enjoyed the learning atmosphere, they shared with their fellow villagers about the activities in workshops (e.g., singing, playing games, having snacks) and

encouraged their fellow villagers to join.

Real life situations were also incorporated into learning activities in the workshops. For example, to practice their communication and leadership skills, community members were asked to share one difficult conflict or situation that occurred to them in the past and chose some situations to discuss in detail. After that, workshop participants were divided into different small groups in which they discussed possible solutions for each situation. Each group then shared their problems and solutions with the other groups and collectively chose the most contextually suitable and effective solutions. Ms. Lan, a workshop participant, commented on the pedagogy applied in the workshops:

MCD staff were young but they had a very effective way of teaching. In the workshops, real life stories of the commune's head, a local police, a local security man, or stories of various ordinary people like me were shared and discussed. We listened to, learned from stories/situations of each other, connected our own situations to other people's situations, and solutions came up during the discussion.

6.1.2 Exchanging Knowledge and Experience

Giao Xuan community members also had the chance to share their environmental knowledge and experience as well as learn from people in another CBET site through a social exchange. With financial support from MCD, a group of community members, including the CBET core group members, joined a social exchange in Nam Phu, Thai Binh province. This was an opportunity for Giao Xuan community members to learn and exchange their knowledge and experience in developing CBET as a new sustainable livelihood that helps promote local environmental conservation. In this social exchange, Giao Xuan and Nam Phu community members also exchanged their experiences in managing local natural resources. Giao Xuan

community members visited sustainable aquaculture models in Nam Phu. Moreover, local people of the two communes shared their knowledge of developing other non-fishery livelihoods for poorer local people who did not have access to aquaculture resources. Some examples include raising earthworms, gardening, making fertilizers using agriculture residues, and cultivating mushrooms. Ms. Ha narrated the trip with excitement:

It was a helpful and joyous trip. We had a chance to meet with local people and learned about different forms of local livelihoods. They (local people) are very friendly and generously shared their experience in doing economics. We also exchanged experience in doing CBET. I still keep in touch with some of them until now.

In addition, Ms. Lan found the trip was very practical in terms of networking and promoting the CBET initiative:

We (Giao Xuan and Thai Binh community members) both participate in doing CBET. It was a chance for us to get to know each other, support each other, promote CBET, and make it a more popular tourism model.

Local participants of both communes also joined in an art performance exchange to promote the development of CBET as a new sustainable livelihood. Thai Binh community members chose to perform traditional songs and dances through which they introduced their local natural resources and environmental conserving activities. Meanwhile, Giao Xuan community members composed and performed a drama that included different characters who had a very good sense of protecting the local environment, and others who irresponsibly destroyed local natural resources (e.g. cutting trees, polluting rivers). The drama ended with a scene of how those who harmed the environment were eventually convinced to stop their harmful actions. These people came to realize the importance of protecting the environment for developing CBET and for sustainable community development.

According to Ms. Kim, the CBET core group's members decided to choose drama as a

medium of promoting the initiation of CBET as a new form of local sustainable livelihood because it was more effective at delivering socio-environmental messages than through lectures. Ms. Kim reasoned that local people would find it more fun to watch a drama than to listen to lectures. Moreover, many local people's daily life activities could be integrated into dramas which made it easier for them to absorb and remember the educational messages.

In a similar vein, Ms. Lan described the joyfulness and effectiveness of using drama as a form of promoting CBET:

We could play different roles. It was fun. We wrote the script and practiced our roles. Each person thought of his/her own lines, so it was easy to remember. It was practical too because what we said reflected what we did in our real life. So, I think, drama was both entertaining and easier to carry our messages.

After the social exchange, community members who joined the social exchange shared their experience and knowledge of other CBET sites with other community members in the commune.

6.1.3 A Learning Competition

A competition on the understanding of wetland coastal resource conservation and CBET development in Giao Xuan was also integrated into the environmental awareness raising program. A wide range of local people including local women, fishermen, and farmers participated in this competition. Some community members gave a presentation on their understanding of wetland coastal resources. A group of community members performed songs that they composed based on the rhythms of their traditional opera (Cheo) with new lyrics describing their local history, natural resources, and livelihood activities. These songs were also performed in other local events for local people and visitors as a way of introducing the community.

MCD and the CBET core group also collaborated with local schools and included secondary students in the competition to raise environmental awareness. Secondary students attended a study tour in the core zone of Xuan Thuy National Park and learned about the biodiversity of the Park under the instruction of Xuan Thuy National Park staff. In this study tour, students had a chance to expand their knowledge of the local wetland ecosystem as well as to immerse themselves in nature and reflect on its vital role in local people's life. After this study tour, students submitted drawings, essays, poems and stories describing their knowledge of the local environment and the importance of protecting it. As one of the students wrote in her essay after the study tour:

I enjoyed the study tour very much. It not only gave me an opportunity to obtain more knowledge but also helped me to understand that people cannot live without nature and resources. Life will become meaningless if we destroy nature. So let's join me in protecting the National Park. (MCD, 2006a, p. 3)

MCD also created opportunities for community members to learn to promote environmental conservation activities in their commune. The process of learning to promote local environmental conservation was incorporated into many informal learning activities that were collaboratively conducted by MCD and local community members. In addition, local community members learned and changed greatly by reflecting on visitors' attitude and actions towards the environment. All of these informal learning activities in the Giao Xuan CBET project are presented in the following section.

6.2 Informal Learning

Local community members learned to promote local environmental conservation by undertaking activities that helped to improve knowledge, attitude and actions towards the

environment in their community. Specifically, with the support of MCD, local community members participated in initiating an environmental awareness program and set up community learning spaces in their commune.

6.2.1 Initiating an Environmental Awareness Program

To create an opportunity for community members to practice the knowledge and skills that they obtained through different non-formal learning activities, MCD helped community members to carry out an environmental awareness program in their commune entitled: “Mangrove Protection and Coastal Environmental Clean-up and Protection.” This program included three main segments: 1) Community Dialogues/Meetings; 2) Voice of Giao Xuan Commune; and 3) Community Coastal Clean-up.

Community dialogues conducted in this program including community meetings and informal home dialogue meetings. The local Women's Association was the key facilitator of these dialogues. In addition, the dialogues were also conducted with the support of Xuan Thuy National Park Management Board. In these community dialogues, community members shared their knowledge of and concerns about local socio-environmental issues. Some examples were dialogues about wetland resource protection and management, strategies to maintain and develop local traditional livelihoods in a sustainable way, and how to develop CBET as a new sustainable livelihood in the commune. Environmental issues discussed included improper local trash disposal practices, increasingly polluted water, and the issue of fertilizer and pesticide use for agriculture. All of these issues negatively affected local people's health. The dialogues reached diverse groups of local community members representing local social organizations including

Youth, Women, Aquaculture Farmers, Agriculture Farmers, and Veterans Associations (MCD, 2007).

In cooperation with MCD and the local authority, local community members also organized a program entitled “Voice of the Commune” which lasted almost a month. This program aimed to reach a large number of community members through local radio and the public announcement speakers system. Information on the local community dialogues were aired so that many community members who did not have a chance to join the community dialogues could be informed and updated. In addition, the local radio and public announcement speakers aired many essays and articles about the urgency of conserving the local environment written by local participants in the non-formal education programs provided by MCD. One article written by a community member and aired on the local radio, for example, called for action in conserving the local environment:

Looking back to 1970-1980, an average of five to seven storms came to destroy our coastal community every year. It is hard to forget the fear caused by the floods that have stolen thousands of innocent people's lives, destroyed houses and land, and hampered the efforts of local communities and authorities to make a better life for themselves. The poor and hungry families in the area are continuing evidence of this... As the weather changes we need to learn from what our communities had to bear in the past, and each of us has to take care and protect our mangroves as we protect our own children. Please be aware that each piece of firewood, each branch or ship stake that we take away from our mangrove may cause future floods and cause immeasurable damage. Let's act for our life and future. (MCD, 2006a, p. 4)

Another activity in the environmental awareness program was a “Community Coastal Clean-up.” On June 5, 2006, during World Environment Day, together with MCD, Giao Xuan community members held a Community Coastal Cleanup Day. Before the event took place, the CBET core group and representatives of local social associations attended a workshop facilitated by MCD about pollution and its impacts on the living environment. In order to prepare for the

Community Coastal Cleanup Day, meetings were held among representatives of different local social associations to discuss the event's objectives and activities. Representatives of the local social associations then informed their members about the objectives and activities of the event and encouraged their members to attend.

The Community Coastal Cleanup event attracted more than 100 community members. On the cleanup day, all participants were provided with a hat and a shirt with the slogan, “Keep the environment green, clean and beautiful.” In the opening ceremony, speeches on the importance of environmental conservation and World Environment Day were given by representatives of the local authority and MCD. After the ceremony, community members were divided into different groups and started collecting trash on the beach. According to community members, even though it was an extremely hot and sunny day, the atmosphere of the event was very exciting. People worked hard and had a good time talking to each other in a cheerful atmosphere. Community members shared their feelings:

The opening ceremony was so exciting. Hundreds of people including both young and old people participated in the event, from old veterans to very young school students, and even volunteers from outside of our commune. People complained about the huge amount of trash on the beach, but we were very happy to participate in this event. It was a memorable day to our community. (Ms. Tam)

At the end of the day, piles after piles of trash were loaded on the trucks and transported to the local landfill. I was kind of sad to see huge piles of trash on the beach. Many of us just wished that there had been less irresponsible people who threw trash everywhere. However, I thought it was a good start that some of us cared about our environment and wanted to keep our environment clean. Hopefully, there would be more and more people do it. (Ms. Ha)

It was the very first time community members had participated in cleaning up their beach together. Community members had a chance to talk and reflect together on the environmental condition of their commune. All the activities and results of the Community Coastal Cleanup

Day were then communicated to other community members who did not participate in the event. This event provided a chance for community members to informally and collectively learn to take care of their environment by taking concrete action. Since then, Giao Xuan community members have maintained this new tradition. Every year, on World Environment Day, the local community holds a Community Coastal Cleanup Day which is viewed as “a local festival” (Mr. Gia).

6.2.2 Community Learning Spaces

In cooperation with MCD, community members collectively set up new community learning spaces in their commune including the Ecolife Cafe and the Local Community Learning Centre. The Ecolife Cafe was set up as both a local coffee shop and the Centre for Tourism Information and Community Climate Change Adaptation. Meanwhile, the Local Community Centre was set up as a showroom of local CBET and environmental activities as well as a reading room for local people.

The Ecolife Cafe was built and inaugurated in June, 2010. Before the Ecolife Cafe was built, dialogues between representatives of MCD and the CBET core group were held. In these meetings, MCD and the CBET core group members discussed the design of the Ecolife Cafe and a location to build it. There were four households wanted to have the coffee shop to be built on their land. The CBET core group members voted and finally chose Mr. Kha's and Ms. Sam's house as the location to build the Ecolife Cafe.

The CBET core group members agreed that the design of the Ecolife Cafe should show some of the local traditional architecture. After many discussion sessions, the CBET core group

decided that the Ecolife Cafe should be built with a traditional thatched roof and surrounding walls made of bamboo. The initial plan was to build a small cafe due to the CBET project's limited budget. However, local community members wanted to build a larger cafe so that it could accommodate more people, and they decided to contribute some of their money to the budget.

Mr. Kha emphasized the importance of local people's contribution to the Ecolife Cafe:

It was great that we received some financial support from the project, but we could not depend totally on the project. We needed to take our initiative and be actively involved in this process. It was not just for me because the Ecolife Cafe was built on my house, but it was for the long-term benefit of the whole community. Looking back, I am happy about how things worked out. The cafe could not have been as spacious and beautiful as it is now if we had just completely depended on the project's funding and support.

Building the Ecolife Cafe was a collective process. Community members actively contributed their knowledge and labour. Community members recommended places to buy the best building supplies such as bamboo, wood, and thatching material. The site chosen to build the Ecolife Cafe was Mr. Kha's and Ms. Sam's garden, so local community members first had to clear the trees and bushes in the garden to make a foundation for the cafe. After that, local carpenters worked on the wooden poles, skilled thatchers worked on the thatched roof, and other people worked on the bamboo walls. Mr. Long, one of the skilled house builders in the commune, recounted his contribution to the construction of the Ecolife Cafe:

I built a thatched roof house for my own family. It lasted for several decades. So I have knowledge of and skills in building such kind of houses and I wanted to contribute my part to this collective work.

The cafe was constructed in the middle of summer. Community members recalled that sometimes the power was off and it was extremely hot, but they continued the work because they were all excited about a new place to receive visitors and have social gatherings with other local people in the commune:

MCD supported us both financially and psychologically. It was a great opportunity for us. Everybody was excited about the Ecolife Cafe and envisioned the day we would host visitors here. Thus, we found that we needed to be responsible for its construction and we were very proud of what we did. (Mr. Gia)

After months of construction, the Ecolife Cafe was completed. The cafe's internal and external designs were very traditional. A flower tree was shaped to form the cafe's gate and a bamboo sign "Ecolife Cafe" was put outside of the cafe. A line of betel trees led to the main area of the cafe. A small lily pond was situated in front of the main area. All the table and chairs in the cafe were made of bamboo as well. There was a small Karaoke room. One corner of the cafe was used to display local traditional products including rice, fish sauce, and medical herbs (*sophora flower* and *eugenia flower bud*). In another corner, there was a bookshelf with local tourism brochures and documents related to climate change and the environment. Knowledge of the environment and climate change was also incorporated into the menu of the Ecolife Cafe. The drinks in the menu were labelled with different natural disasters or phenomena, some of which could be affected by climate change or human impact on the environment, such as volcano coffee, glacier coffee, tsunami smoothies, earthquake mixed fruits, acid rain coconut juice, and oil spill strawberry juice. One of the CBET project's consultants explained about the names of drinks in the menu:

The best way to raise local people's awareness of the environment and climate change is incorporating the knowledge of the environment and climate change into local people's daily life. Introducing different environmental concepts in a menu of a local coffee shop is a much more effective way than lecturing local people about those concepts. When a cup of "volcano coffee" or a glass of "tsunami smoothies," was ordered, environmental concepts were indirectly introduced to local people. Gradually, these concepts might become familiar to them. If local people don't know them yet, they might be curious and ask about these concepts or might even look for more information on these concepts and other related issues. (Mr. Phuc)

Figure 6.1

The Local Ecolife Cafe



Figure 6.2

Inside of the Ecolife Cafe



In addition to building the Ecolife Cafe, a local community learning centre was also set up in Giao Xuan. Since the CBET project was implemented, MCD obtained great support from the local government. MCD was successful in convincing the local authority to agree to save one of the rooms in the local People Committee's building for CBET activities. This room has been used as the main office of the CBET project. It was also set up as a showroom of local CBET and environmental activities and a reading room for local people. Pictures of the CBET core group members in cooking classes, musical shows and at their houses hosting visitors were hung on the

wall. There were also pictures of workshops on CBET development, environmental conservation, and gender equality. A large part of the room was saved for an “Environmental Education” section in which there were many pictures and posters of local environmental conservation activities including Xuan Thuy National Park’s biodiversity, community members cleaning up the beach on World Environment Day, and volunteers and community members planting mangroves and collecting trash in the forest. Different environmental slogans were also hung on the wall such as: “Protecting birds for human beings' life and a beautiful nature”, “Let's keep Giao Xuan always clean and green” and “Protecting natural resources is protecting our own lives.” There were also many local children's drawings from a competition on environmental conservation. Next to the Environmental Education section was a Vietnamese map and a world map hung next to each other. A clay model of Xuan Thuy National Park was displayed in the middle of the room. Several bookcases held adult and children’s books sorted by subjects such as culture, history, tourism, cooking, novels, books and magazines related to the environment and wetland resources, and foreign books.

The Community Learning Centre was set up in collaboration between MCD and community members. Books were provided by MCD or by visitor donation. Community members were involved in setting up and decorating the room. Local children contributed their artwork on environmental conservation to display in the room. After the Community Learning Centre was set up, MCD, the CBET core group, and other local social associations conducted publicizing programs to introduce the centre to local people.

Figure 6.3

A Corner of the Community Learning Centre



Figure 6.4

Environmental Education Pictures and Posters in the Community Learning Centre



6.2.3 Learning from Visitors

Since the CBET project's inception, Giao Xuan has received thousands of visitors. Visitors came to Giao Xuan as tourists, to conduct research, and do volunteer work. “Responsible visitors” who were environmentally conscious and socially responsible were the target group of visitors whom MCD mainly wanted to attract for the Giao Xuan CBET project. These groups of visitors included researchers, scientists, and a great number of volunteer visitors

or *voluntourists*. In cooperation with some volunteering organizations such as Volunteer for Peace, Vietnam (VPV) and Solidarités Jeunesses Vietnam (SJ Vietnam), MCD has sent hundreds of voluntourists to Giao Xuan, which composes the main group of visitors to date.

Voluntourists who joined the CBET project in Giao Xuan had an opportunity to learn about local natural and cultural resources as well as local people and their lifestyles. During their stay, voluntourists also participated in various social and environmental activities. In doing so, voluntourists could exchange their knowledge and experience with local people, contributing to the sustainable development of Giao Xuan. Specific activities undertaken by voluntourists often depended on their capacity and length of stay in Giao Xuan. Long-term voluntourists often stayed for at least a month; meanwhile, short-term voluntourists usually stayed from a few days to two weeks.

Voluntourists often visited the families of victims of Agent Orange⁸. During their visits, voluntourists learned about difficulties these families had to cope with in their daily lives, and helped them with housework and livelihood activities. Long-term voluntourists usually had enough time to join some other local capacity building activities. For example, voluntourists could teach English to local people who participated in the CBET project and Giao Xuan secondary school students. Voluntourists also helped local guides and host families with skills regarding interacting with visitors from other countries or cultures. They then provided some detailed feedback on local hospitality and customer service during their stay at local host families. In addition, voluntourists assisted local people with the promotion of CBET by helping

⁸ “A powerful herbicide and defoliant containing trace amounts of dioxin, a toxic impurity suspected of causing serious health problems, including cancer and genetic damage, in some persons exposed to it and birth defects in their offspring: used by U.S. armed forces during the Vietnam War to defoliate jungles.” (Dictionary.reference.com, 2014).

them network with tourism agencies or by producing and distributing marketing materials on the Giao Xuan CBET model.

Participating in local environmental activities was very a popular choice for both short and long term voluntourists. These included promoting programs on sorting and managing household trash and trash in public areas. Voluntourists introduced local people to compost holes and assisted them in making compost holes in their gardens. Voluntourists also cleaned up trash on the beach, then sorted and brought unrecyclable trash to the local landfill. In addition, they participated in planting mangroves in the local forest, and trees and flowers along the commune's road and in the local secondary school and daycare centre. Voluntourists held informal meetings with local people, learned about the daily life of local people in a typical coastal village, and discussed climate change and community development activities.

Community members asserted that the environment was an issue that concerned visitors the most. Community members were taught many environmental practices by visitors. Mr. Long noted that: “they taught us many environmentally friendly practices. For example, how to sort solid waste and disposable waste, how to make a compost hole.” However, according to Ms. Kim, community members could not maintain all of these practices. For example, some community members thought that collecting organic food waste to put in a compost hole and maintaining a compost hole in their household's garden created more work for them. Community members acknowledged that hosting environmentally responsible visitors in their commune helped them to raise their awareness of environmental issues and reflect on their own attitude and actions toward the environment:

Visitors really cared about the environment. Visitors on my tours raised their concern immediately when they witnessed environmentally illegal practices like cutting trees.

Such attitudes of visitors made me think: 'why could visitors, who are not members of the community, be responsible for our commune and our people, but we (local people) could not do such things?' (Mr. Du)

Many community members also joined voluntourists to undertake environmental activities. They revealed reasons for their participation in such activities; for example, Mr. Kha reasoned that he joined most of activities that voluntourists did in the commune because he wanted to show his fellow villagers that “it is our own responsibility to protect our environment.” He hoped that through his actions he could encourage other people in his commune to participate in local environmental activities. Meanwhile, Mr. Gia articulated his motivation to participate in environmental activities with visitors:

They came here to do our own work. I felt obliged to join them. They collected trash, and other community members and I transferred trash to the local dump site. It was a way of encouraging and supporting what they were doing to help us and it also created a joyous atmosphere between local people and visitors.

In addition, Mr. Gia shared the story of how he became more concerned about the environment thanks to the influence of visitors' actions and attitude towards the local environment. In the past, Mr. Gia used to witness local people catching a large number of birds every day. Nowadays, he witnesses many outside people coming to the commune just to watch and learn about birds. At the beginning, Mr. Gia questioned why so many people were concerned about birds. However, since participating in the CBET project, and witnessing the concern of visitors and obtaining knowledge in environmental promoting programs from the national and local government, Mr. Gia saw the long term-benefit of protecting birds:

Many visitors came here just to watch birds. Some of them waited for months and months for migratory birds. They even came back several times. There were times when they came back and it was not the season for migrating birds to stop by Giao Xuan; visitors were so worried. They thought that we hunted all the birds. In general, visitors, especially foreign visitors really care about the environment and there must be reasons for it.

6.3 Impacts of Environmental Learning Activities

Various MCD-led and visitor-initiated activities took place in the Giao Xuan CBET project. These activities had certain impacts on the promotion of local environmental protection and conservation. In this section, I present how non-formal and informal environmental learning activities had an influence on local community members' knowledge, attitude, and actions towards the environment.

6.3.1 Impacts on Environmental Knowledge

Community members already have rich knowledge of the local environment; therefore, the workshops on local wetland resources actually provided local community members with an opportunity to share their knowledge and experience. Since many local community members were born and grew up in Giao Xuan, they had insight into both historical and socio-environmental issues. Old veterans remembered the local mangrove forest as a place for soldiers to hide from enemies. Community members claimed that the local mangrove forest saved a great number of soldiers during wartime. Thus, to many old community members, mangroves were part of their life and had a great historical value to the local community:

We know our mangrove forest well. When we were chased by French soldiers, we ran into the forest. French soldiers did not dare to chase after us inside the forest because they did not know their way in the forest, but we know our mangrove forest very well. We know all kind of places where we could hide from them. (Mr. Binh, a local veteran)

Many community members showed great knowledge of local species and other natural phenomena. Their knowledge was accumulated through many years of living in their commune. For example, Mr. Minh, a local guide, who used to be a well-known bird hunter, and was also known as “the King of birds”. He knew exactly what kind of birds come each season and where

birds go during specific times of day. He could easily identify any bird that flies by. Moreover, with the experience of working on the sea for most of his life, Mr. Minh also summarized the expected time for high and low tide in the local sea. He created a tide chart to help local fishermen on their trips to sea. Mr. Minh applied his knowledge of local natural phenomena on his job as a tour guide for mangrove, ocean, and bird watching tours. He discussed the important role of his local knowledge in his job as a tour guide:

Knowledge of the locality is very important for me in fulfilling my job as a local guide. For example, if a group of visitors comes around 4 pm and want to watch birds, I need to know where birds are around that time. Or I am aware of when the tide is low or high in the local area. For example, a riptide could come around noon which makes sea waves flow speedily seaward. If visitors are taken to the sea around this time, they might be swept further to the sea. Thus, I need to know the timeframe of tide in the local area. If I don't have such knowledge, it would be very dangerous for visitors.

Some dilemmas of socio-environmental issues in Giao Xuan were pointed out by community members. Community members revealed that many local people were aware of the danger of environmentally destructive practices such as cutting mangroves for fuel or shrimp and clam farming, overfishing, and fishing using dynamite. However, some local people still did such illegal practices because the income from them was much higher than from other livelihood activities such as wet rice cultivation. In addition, many poor local people did not have other choices for earning money to support their families. Mr. Minh articulated the relation between local people's economic situation and their treatment toward the environment:

Economics has a great impact on how people treat the environment. For example, if tomorrow I have no option other than cutting trees and selling them to earn money for supporting my family's living, then I'll have to do it. CBET has partly contributed to local people's incomes but it is not a big contribution and not for everybody in the commune.

Even though community members already had knowledge of their wetland resources, the environmental learning activities incorporated in the Giao Xuan CBET project helped them

obtain a better understanding of important values of wetland resources. Bird hunters acknowledged that they have knowledge of birds in their local area, but it was not until they joined the CBET project and other national and local environmental promoting programs that they were aware that residential and migrating birds in the mangrove forest were on the international list of endangered birds. They also came to realize that if they protected those birds, they could attract more visitors to Giao Xuan. Thus they could obtain more income from CBET.

Through environmental learning activities, community members could also learn about other people's views toward local environmental issues. They learned from both outside experts and their fellow villagers about how environmental issues should be solved and what sustainable solutions would be appropriate and feasible for their commune. Community members showed their awareness of protecting the environment for the development of the CBET project in their commune:

Visitors came here to visit the local mangrove forest, watch birds and learn about different local livelihood activities. If the mangrove forest is gone, then birds have no place to live, so we need to protect it. If we don't conserve such local resources how can we attract visitors to come and how can we earn money from CBET? (Ms. Ha)

Even though we own rich natural resources and we are very proud of them, we also need to understand that natural resources are not unlimited. Developing CBET depends much on the sustainability of local natural resources. If we keep exploiting them without nurturing them, one day we will have nothing left. (Ms. Tam)

Other activities incorporated in the Giao Xuan CBET project with the goal of promoting the protection and conservation of the local environment had certain positive impacts on community members' environmental knowledge. For example, Giao Xuan Secondary School teachers acknowledged that their students showed an interest in joining study tours and a competition on ecotourism development and wetland coastal resource conservation because these

activities provided students with practical knowledge and experience. According to Mr. Trung, a member of the Giao Xuan Secondary School Managing Board, students also learned other skills such as social skills of interacting and working with other people during their study tour/field trip.

However, teachers also commented on the small scope of study tours. So far only about 10% of students had a chance to join these tours (MCD organized one study tour for local students, other study tours were organized by Xuan Thuy National Park in other environmental awareness raising programs). Mr. Ninh, a teacher at Giao Xuan Secondary School, explained the necessity of having more study tours for local students to increase students' environmental knowledge: "There were already a lot of posters for promoting environmental conservation, we want more practical activities for students." Mr. Ninh and Mr. Trung also commented that the study tours in Xuan Thuy National Park mostly focused on learning about wetland plants and birds. However, according to them, many students who were born and grew up in Giao Xuan still lack knowledge of local aquatic species and their habitats. Therefore, these teachers suggested that a study tours promoting the understanding of aquatic species in the local coastal area would be valuable for local students, especially since these aquatic species have a direct impact on local people's life. Teachers also pointed out the limited knowledge of environmental staff who guided study tours as one of the factors that decreased the effectiveness of study tours. Mr. Ninh asserted: "Students are very curious and they like asking many questions, however, some students' questions about some plants and lives of animals were out of environmental staff's preparation and knowledge, so they could not answer many students' questions."

The Ecolife Cafe was originally set up to be both the local Centre for Tourism

Information and the Centre for Community Climate Change Adaptation. According to community members, since its inception, the Ecolife Cafe has received thousands of customers including both local people and visitors. Many dialogues about wetland resources and environmental conservation were held in the cafe. Different local and national workshops and conferences on climate change and community development also took place there. Local people had a chance to socialize and talk with both domestic and international visitors through these events, and therefore raise their awareness of climate change and environmental conservation.

However, in 2011 and 2012, when I conducted my fieldwork in Giao Xuan, I noticed some missing features of the Ecolife Cafe that were originally included in pictures and documents from 2010. For example, documents related to climate change and the environment as well as brochures for information related to CBET were not available at the Ecolife Cafe. The menus labelled with different concepts of natural disasters or phenomena which were initially designed as a source of environmental learning for local people were not available. Bringing up questions about these missing features, I was informed by local people that because of time and weather the documents were not in good shape and were put away. Also, the menus were made of bamboo and were no longer in good condition. Because of the mentioned missing features and from my observation during the field work, the current Ecolife Cafe did not appear to be a source of environmental learning for local people in its full meaning. It resembled a place to receive visitors and a regular local coffee shop or a social place for local people (mostly young people) to get together and relax in the evening.

One of the initial objectives of setting up the Community Learning Centre was to create a space for all community members to obtain access to an extra resource of knowledge, especially

knowledge on environmental conservation. However, local people typically did not have time to go to the Centre to read books. According to community members, their priority was to work and earn money. After working hard all day, they had no time for reading books and magazines. If any free time was available, they would rather watch TV than go to the Centre. Even local children, who did not have to work as hard as their parents, still did not go to the Centre. They preferred to go to Internet shops to chat with their friends or play games. As Ms. Tam said: “We need to work for a living and had no time for such kind of things. So, it is very difficult to change and form a new habit of reading books.”

Meanwhile, some local people who were interested in reading and wanted to obtain more knowledge from the Centre pointed out barriers that prevented them from accessing this extra source of knowledge. For example, the Centre is only open during the day and people are not allowed to bring books home. As Ms. Ha said: “With all the work that I had to take care of, I did not have time to stay there and read. I wish that I could bring books and magazines home.” Ms. Kim complained of the limited book selection and that the person who was in charge the commune's cultural division was also in charge of the key for the Centre, but was not paid enough to be there often:

Local people were asked about the kinds of reading materials that we wanted, but our request was not fulfilled. We need practical materials that are directly helpful for our livelihood activities rather than general documents on the environment. Moreover, books were kept in the bookcases with locked glass doors. Sometimes people came but nobody was there to unlock the doors for them. One time, two times, and three times, they lost their interest in going there (the Centre), so reading could not become a movement.

The Centre, therefore, has become more of a place for introducing visitors to the activities and environmental conservation that local people have been doing through CBET:

When visitors came, we took them to this centre so that they could have an idea of what

we have done to protect our environment and develop our CBET project, but other than that, I hardly see any local people going there to read books. (Ms. Tam)

6.3.2 Impacts on Environmental Attitudes

There were positive changes in community members' attitude towards the environment. However, both community members and MCD's staff noted that these changes were not just thanks to activities incorporated in the CBET project; but they were a result of a process accumulated through many other local and national environmental promoting programs.

Community members acknowledged that they realized the double benefits of protecting the environment. First, protecting the environment could help conserve local wetland resources which were key attractions to ecotourism visitors who would bring a new source of income to the commune. Secondly, it could also create a safer, cleaner, and more beautiful living environment for local people. Thus, many of them showed their concern for local environmental issues and expressed their motivation and commitment to the improvement of these issues:

There is a saying that 'hundreds of rivers run into the sea,' so everything people threw into rivers will end up into the sea. Polluted water is very harmful for our health. In addition, the view of floating trash in the rivers and the sea is not at all attractive. Especially since we hosted visitors, we heard many complaints from visitors about trash in our commune. It is embarrassing. For all these reasons, we recognized that we needed to take the trash issue seriously. (Ms. Tam)

According to local community members, besides environmental promoting programs, the implementation of environmental regulations in Giao Xuan also helped local people develop a more positive attitude towards environmental conservation.

They (environmental experts, governmental staff, and the CBET project's staff) talked a lot about the benefits of protecting environment. Local people have had a much better sense of protecting environment. In addition, illegal bird hunters would get fines, thus, hunting is hardly seen in the commune these days. Many bird hunters switched to doing other livelihood activities for a living. (Mr. Gia)

Witnessing visitors take environmental action was a critical incentive for community members to change their attitude towards the environment. Before the CBET project started, it was not common to have outside people in the commune. In addition, volunteering was not common anywhere in Vietnam until recently. Therefore, witnessing outside people coming into the village and doing volunteer work was a big change for many local people. To some extent, the work done by volunteers inspired an awakening sense of local people's responsibility for protecting the environment:

Outside people (voluntourists) initiated many environmental activities in our commune, thus there is no reason for us not to join these activities. It is necessary to understand that a polluted environment in our commune does not only harm us but could harm people who live in other places too. (Mr. Du)

Visitors came here and they even helped us with collecting garbage, planting trees, and teaching us how to protect and beautify our living environment. It is not their homeland, but they did it enthusiastically and responsibly. So, I questioned myself: if they can do it, why can't I? (Mr. Long)

Mr. Long has since actively joined different activities in protecting the environment in the commune such as collecting garbage and cleaning up the roads and beaches. He also encouraged his children and grandchildren to join those activities. Mr. Long even convinced other community members to contribute their own money and lobby for financial support from the local government in order to build new roads and bridges to make their village cleaner and more beautiful.

An assimilative learning process from reflecting on other people's attitude and actions towards the environment encouraged a radical shift in the career and ideology of Mr. Minh. Mr. Minh is a veteran who served eight years in the army and is an Agent Orange victim. Generations of Mr. Minh's family have lived in Giao Xuan and many of them lived on hunting and selling

birds. They were known locally as skilful bird hunters. His job as a bird hunter helped support his family for many years.

About 15 years ago, groups of researchers started coming to Giao Xuan to conduct research on birds. These researchers needed a local expert to help them with their research project, so Mr. Minh was invited to join them. In 2000, Mr. Minh was invited to work for Birdlife – a local organization which promotes the conservation of birds and their habitats. Helping to conduct research on birds was a critical step for Mr. Minh to expand his horizon of knowledge on bird protection and had a great impact on his decision to shift his job completely from a bird hunter to a bird protector. He recounted how he changed from a bird hunter to a bird protector:

In the past, one day I could use nets and catch hundreds of birds. But after many years joining different groups of scientists and researchers, especially since working for Birdlife, I had many opportunities to learn more about birds, their habitats, and how to protect them. I came to realize that many birds that I hunted in the past were on the list of endangered species like *platalea minor* and *calidris pygmeus*. I had hunted too many of them, but I did not even know that they were endangered birds. If we don't protect them now, certain kinds of birds will be extinct.

When the CBET project started in 2006, Mr. Minh worked for the CBET project as a local tour guide. Mr. Minh was a guard for the local mangrove forest and was responsible for bird watching and a local tour of the beach and mangrove forest. Mr. Minh claimed that many social, political, and economic factors have influenced his change as well as made him commit to his job as a bird protector. He said: “I am a member of the Communist Party, receiving benefits as a veteran. The government offers me a job, pays me to protect birds, so there are many influences.”

Another very important incentive that motivated Mr. Minh to keep working as a bird

protector was that he felt good about himself when his knowledge was acknowledged and became useful:

Joining the CBET project, I attended many workshops on natural resources and management, but even educators in such workshops respectfully called me their 'mentor'... Many groups of visitors joined the bird watching tour and found it very interesting that I am now working as a bird protector even though I was a skilful bird hunter in the past. Even though they were more educated than me (university students, scientists, researchers...), they listened to me attentively when I shared my knowledge of birds, they showed their interest and respect...That feeling was really rewarding.

Even though Mr. Minh's knowledge of local birds was very rich, Mr. Minh found motivation to learn more about birds to fulfill his job:

I am working as a tour guide and am known as a local bird expert. I felt that the information that I provide to visitors needs to be precise and helpful. Income from this tour guiding job is not much, but the most important thing is the passion for what you are doing. If you don't like your job, you cannot do it.

Mr. Minh thought that stopping bird hunting was the right thing to do for long-term environmental change. He found that what he is doing now as a tour guide for bird watching and mangrove forest tours to some extent created a space for him to fulfill his hobby and passion about birds. It gave him the opportunity to share his knowledge with other people and promote about bird protection.

6.3.3 Impacts on Environmental Actions

Combining all the existing knowledge of local socio-environmental issues, the understanding of their commune and people, and the participatory and experiential learning from MCD-lead and visitors-initiated activities, Giao Xuan community members have collectively taken action to make environmental changes in their commune. The action was evident in their efforts to rehabilitate and protect the local mangrove forest as well as make changes in local

environmental practices by forming and enforcing regulations on local household trash.

6.3.3.1 Rehabilitating and Protecting the Local Mangrove Forest

Before the CBET project was initiated by MCD, Giao Xuan was one of the buffer communes of Xuan Thuy National Park that participated in the Danish Red Cross Mangrove Forest Plantation Project from 1997 to 2002. During this time, Giao Xuan community members planted over 100 hectares of mangroves (MCD, 2006a). Carrying on this movement, MCD continued to focus on promoting local people's sense of rehabilitating and protecting the mangrove forest by incorporating various environmental programs into the CBET project. Together with volunteers, community members replanted mangrove trees and cleaned trash in the mangrove forest. There were still local individuals who thought that in order to promote the rehabilitation of the mangrove forest, NGOs like MCD should provide local people with money so that they could plant mangrove trees (similar to the Danish Red Cross Mangrove Forest Plantation Project). However, the majority of community members interviewed were conscious of the importance of rehabilitating and protecting the mangrove forest for the sake of their life and appreciated environmental activities initiated by MCD:

People (voluntourists) from everywhere came here and helped us to plant mangroves and collect trash in the mangrove forest. We learned and benefited a lot from such activities of the project. Visitors' actions made us recognize that we ourselves need to be responsible for protecting our mangrove forest. We are aware that the mangrove forest is a green lung of our community which helps us to have a cleaner and greener living environment. (Ms. Tam)

Under the Danish Red Cross Mangrove Forest Plantation Project, a group of eight local men were recruited as guards for the local mangrove forest. When the CBET project was initiated, this group of guards maintained their work, and one of the CBET core group members

had actually worked in the local mangrove forest guarding group. When the guarding group was formed, the group members attended workshops initiated by the local government about the importance of mangrove and wetland resources. They also learned about the rules of protecting the core zone of the National Park and communication skills in order to talk to violators. In the past, many of the local guards used to exploit the mangrove forest (cutting trees and hunting birds), but now they shifted to protecting it.

The guards took turns to patrol the forest on motorbikes, bikes, and sometimes on foot if necessary. Their responsibilities included preventing people from cutting mangroves, hunting birds, using destructive fishing practices, and constructing aquaculture farms in the core zone of the Park. The guard group members learned to confront, educate, and convince violators not to harm the environment. The guards' responsibility was mostly preventing people from violating the rules, but they did not have authority to fine or arrest violators. Therefore, local guards had to cooperate with the commune police who are actually in charge of enforcing the rules.

Even though local guards took turns to patrol the mangrove forest, they could not catch all violators because the guards could not constantly patrol the forest. The guards would therefore ask for assistance from local aquaculture farm watchers who work days and nights to catch violators. Mr. Minh acknowledged the important assistance of local ordinary people in protecting the mangrove forest:

We needed to cooperate with other local people. The clam watchers (who were hired to watch clam farms to prevent clam thieves at night) would call us whenever they noticed some violating actions. Most local people's sense of responsibility for protecting the mangrove forest has been greatly improved, so they also wanted to help us and they actually helped us out a lot. (Mr. Minh)

The guarding group faced many challenges when they were on duty. Even though rules

forbidding harmful actions in the core zone were already communicated to all local community members, sometimes violators still claimed that they did not know anything about such rules. Local guards highlighted that working in the community is not all about rules and regulations. Being too rigid about everything could cause conflicts among local people or even revenge from violators to guards on duty. Therefore, sometimes local guards needed to be flexible and “soft” enough in order to convince people to reflect on the long term benefit of protecting the environment and hopefully they would change themselves. Mr. Minh discussed the challenges in his job as a guard for the local mangrove forest:

This is a tough job (guarding). You can't always say that 'you are not allowed to do this and you are not allowed to do that' or 'stop cutting trees and exploiting the resources.' People won't simply listen to you and stop doing what they have been doing. Your words need to carry weight in order to have impact on others. You need to use your reputation and your actual actions to convince people not to harm the environment. Everybody here knows that I used to hunt an excessive number of birds in the past, but now I stopped doing it and switched to protecting birds. This helped my words to violators become more persuasive. (Mr. Minh)

6.3.3.2 Forming and Enforcing Regulations on Local Household Trash

In the past, local people in Giao Xuan commune did not have any programs or regulations on household trash. Local people often burned their trash and dumped the ash in the rivers or the sea. A large number of local people just threw their trash everywhere, with plastic bags and even dead animals commonly thrown directly into the river. The amount of trash in public places kept increasing, causing an unbearably polluted living environment. The trash issue was also a great concern for many visitors to Giao Xuan. According to the CBET core group members, MCD initiated the household trash collecting movement by providing each village in the commune with a trash cart. Unfortunately, the trash carts were too heavy for local people to

move. However, still facing a polluted living environment as well as being influenced by environmental activities facilitated by MCD and visitors' actions, community members decided to set up a local program on household trash.

Meetings were first held in different villages of the commune to obtain community members' opinions about solutions for the household trash issue. The consensus of all the villages was that there should be regulations on household trash and all households in the commune would have to conform to the regulations. Specific regulations were also discussed among community members. All the village heads then submitted the proposed regulations to the local People's Committee. After many meetings between the local authority and village heads, the program on household trash was approved.

In order to operationalize this program, community members recognized that it was essential to build a landfill in the commune. Together with heads of different villages, the CBET core group lobbied for funding from the commune's government to build a landfill. They also sought local people who could work as public trash collectors. Finally, in 2008, the program was officially implemented. In this community trash program, a compliance agreement for “Keeping the Environment Green, Clean and Beautiful” was issued with the following regulations: 1) Sort trash into four types: organic waste, recyclable waste, solid waste, and dead animal waste; 2) Manage trash in households by composting dead animal waste and other organic waste, selling recyclable waste, and burying or collecting solid waste to transport to the local landfill; 3) Do not throw dead animals into ponds, rivers, and other public places; 4) Do not throw trash and plastic bags into the sea; protect the coastal environment and resources for sustainable development; and 5) Do not cut trees and mangrove forests; encourage other local people to conform to the

regulations (Giao Xuan, 2008).

In addition, specific regulations on household trash collection were also set up including:

- 1) Every household has to put their trash in the trash bins;
- 2) Every household pays a monthly fee for trash to be collected. The fee is 3.000 VND (about 15 cents) for each person, but it does not exceed 15.000 VND (75 cents) for a household;
- 3) Public trash collectors pick up trash at every household twice a week (Monday and Friday) and transport it to the commune's landfill.

Even though the program was supported by the majority of local people (to date, over 80% of households voluntarily signed the compliance agreement), the CBET core group members highlighted many challenges in getting other community members more involved in this program. Ms. Nga commented on the difficulty in changing local people's habit of throwing trash in public places:

Changing a habit is not at all easy. You cannot go around and ask people to put trash in bins and not to throw away trash in public places or litter on the beach and rivers and expect that tomorrow they're going to change and do it. It takes time. (Ms. Nga)

Some resistance to the regulations also occurred. For example, Ms. Kim mentioned that whenever she saw other community members throw trash into rivers, she would explain to them about the harmfulness of littering on beach and rivers. She then tried to persuade them to pay money for public trash collectors so that they could help move trash to the local landfill.

However, some people reacted with a negative attitude and even questioned her: "I have been doing it for so many years, and it doesn't affect my life, why do I have to change now?" Ms. Kim concluded: "It is hard. Sometimes it is very difficult to convince them." Even when the program was implemented, some households did not pay the monthly fee for collecting their household trash and claimed that their family did not have trash. Thus, an extra regulation needed to be

added to the household trash program. The new regulation required that regardless of how much trash a household has, all households in the commune must pay a monthly fee for household trash. Ms. Tam emphasized the importance of enforcing the local trash regulations:

It is unreasonable for them (people who did not pay a monthly trash fee) to claim that their family did not have trash. It is impossible. We all know that every family has household trash. It is transparent. If we had not enforced the regulations thoroughly, they would have thrown their trash again somewhere in public places like rivers or markets or the sea. So, we had to firmly enforce the regulations.

In addition, community members also emphasized the importance of understanding the local context and people in order to have the best strategies to encourage people to be involved in changes. Ms. Kim suggested that key people in the community could be targeted as agents of change and these people could influence other people around them. She explained:

You need to understand how things work here among people in the community. Learning in the community is about how people copy other people's behaviour. Therefore, we reached out for key people first including leaders of different associations (Youth Women, Fishermen, Veterans, Farmers associations). These key people needed to encourage their own family members to change, and then members of their associations. Slowly things will change.

Being a role model was identified as a critical strategy that many community members used to make changes.

I don't go out and talk to people in the community about protecting the environment. But I joined most environmental activities conducted by volunteers. By doing this I showed other people in the commune that it is not the job of outside people, it is our own responsibility to protect our environment. (Mr. Kha)

The CBET core group's members also worked together and acted as collective role models for the rest of the members in the community. In all environmental activities in the commune, the CBET core group's members actively joined in and encouraged their family members to join as well:

We run CBET, so we need to be clean and green. It is how we attract visitors to come here. So, the CBET Cooperative's members need to take an effort to do it first so that other people in the commune could see it and do the same thing. (Mr. Kha)

People in the CBET Cooperative need to be role models. You want a cleaner environment to live and host visitors. Not only your house, but all public places like lanes, roads, beaches, and rivers in the community should be kept clean. You want to encourage other people to be involved in keeping the community clean, you should do it yourself first. (Ms. Nga)

After three years of enforcing the household trash program, the trash situation in the commune was greatly improved. All households in the commune now pay a monthly fee for trash to be picked up and the community is noticeably cleaner. Many local people also sorted solid waste and sold recyclable waste to earn some money. According to them it was a dual benefit. Many local people found that if they could earn some money from selling recyclable waste and help to protect environment at the same time, there was no reason for not doing it.

Besides maintaining the Community Coastal Cleanup Day on the World Environment Day, the local community also regularly set up their own Community Cleanup Day. On the Community Cleanup Day, they cleaned the beach area and other public places in the commune including lanes, roads, markets, schools, clinics, and the local soldiers' cemetery. Notably, the Community Coastal Cleanup movement in Giao Xuan has influenced some other neighbouring communes. All other four buffer communes next to Giao Xuan also started cleaning up their coastal area. This makes the situation even better, as Ms. Tam recounted:

In the past, the day after we cleaned up the beach, we could see trash on the beach again. It was not just trash from Giao Xuan, but trash was also brought from rivers of other communes into our commune's coastal area. However, since all other buffer communes also started cleaning up their beach and taking action on their household trash issue, it is different now. The trash issue cannot be solved by only us (Giao Xuan community members), it needs to be done by other neighbouring communes as well. The trash situation is much better now than it was in the past and we are very happy about it.

6.4 Chapter Summary

The non-formal and informal environmental learning activities which took place in the Giao Xuan CBET project were both conceptual and experience-based. Both non-formal and informal environmental learning activities had positive impacts on local community members' environmental knowledge, attitudes, and actions. Non-formal learning activities helped local community members obtain a better understanding of the value of local wetland resources for the development of CBET and of CBET as a solution for reducing pressure on local wetland resources. Meanwhile, informal learning activities created space for local community members to apply their existing environmental knowledge, and the knowledge obtained in environmental workshops, to promote local environmental conservation activities. Through both non-formal and informal environmental learning activities, local community members' environmental attitude towards the environment was positively changed. They showed more concern for the environment as well as commitment to participate in local environmental conservation activities. Most importantly, in addition to positive changes in environmental knowledge and attitude, community members expanded their capacity and empowered themselves to take action and make changes with regard to local environmental issues.

MCD-led environmental activities incorporated into the Giao Xuan CBET project made a strong contribution to the promotion of local environmental protection and conservation in Giao Xuan. MCD's approach of including local community members in key roles in promoting local environmental protection and conservation was critical to making changes in environmental practices in Giao Xuan. However, there was still a gap between some environmental promotion areas facilitated by MCD, practical local needs, and local implementation (e.g. setting up the

local community learning centre and study tours for local students). Moreover, findings also showed that visitors' attitude and actions toward the environment had a great influence on how local community members positively changed their views, attitudes, and action toward making changes in environmental practices in Giao Xuan.

**CHAPTER 7: LEARNING ABOUT GENDER EQUALITY
AND ITS IMPACTS ON LOCAL WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT⁹**

The final focus of this study was the connection between ecotourism, gender, and development. In particular, this study examined the impact of community member learning on gender equality and local women's empowerment. The gender analysis in this study was informed by Longwe's (2002) framework of women's empowerment. The framework describes five levels of women's empowerment (i.e., welfare, access, conscientization, participation and control), taking into women's (and men's) productive, reproductive, and community labor. This chapter reports findings on: 1) What and how local people learned about gender equality in the Giao Xuan CBET project and 2) The impact that learning about gender equality and the planning and implementation of the CBET project had on changes in gender roles, gender relations, and women's empowerment in Giao Xuan.

The chapter contains two sections. In the first section, I describe how learning about gender equality took place through workshops and other activities of the Giao Xuan CBET project. Local people attended a workshop on gender roles, gender equality, and gender perspectives on coastal wetland management and livelihood development. Local people also participated in a "Training of Trainers" workshop on women's leadership and communication skills that would help them deliver messages on environmental issues and conservation to other community members. In addition, gender issues were incorporated into other project activities in which local women played a leading role.

In the second section, I present how gender roles and relations in the Giao Xuan

⁹ An abridged version of this chapter was published in Tran and Walter (2014)

community changed as a result of the gender learning that took place in the CBET project. Findings show a more equitable division of labor, increased income, self-confidence and community involvement, and new leadership roles for women. However, inequities of social class, childcare, and violence against women remained outstanding.

7.1 Learning about Gender Equality in the CBET Project

A focus on poor women and gender issues was consistently incorporated into different activities throughout the Giao Xuan CBET project, among which training on gender issues in community development was an important component. In order to provide locally appropriate training to community members, in the early stage of the project MCD staff worked together with local people to conduct an assessment of gender roles and relations in Giao Xuan. This assessment helped MCD to obtain an understanding of gender issues in the local community. Based on the results of the assessment, MCD provided two workshops on gender mainstreaming to local people entitled: “Gender concept and gender mainstreaming in natural resources management” and “Training of Trainers.” Local people also had opportunities to apply what they learned from the workshops to different action-oriented activities in which local women played a key role. These activities included promoting local awareness of environmental conservation and facilitating community dialogues on local livelihood development and wetland resources conservation.

7.1.1 Gender Awareness Raising Workshop

A two day workshop entitled “Gender concept and gender mainstreaming in natural

resources management” was conducted in Giao Xuan in May, 2006 (MCD, 2007c). The workshop's objectives were to raise local people and relevant stakeholders' awareness of gender roles and relations as well as highlight the importance of integrating gender mainstreaming into local coastal resources management and livelihood development. The workshop brought together 44 participants including local people, the Giao Xuan People's Committee, representatives of the Giao Xuan Women's Association¹⁰, local government agencies such as the Department of Trade and Tourism and Department of Natural Resources and Environment, research institutions including Vietnam National University and Maritime Anthropology Research Group – MARE, of the University of Amsterdam, Netherlands, and media organizations such as Voice of Vietnam and Vietnam News.

The workshop provided the participants with fundamental concepts of gender, gender roles, gender equality, and gender and development. A brief introduction of gender issues in Vietnam was also introduced to the workshop's participants. Local people found that many gender concepts introduced in the workshop were very new to them. Ms. Lan, one workshop participant, expressed her views:

I was so impressed when it was pointed out in the workshops that it was women's right to go out and learn, to exchange knowledge with other people, but not just to stay at home and serve their kids and husbands all the time. Women also have right to obtain a loan from the bank because women can be just as good as men in terms of managing the loan as well as financial resources in the family. (Ms. Lan)

A summary of the results of the assessment on gender issues in Giao Xuan was then highlighted in the workshop. The results showed that there were still traditional gender stereotypes believed by many, such as “men are breadwinners of the household” and “women are

¹⁰ Giao Xuan Women's Association is a local organization representing Giao Xuan women to protect women's rights and interest, support women to participate in and contribute to local community development, and promote gender equality in the commune.

dependent and have subordinate roles both in home and community.” Compared to men, local women had less access to and control of resources such as capital, land, and technology. The local community's main livelihood activities were wet rice farming, coastal fishing and aquaculture. Local women mainly participated in wet rice farming, but during the off-season, up to 70% of them had to work as low wage laborers for large-scale fishermen to collect marine and aquaculture products. Moreover, local women had limited access to education and lower mobility than men. Women spent most of their time at home and were responsible for reproductive work such as taking care of housework, old people, and children. The amount of time local women spent on reproductive work was two to three times higher than men. Thus, their income from their productive activities was lower than that of men. Furthermore, local women also had limited access to information such as legal regulations on rare animals, aquatic species and wetland resources conservation. Local women were underrepresented in local leadership positions and hardly had any opportunity to participate in discussions and making decisions on community development issues (MCD, 2006c). The link between gender inequality and a number of local issues such as environmental degradation, low income, health problems, and family conflict was then pointed out and discussed among the workshop's participants.

Following the presentation of local gender issues, the workshop underlined the importance of integrating gender mainstreaming into local livelihood development and natural resources conservation. A discussion of specific strategies to address each gender aspect that needed to be integrated into the CBET project to improve local women's involvement and capacity in Giao Xuan's livelihood development and natural resources management was facilitated. Three main aspects and specific strategies identified in the workshop are summarized

in Table 7.1 below (MCD, 2006c).

Table 7.1

Strategies to Improve Local Women's Involvement and Capacity

Aspect	Strategies
Awareness	<p>Raising local people's awareness of the women's roles</p> <p>Providing women with knowledge of natural resources and the importance of conserving natural resources</p> <p>Lobbying the local authority to pledge their support for creating favourable conditions and opportunities for women to participate in local livelihood development and natural resource management</p>
Resources Distribution	<p>Providing training on entrepreneurial skills and knowledge to women</p> <p>Providing women with opportunities to exchange their skills and knowledge with people from other provinces through study tours and social exchanges</p> <p>Organizing social exchanges in the commune for local women to share their knowledge, skills, and success in their businesses with other people</p> <p>Increase credit schemes and knowledge of using credit for women</p> <p>Providing CBET skills and knowledge training</p> <p>Providing CBET materials and documents</p> <p>Promoting learning of foreign languages and other cultures</p> <p>Providing vocational training to local people</p>
Women's Involvement	<p>Lobbying women's participation in planning, implementing, and managing community activities</p> <p>Enhancing the role of the local Women's Association</p> <p>Setting up regulations for the rate of women's participation in the CBET project's activities including participation in training and the surveillance and management of the CBET project</p>

7.1.2 Training of Trainers Workshop

In addition to the gender awareness workshop, in June, 2006, a three day “Training of

trainers” workshop on communication skills and women’s leadership was also conducted with the aim of developing a core CBET group for “gender and development mobilisation, and gender empowerment” (MCD 2007a, p. 7). The workshop also aimed to provide the core CBET group with communication skills so that they could become more effective communicators and active agents in promoting women's roles in local wetland conservation and management. Participants included staff of Xuan Thuy National Park, representatives of the Giao Xuan People's Committee, Women's Association, Farmer's Association, Fisherman's Association, Youth Association, Bird Conservation Club, and the local Secondary School. Women accounted for 50% of the participants in this workshop.

The workshop was conducted with a participatory approach in which members of Giao Xuan Women's Association played a critical role in collaboratively facilitating workshop activities with a communication expert and MCD staff. The workshop started with a discussion on local natural biodiversity. The participants were encouraged to share their knowledge and concerns about local wetland resources. Following this discussion, the participants were introduced to key communication tools and steps. The workshop participants affirmed that the most common communication tool that they used in the past was spoken words. In the workshop they were introduced to other non-word communication tools such as pictures, panels, posters, and brochures. The participants also learned six basic steps of planning and conducting communication, including: 1) Identifying target audience and their characteristics; 2) Identifying objectives of communication; 3) Choosing appropriate communication tools; 4) Creating and testing communication products; 5) Conducting communication (e.g., providing information and skills in order to change local people's behavior toward wetland resource conservation and

management); 6) Re-evaluating the results of communication (MCD, 2006d, p. 5).

The participants then applied the knowledge of communication they learned to an activity in the workshop in which they had to find appropriate communication tools for different target groups in order to promote local environmental conservation. Four communication target groups were identified, including the general local community, aquaculturists, students and other ordinary people, and heads of the Women's Associations in different villages of the commune. The participants were divided into four small groups. Each small group was assigned one of the four identified communication target groups and had to find appropriate communication tools for their assigned communication target group. Because of time constraints, participants only had enough time to practice the first three steps of conducting communication in the workshop. The participants identified the objectives of communication based on five criteria: 1) Details; 2) Quantity; 3) Feasibility; 4) Reality; and 5) Timeframe. They then chose appropriate communication tools for their assigned communication target group. For example, with the general local community, participants chose a short news segment aired through the local radio; posters and slogans were chosen to request aquaculturists to stop throwing trash into the sea; slogans and promoting programs aired on the local radio were chosen for students and other local ordinary people; and group meetings, brochures and posters were chosen for the heads of the Women's Associations at the village level of the commune. After working in small groups, ideas for appropriate objectives, tools, and strategies of communication chosen by each small group were presented for all the workshop participants and facilitators. In this way, everybody could learn from each other and give comments and feedback on each other's work. Community members found the workshop activities interesting and some commented positively on the

pedagogy applied in the workshop. For example, Mr. Long shared his thought of the group work activity:

I like how they (workshop facilitators) let us work in groups first and then presented to the whole class. I felt more prepared that way. You had time to talk to other people in your group first. Working in a small group also required you to pay more attention. In some other sessions, they raised questions for all participants to answer, I felt kind of under pressure and feared that I might be assigned to say something. (Mr. Long)

7.1.3 Taking a Leading Role in the CBET Project's Activities

In addition to gender training, other action-oriented activities were also incorporated into the CBET project to support gender mainstreaming and local women's empowerment. At the inception of the project, the Giao Xuan Women's Association and Xuan Thuy National Park were chosen as two main partners that cooperated with MCD to plan and implement the project. The Women's Association was a link between MCD and the local community in all of the CBET project's activities. The Women's Association was responsible for the mobilization of community resources at the community level. They were in charge of providing information about the CBET project and encouraging other community members to get involved in the CBET's activities. Ms. Kim, the head of the Women's Association, gave examples of the tasks that local people were in charge of in the CBET project:

MCD collaborated with us on all the project's activities. We (representatives of the local Women's Association) were responsible for the tasks at the local community level. For example, if a CBET meeting was held in Giao Xuan, we needed to identify appropriate participants, send out invitation letters and encourage them to attend the meeting. We also prepared logistics for the meeting such as meeting locations and necessary documents for the meeting. When MCD conducted an assessment on local potentials for developing the CBET project, we were the ones who took them to meet and work with local people. We also looked for community members who wanted and were qualified to participate in the CBET project and submitted a list of potential participants to MCD.

The findings indicate that community members who participated in the CBET project had

some control over the CBET activities. However, there was concern from community members who did not participate in the CBET project over the politics of local power. This group of local people complained that they were not informed of the CBET project, and the selection at the commune level was not transparent. Ms. Na complained, “Many people were not happy about the way some people with power in the commune did it (CBET). When the CBET project started in the village, they just picked whoever they liked to join the CBET project.” In a similar vein, Ms. Hinh recounted:

You are asking me about the CBET project? I did not know about the CBET project for a long time. I had no idea about it until I saw many outside people in my commune. All of my children grew up and left home. My house is big enough. If I had known about the project, I would have wished to join the project as a host family.

The local Women's Association also played a key role in the “Community Coastal Clean-Up” event conducted on World Environmental Day. This event aimed to raise local people's awareness of the importance of keeping the local living environment clean and healthy. Members of the Women's Association were in charge of encouraging local people to participate in the event. They also selected the sites for cleaning up and organized the clean-up activities. After this Community Coastal Clean-up event, the Women's Association initiated and set up the local household trash regulations with the assistance and support of MCD and the local authority.

In addition, with the support of MCD and Xuan Thuy National Park, the Women's Association was the key conductor of the Community Dialogues Activity. The Women's Association facilitated a number of community dialogues including: 1) Coastal wetland resources protection and conservation; 2) Potential CBET services and providers ; 3) CBET core group formation; 4) CBET activities implementation; 5) Micro-finance for community ecotourism development; 6) Local CBET funding; and 7) CBET pilot tours. In these community

dialogues, members of the Women's Association applied the communication, management, organization, and leadership skills they had learned in various workshops to encourage their fellow villagers to actively join in CBET activities. They were also responsible for setting up and implementing the community dialogues. For some local women, this was the first time they had participated in such community activities. Ms. Nga, for example, talked about her experience becoming involved in the project:

Before participating in CBET, I was too shy to talk to people, especially in public. However, when I started participating in the CBET project, I was invited to various meetings of the project. After that I just followed other people to participate in different project's activities and also encouraged my fellow villagers to join these activities. Gradually, I have become more and more familiar to getting involved in communal activities.

Members of the Women's Association also needed to network with a number of groups and organizations both within and outside of the local community. For example, they worked with the local authority to obtain their support to conduct community dialogues. In the dialogues on CBET activities implementation and CBET tours, the Women's Association members had the chance to work with tourism experts, and learned from their feedback and advice on local ecotourism products and services. In the Micro-finance community dialogue, the Women's Association was again one of the key facilitators. Participants learned from banking and financial experts about procedures and strategies to use in micro-finance for community ecotourism development.

Even though local women were targeted as leading participants in the CBET project's activities, local men also joined various CBET activities to promote improvement and awareness of gender roles and relations. For example, cooking and cleaning have traditionally been the arena for women, but local men were strongly encouraged to participate in training related to

cooking, food safety, arranging houses for accommodating visitors, and hygiene techniques for keeping houses clean. Mr. Kha stated:

I participated in different training workshops such as cooking and kitchen management, communication skills, and hospitality and homestay preparation. From not knowing much about cooking techniques, we now could cook very well.

In a local cooking competition which aimed to provide opportunities for local CBET participants to apply what they learned in the cooking class, many local CBET male participants actively attended and showed their enthusiasm and capacity in cooking. Some men were even selected as leaders of participating teams. Mr. Long, a local host family, proudly asserted:

Participating in the CBET project did not only help women to cook better, but also helped men like me have an opportunity to learn a lot about cooking. In a cooking competition in Giao Xuan, I was a leader of one team and my team won a special prize.

7.2 Impacts of Learning about Gender Equality on Local Women's Empowerment

Gender mainstreaming was consistently incorporated into the planning and implementation of the Giao Xuan CBET project. Both non-formal training and informal action-oriented activities had some positive impacts on the local gender roles and relations. In this section, I present findings on the impacts of learning on gender equality, changes in local gender roles and relations, and local women's empowerment. These impacts are organized according to Longwe's five levels of women's empowerment: welfare, access, conscientization, participation, and control.

7.2.1 Welfare

In Longwe's (2002) framework, the Welfare level indicates equal access to material

resources such as food, income, shelter, and medical care. The CBET project clearly brought local women a new source of income, in work such as hosting tourists, tour guiding, cooking and musical performance. CBET income was supplementary, varied depending on the particular activities in which a participant engaged, and did not affect subsistence livelihood. For the 11 host families who participated in the study, CBET income was approximately \$47 per month, about twice the average household ecotourism income for other CBET members. This higher income reflected the longer-term involvement of these families in the CBET project. The ecotourism income gained by the 11 families was at least twice as much as they earned from wet rice cultivation, with significantly less input of labor.

Before the CBET project started, most local women worked as wage labourers to collect marine and aquaculture products such as clams and oysters. For this, they had to submerge themselves up to their waists in water, and often contracted skin diseases. They reported earning about seven dollars per day, a sizable amount, but coming at the cost of their health. Ms. Lan, typical of the women, commented on the change in the nature of her work:

It's so much easier to work in CBET. I just use my own knowledge, my understanding about my village to guide tours. I can easily earn 130,000 Dong (about \$6.00) in around two to three hours, compared to seven hours of hard labor in the water. With this income, I can have extra money for my family's daily expenses or for my kids' education.

Ms. Nga echoed this experience:

I used to work as an aquaculture product collector for other large scale fishermen in the commune. It was a hard job. You need to be ready to go anytime they call you regardless whether it is late at night or very early in the morning or it is hot or extremely cold...It is so much easier to work in CBET than to work in the sea or the rice fields. Now I can just host visitors at my house...I can earn up to several million VND per month – it takes me up to six months working hard in the rice field to earn the same amount of money.

From other interviews, it was evident that Giao Xuan women were economically

empowered through their participation in the CBET. They had equal access or even better access to CBET income than men. Moreover, all the women and men interviewed acknowledged that it was entirely the women's right to decide on how to use this new income. Mr. Kha stated: "It is my wife who manages how the income from CBET is used in daily life expenses. I just work to ensure that the CBET business run smoothly."

All women in the project reported reduced physical burdens in their productive labor, more income and more control over this income. Most spent it on the welfare of their families. However, this spending was also dependent on social class. For example, some wealthier participants reinvested CBET income in renovating their houses so that they could accommodate more visitors. By contrast, poorer families spent their income on basic Welfare needs such as food for their families or clothes for their kids. When large numbers of visitors arrived, wealthier families were able to accommodate more visitors and thus earn greater income than poorer families. This may lead to a self-perpetuating cycle reproducing social class inequities in which wealthier families become richer while poorer families stay poor. In this sense, social class is clearly a potential barrier for local community members in the Giao Xuan CBET project, and especially for poor women, to equally share welfare benefits.

7.2.2 Access

Access refers to equal access to factors of production such as land, labour, credit, education, and public services. Like many women in rural villages in Vietnam, women in the Giao Xuan CBET project did not have much access to education. Of nine women interviewed, one graduated from elementary school, five from middle school, two from high school, and one

from a local vocational school. Before the CBET project started, all of them made their living from wet rice cultivation, shellfish harvesting, and occasional small business. One woman also had an administrative position in the local commune committee. Except for few women who had relatively highly social status positions in the commune (e.g., the head of the local Women's Association), majority of the women did not have opportunities to gain new knowledge or skills, to improve their productive labor capacity or to increase their mobility outside their home and local community. Through the CBET project, women above all gained access to education, and to a lesser but important extent, increased access to loans and credit for investment in ecotourism-related businesses.

Both men and women had equal opportunities to participate in all training programs and workshops offered by MCD in developing the Giao Xuan CBET project. These included areas such as communication, planning, leadership and management skills, hosting, tour guiding, and traditional opera performance. In some training activities, women outnumbered men. For example, 57% of participants in the CBET “concept and planning” workshops were women, who likewise comprised 70% of participants in CBET skills training, capacity building (business skills, reception, food services, local environmental knowledge), and pilot ecotour workshops (environmental interpretation, services, business planning, marketing) (MCD, 2007b; Tran, 2011).

A local woman spoke of increased mobility, access to information and access to government programs thanks to the participation in the CBET project:

Before the CBET project started, local women did not have any opportunities to learn new knowledge or to exchange knowledge with other people. However, after MCD staff came and lobbied about gender equality, the local authority paid more attention to us. We had the chance to participate in many competitions that expand our knowledge –

competitions about the environment and ocean resources. (Ms. Lan)

Although local women had equal access to learn new knowledge and skills, the burden of reproductive labor in housework and childcare sometimes prevented them from meaningful access to educational opportunities. For example, Ms. Ly, who had two young children and a husband who worked the entire week out at sea as a clam watcher for large-scale fishermen, had to drop out of evening classes when her children wanted to go home:

My kids were so little when the CBET project started. I remember that I had to bring my kids along to a class in the evening because I could not leave them at home. Sometimes the class had just started, and our kids wanted to go home, They didn't want to sit still in the class, so I had to drop that lesson. This happened quite often, so I couldn't learn that much. It was so inconvenient.

Under the CBET project, women in Giao Xuan could also obtain access to investment funds and bank loans to renovate home-stay accommodations. Normally, to be eligible for a bank loan, a person must be the (male) head of a household. However, in the CBET project, women who were not household heads could still access loans, as noted, for example, by Ms. Tam:

The project provided some initial funding for CBET participants to help us renovate our houses to host tourists...Each participant in the CBET project received six million Dong (approximately \$300) for renovating our places. We pay a small interest rate per year and this money goes to the Community Fund – it is used for some activities for all other community members. With this funding and some of our own money we could renovate the ceilings of our houses, our bathrooms – install flush toilets and water heaters in the bathrooms, buy new furniture, and drill wells to get water.

All the local women interviewed from both poor and better off households found the initial supportive funding from the project very useful. Without this funding most of them could not be able to join the CBET project. This initial financial support and different training programs are certainly a great assistance for local women. They helped

increase women's access to the factors of production (in this case: education and credit) and therefore opened up a new job opportunities for local women.

Moreover, each household could also borrow \$240 to \$340 from the bank at a preferential interest rate. However, because homestay renovations required a bit more than the combined funds offered by the CBET project and the bank, and future income from tourists needed to pay the loans was not guaranteed, some households chose not to make the investment. Only those wealthier households who could assume potential risk were able to fully employ the loans for homestay renovation, pointing again to the importance of social class in the wider success of the CBET project.

7.2.3 Conscientization

Conscientization in Longwe's (2002) women empowerment framework means an increase in understanding of gender roles and the gender division of labour, and the realization that these can be changed to become more equitable. This was a significant finding in this study, and occurred not only for women but also for men. According to Giao Xuan women, as a result of their participation in the CBET project, they experienced changes in the way they understood gender roles, their capacity for new roles, violence against women, and gender relations. Men also gained new gender awareness and took on new gender roles. Conscientization took place through access to education, and in broader participation in the CBET project at both the family and community levels.

Several of the women spoke about the effects of increased educational access through the CBET project. Ms. Ha, for example, explained that, through project study tours, “women had the

chance to go to other provinces to exchange our knowledge and experience in doing CBET.

People from other provinces also came here to learn from us.” Ms. Thanh likewise spoke of increased mobility and access to information:

As countryside women, we recognize that our knowledge and understanding of the outside world has been so limited. Our “mobility” was just from the rice field to our house twenty-four-seven. The only source of information we had in learning about the outside world was the TV. But this has now changed.

Giao Xuan women pointed out that the gender division of labor in the community became clearer to them after they began participating in the CBET project. Ms. Nga, for instance, detailed the range of her usual reproductive, productive and community labor, but also her intensified reproductive labor in hosting visitors:

Women have a lot of work to do. Not a single job is not our responsibility. I have to cook, wash clothes and dishes by hand, take care of chickens and pigs. I also have to cultivate wet rice, buy rice from other people in the community and sell it at my rice store. In addition, I participate in the women's union of the commune...If a group of tourists come and stay for five or seven days, then it's worth our time preparing to host them, but sometimes just one or two visitors stay for only one night. We still have to prepare blankets, mattress, beds, and after that we still have to wash them and dry them all up. It quite a lot of work...

All eleven local women in the CBET project acknowledged that hosting visitors brought benefits to them including widening their knowledge about other cultures, creating new social contacts and boosting their self-confidence. However, hosting also added extra reproductive labor for them on top of regular cooking, cleaning, and taking care of kids. Notably, once some women identified the unfair division of labor, they successfully convinced their husbands to share domestic and hosting labor, and even gave them instruction on doing this work. Ms. Ha and Ms. Kim, for example, spoke of how participation in the ecotourism project had begun to shift gender roles in their families:

I work as a tour guide, but I am sometimes hired by some host families to cook if they have many visitors staying at their places. After cooking, I have to stay and clean up as well. In this case, I often ask my husband to help me with cooking food for our kids, cleaning up, helping them to study, and putting them to sleep. Normally I am responsible for such work. (Ms. Ha)

In hosting visitors, there are certain things that I have had...to teach my husband how to do. For example, before the CBET project started, my husband never paid attention to making a bed, so I had to teach him how to make a bed. He now knows how to arrange blankets, get matching cloth and pillows, and such to accommodate visitors – he never had to do this before. (Ms. Kim)

Another significant change for women who participated in the CBET project was the recognition by women of their capacity for non-traditional labor roles. Ms. Lan, for example, spoke of a new capacity to deal with life problems and financial management in her family:

I used to be a woman who often got confused and did not know what should be the right solutions for problems in my life. However, after attending the workshop on business, I have become a stronger woman and realized that I can totally deal with difficulties and conflicts in my life...I have become more capable of managing the finances of my family...and (have even) put some money in savings for unexpected circumstances...

Other women found that increased self-confidence led them to become more active community members. They now saw themselves as able to make changes by influencing their neighbours and becoming more involved in community initiatives; however, this also added to the burden of community labor. Ms. Thanh, for example, now actively participates in the women's union and public welfare work in Giao Xuan. She joins delegations to visit sick people and families in difficult circumstances, and participates in communal environmental conservation activities like collecting garbage, and cleaning up the roads and beaches. After participating in CBET workshops, Ms. Nga likewise gradually became more involved in social welfare activities, and then moved into community governance. Today she serves as a member of several different

unions in the commune, works to recruit other women to join in communal activities, and acts as spokeswoman for the ecotourism project:

...since I participated in CBET, I find that I have changed a lot. I have become more energetic and progressive. Before... I was too shy to talk to people, especially in public... But now things have changed. I had the chance to join many workshops both inside and outside the commune. I met with many people in these workshops – (now) I host visitors at my house, spend time with them, and talk to them... I feel happy to meet people and feel confident talking with them. I don't even find foreigners strange any more! I used to just stare at them when I saw them (laughs)... I never dreamed of appearing on TV before, but now I've gotten used to it. People come here and interview me, they take pictures and film me.

Both women and men in the Giao Xuan CBET project had a greater awareness of gender roles and the possibility of change. Local women strongly believed that women are capable of earning income for their families just like their husband do, and see it as their responsibility to share the burden of being a breadwinner with their husbands. As Ms. Ha put it, "It is not like in the feudal society in the past where certain work was imposed as the responsibility of men, and women could not do it, or vice versa." Similarly, Ms. Lan affirmed:

I have changed a lot in my thoughts about the role of myself and other women in the family since I had a chance to participate in gender workshops and met with many women from other places. In my opinion, in a married life, there is no need to have a clear division in terms of what work is the responsibility of a husband, and what work is just the responsibility of a wife. Both wives and husbands need to share family responsibilities. As women, we want men to know that if the family and society care about us, we can totally bring our capacity into play. We can work and earn more money to contribute the family income. We don't want the responsibility of earning money to be just the responsibility of men in the family. (Ms. Lan)

Local men were also willing to change their traditional gender roles. Since the CBET project started, local men have, for example, joined training programs for cooking, and now not only cook for visitors, but also help their wives with family cooking and housework. Mr. Kha, for instance, explained how his beliefs about the gender division of labor had changed:

When we host visitors, both my wife and I cook. I think it is a shared responsibility...I don't distinguish which work is my wife's and which work is mine anymore. It is family business so we both need to be responsible...In daily life, my wife is still mainly responsible for cooking, but I do help her. I find it entirely normal for a man to cook and help out with cleaning up in the family.

Another man in the project, Mr. Long, likewise started cooking for visitors and his family after changing his views about traditional gender roles. In fact, Mr. Long is now so enthusiastic about cooking that he seizes every opportunity to learn more: he watches cooking shows on television, questions tourists, and reads all the cookbooks he can get his hands on. Mr. Long described his involvement in new tasks:

Even though I am the head of my household, since the CBET project started, I have become aware of all the new work related to the ecotourism project. I've helped with preparing different menus for visitors. I've also cooked and taken care of visitors' sleeping arrangements. I need to make sure that everything is neat and clean. It's a lot of work, and my wife herself cannot take it all on...

The knowledge, skills, and experience that Giao Xuan women obtained from participating in the CBET project also helped them become more aware of their status and rights as women. This area of conscientization did not generally extend to men. Ms. Lan pointed out that local women's awareness of their rights and capacity to protect themselves from family violence is an ongoing educational issue in the community. According to Ms. Lan, there are men in the community who often get drunk and beat their wives. However, she noted that the local authorities only intervene if women sue their husbands. Ms. Lan asked sarcastically: "I ask you, as a woman, who dares to sue her own husband?" She then spoke of a rare case in which a local woman did inform the local authority after being beaten. Her husband was held for two days, but during this time, she had to bring meals to him, and do this on top of her domestic labor and care

of young children at home. This created too much work for the woman, Ms. Lan concluded. She believed the woman was compelled to do this by oppressive community gender norms:

It is not at all simple... People will criticize her [if she does not bring meals to her husband]; they will judge her as a bad woman who dares to ignore her husband just because he beats her. They will think that if she dares to do so with her husband, how can she fulfil her role as a mother and take a good care of her kids?

Ms. Lan believed women could protect themselves by being strong, speaking out, and working together:

We as women often just take it and keep silent when our husbands beat us. However, having opportunities to learn about gender equality, we have now recognized that it is our right to raise our voices about this status. The more we try to endure, the more they keep doing it. We should not keep silent and endure the violence anymore. Men may beat us because of the demon of drunkenness. When they are not drunk, they still love their wives and kids. But it is really torture for us... To be honest with you, by myself... I cannot stop men from drinking and beating their wives. But I have been trying my best to raise the issue whenever I can in the women's union meetings and other communal meetings. I have been lobbying about gender equality. I have also discussed with other women in the community about how – first and foremost – to protect ourselves from being physically abused.

7.2.4 Participation

Participation refers to equal participation in decision-making processes related to policymaking, planning, and administration of both the ecotourism project and, by extension, the larger community. Giao Xuan women's participation in the workshops, activities and management of the CBET project helped them to become active leaders in their community.

When the CBET Cooperative was established in 2010, four years into the project, two women were elected to be on the CBET Cooperative Management Board, and one woman then became Head of the CBET Cooperative. When this capacity for women's leadership was demonstrated by the project, local government authorities also began to pay attention. Ms. Lan, for example,

reported that the self-confidence, management and communication skills she gained from working as a CBET tour guide then allowed her to actively contribute her ideas about community development to the authorities. As a result, she was appointed head of one of the villages in the commune. Ms. Lan recounted her experience:

The local authority knew about my success as a tour guide. They appreciated my skills in managing a tour group, and my contribution to CBET activities. The knowledge that I learned from CBET workshops also helped me contribute a lot of ideas and knowledge in our communal meetings about local environmental conservation. My abilities were recognized by the local authority – I am trusted and given many important tasks in the commune.

As noted earlier, the Giao Xuan's Women's Union acted as one of the two main partners that worked with MCD to set up and implement the CBET project. The agreed upon function of the Women's Union was in part "to facilitate local meetings, participation of women community members, (and) inputs on community gender relations" (MCD 2007a, p. 8). Local women were encouraged to proactively participate in many activities of the project. For example, in 2006, as mentioned above, women played a key role in planning, organizing and promoting a Community Coastal Clean Up activity on World Environmental Day, which attracted more than 100 volunteers from different groups of the local community. In a series of community dialogues for the day, local women were likewise facilitators, promoters and key participants. These dialogues included awareness-raising on coastal wetland biodiversity protection and the need and rationale for ecotourism development in the local community (MCD 2007b). Many Giao Xuan women have remained involved in community activities even without direct support from MCD and the CBET project. For example, Ms. Nga spoke of her involvement in communal activities:

When I started participating in the CBET project, I just followed other people to participate in different project's activities. Gradually, I have become more and more familiar to getting involved in communal activities and become more and more

confident. I was asked to keep my house and the lanes in the commune clean when I first participated in the CBET project. Keeping them clean now has become my habit and I started encouraging and lobbying other people in the commune to keep the commune clean.

7.2.5 Control

Control indicates equal control in decision-making over factors of production (land, labour, credit, education, public services) and equal distribution of benefits. Even while women in Giao Xuan are now more involved than before in decision-making processes in the family and community, they do not have equal control over factors of production or distribution of benefits. To some extent, CBET promoted a shift in employment for local women, who have moved from low wage laborers to owners of their own business and into jobs as tour guides.

To take on these new gender work roles, most of the women first had to negotiate with their husbands. Ms. Lan, for example, explained that her husband initially resisted her tour guiding plans for fear of losing her. As she explained, he believed that “once I had a chance to meet many people, I’d prefer people who are more educated than him or richer than him.” Ms. Ha persuaded her husband not only to endorse her guiding work, but to provide domestic labor while she was out on the job:

When I started working as a tour guide in the CBET project, I had to collect information to compose a CBET tour for a project competition. I spent two months collecting documents and asking for information from the Elders in the commune. My son was only three months old at that time and I needed to leave him at home with my husband to complete the competition. During this time, my husband replaced me in my role at home. He cooked for the family, cooked porridge for my son, and took care of housework...He was really supportive.

In economic decisions, Giao Xuan women normally control money for daily living expenses, food and children’s education, but final decisions about the purchase of expensive

items are made by their husbands. Local women in the CBET project do have control over new sources of income from ecotourism, but this is usually just supplementary income. Up to 70% of family breadwinners in the project are men, and as breadwinners, they traditionally control major financial decisions. Even when women are the main source of family income (30% of the families), they often make large decisions only in the absence of their husbands. Ms. Kim, for example, talked about relinquishing her decision-making control after her absent husband returned to Giao Xuan to retire:

When my husband worked far away from home, I was the one who made decisions in the family. However, since he has retired and stays at home, I need to discuss with him every single issue in the family. For example, if I want to sell a plot of land, I need to get his approval. If he doesn't want to sell it, I still have to respect and follow his decision... At the family level, it is still impossible to get rid of gender inequality. Husbands are still in the first position in the family to have final decisions in all matters.

At the community level, women reported that men were still largely preferred over women for leadership and administrative positions, and that decisions were not always made democratically, but by powerful men. However, within the group of people who participated in the CBET project, women seemed to have equal control in decision-making. Ms. Kim asserted that different tasks were given to members of the CBET Cooperative based on individual capacity regardless of gender, age or class. Most decisions were made by majority vote of the members in the CBET Cooperative, and CBET business permits went to all persons who participated in the CBET project regardless of gender.

In addition, as discussed in the previous chapter, some women in the project also applied what they learned from the project to change policies in the commune. For example, local women actively lobbied for changes in solid waste management in Giao Xuan and set up the local household trash program. After the local household trash program was set up, the local

trash situation greatly improved. In short, some local women, even though in small in number, have utilized the knowledge that they gained from the CBET project as a tool to promote control over community resources.

7.3 Chapter Summary

This gender analysis of the Giao Xuan CBET project shows how a gender perspective integrated into the planning and implementation of a community-based ecotourism project may result in many positive benefits for local women. MCD incorporated various activities into the CBET project to support and promote local women's participation and empowerment in the CBET project and the local community. The activities included on-site training to equip local women with the knowledge and skills needed to implement and manage the CBET project, and creating opportunities for local women to increase their knowledge and confidence through social exchanges and other local action-oriented activities. More importantly, MCD made an effort to ensure that the number of local women participants in the project activities was at least equal or greater than the number of local men participants. In addition, local women were consistently encouraged to play a key leadership role in all project components.

Women participants in the Giao Xuan CBET project experienced significant benefits at all levels described in Longwe's empowerment framework, including welfare, access, conscientization, participation and control. Moreover, changes were experienced by both men and women in their understanding and performance of gender roles, and to a limited extent in gender relations towards a more equitable division of labor. Study findings show both increasing equity and empowerment, welfare, access, conscientization, participation and control. They also

show several areas where results have been less impressive in each of the five categories, especially in the highest level, “control.”

Even though local women significantly benefited thanks to project activities that centred on women's empowerment, study findings identify several issues that still needed to be addressed in the Giao Xuan CBET project. These issues included inequities due to social class, lack of child care which prevented local women from fully accessing educational opportunities, and the ongoing problem of family violence against women in the Giao Xuan community.

CHAPTER 8: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This study focused on community member learning in non-formal and informal settings as well as the impact of planning and implementation of a CBET project on a local community in northern Vietnam. Study findings indicate that CBET is a rich site of learning for local people and the CBET project's planning and implementation can have tremendous impacts on the local community. Through the CBET project, Giao Xuan community members enriched their existing knowledge, obtained new knowledge and skills, widened their outlook, boosted their confidence, and consequently, empowered themselves to make positive changes in their lives to address local socio-environmental problems. However, study findings also identify issues in the CBET project that still need to be addressed, including the impractical content and organization of English classes, gaps between some environmental initiatives facilitated by MCD and practical local needs, inequities due to social class, lack of child care, and domestic violence against local women.

Below I provide a discussion of study findings following the order of the Research Questions and the three finding chapters in the study: 1) Learning to develop and manage the CBET project (Chapter 5); 2) Learning to protect and conserve the local environment (Chapter 6); and 3) Impacts of learning about gender equality on local women's empowerment (Chapter 7). The chapter then concludes with study limitations, recommendations for practice, directions for future research, conclusions, and closing remarks.

8.1 Learning to Develop and Manage the CBET Project

The first focus of this study is on the community members learning processes in

developing and managing the CBET project in Giao Xuan. The first research question asked: 1) what do community members learn in non-formal and informal settings in order to develop and manage the CBET project in Giao Xuan? 2) How do the learning processes take place? and 3) What are the outcomes of the learning processes? The findings show that the community-based approach applied by MCD in the planning and implementation of the Giao Xuan CBET project greatly influenced the community member learning processes and outcomes. The finding also demonstrate that experiential learning and incidental learning were two prominent forms of learning that community members experienced while they developed and managed the CBET project.

8.1.1 The Impacts of the Community-Based Approach on Community Member Learning and Participation in the CBET Project

The community-based approach applied by MCD in the local capacity building, planning, and implementation of the Giao Xuan CBET project reflects some of the non-oppressive/empowering aspects in the educational approach framed by Freire (1973). MCD included local people in all stages of the CBET project by trying to cooperate with the local authority and community members to publicize information of the CBET project and encourage people from various local organizations to participate in the project activities. Collective discussion and joint decisions between MCD and local people were consistently enforced. In the assessment of local potential for the development of the CBET project, local people shared their knowledge of the community and identified potential strengths and weaknesses in developing the CBET project. By being involved in the very early step of assessing the current conditions of the

community, local people obtained a better understanding of their place, their capacity, and their roles in the development of the CBET project. In addition, in the CBET awareness raising workshop, even though CBET was introduced to local people by MCD as a form of sustainable livelihood, local people were encouraged to share their thoughts on whether it was feasible to develop CBET in their social, environmental and economic context.

The relationship between MCD staff/consultants/educators and local people can be described as “teacher-student”, “student-teacher” as termed by Freire (1973), in the sense that in all the workshops in the capacity building program, local people were always encouraged to share relevant knowledge and experience. Many experts saw themselves as supporters and facilitators rather than as knowledge transmitters who came to Giao Xuan to enlighten local people with new knowledge. The exchange of knowledge and experience between MCD staff, consultants/educators and local people demonstrates that a co-learning process took place in the Giao Xuan CBET project. The consultants/educators did not deposit knowledge and information into local people; instead, they helped local people critically obtain new knowledge and skills and become confident in their existing knowledge and capacity. The exchange of knowledge between MCD staff and consultants also helped experts/educators to obtain a better understanding of the local contexts and needs. As a result, they could construct and revise the learning content and pedagogy in a more contextually appropriate way. As Mr. Vinh, a project consultant, indicated, “We including consultants, local people, and visitors all learned. We all learned from each other and 'grew up' together.”

Study findings illustrate that local knowledge was acknowledged and taken into account in the construction of eco-tours. Local people were invited to make decisions about the local

products that they wanted to sell to visitors. Local people also identified potential destinations to be included in eco-tours. Local people had opportunities to collaborate with different stakeholders in the CBET project such as MCD staff, consultants, local authorities, and their fellow villagers. Through various meetings with other stakeholders, community members learned to discuss, compromise, listen and open themselves to other perspectives on the construction of eco-tours. By creating opportunities for local people to be actively involved in the process of constructing eco-tours, MCD helped to increase community members' pride in local values and promote collective participation and decision-making among stakeholders.

Community members had an opportunity to learn and work in a democratic environment. They chose leaders of the CBET Cooperative themselves. The fact that all practices of the CBET initiative were made by majority vote of all the CBET Cooperative's members was critical and emancipatory. To some extent such practices contributed to transform Giao Xuan's management system. In contrast, community members argued that the practice of democracy in regard to other issues in Giao Xuan was still very superficial; decisions on the commune's issues were often made by people with power.

MCD also promoted community members' sense of ownership toward the CBET project. MCD included representatives of a wide range of local groups in the local capacity building program, and the planning and implementation of the CBET project. By doing this, MCD wanted the CBET project to be widely known and to encourage local participation (especially by the poor). In particular, the Giao Xuan Women's Association, the main local partner with MCD in the planning and implementation of the CBET project, was in charge of many important activities. Some examples were the mobilization of community resources at the community level and the

selection of local people to participate in the CBET project. Being a key part of the decision making process in many important project activities, local people learned how to actively develop and manage the CBET project rather than passively accept the development of CBET by an outside agency.

Denman (2001) asserts that training in local capacity building programs based on local communities' needs and input can contribute to the success in planning and implementation of a CBET project. Similar to findings of other studies on CBET (Laverack & Thangphet, 2007; Victurine, 2000), local capacity building in the Giao Xuan CBET project for the most part met local people's needs, but there was room for improvement. For example, the time allotted to the training workshops was too brief for community members to effectively absorb new knowledge and skills. The inclusion of both local school students and adult community members in English training caused an uncomfortable learning atmosphere for older community members. In addition, not all local participants could join all training workshops regularly due to barriers such as a heavy household workload, lack of child care, and being busy with other subsistence activities (e.g., wet rice farming). The findings point to the need of a thorough intersectional analysis in both the planning and implementing stages of the CBET Giao Xuan project. This important issue was highlighted in other community development projects with an integration of gender mainstreaming implemented by international organizations (Morley, 2010; Unterhalter & North, 2010).

MCD's goal was to support and empower local people so that they could become the owners of the CBET project. Thus, MCD made the effort to create opportunities for local people to take the initiative in and control many aspects of the project. For example, representatives of

the Giao Xuan Women's Association took control of selecting local potential participants of the CBET project and proposing the potential list of participants to MCD. The final decision was jointly made between MCD and the representatives of the Giao Xuan Women's Association. However, the finding shows that not all community members knew about the CBET project and concern was raised over the lack of transparency in choosing participants for the project. This reality indicates the complexity of the local power. In this case, the community-based approach that was implemented outside the surveillance of MCD could unintentionally create unequal participation among the community members. If participating in CBET means more opportunities for education and income, then unequal participation might have led to conflicts among community members over who participated in the CBET project.

8.1.2 Learning Centred on Experience

Community member learning centred upon their experience in implementing the CBET initiative and to some extent reflects four elements of Kolb's (1984) experiential learning cycle: 1) Concrete experiences; 2) Reflective observation; 3) Abstract conceptualization; and 4) Active experimentation. “Concrete experiences”, the first element of Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory cycle, was seen in the fact that host families, local guides, and the CBET Cooperative's leaders all learned from the concrete experiences of hosting and guiding visitors, and from working with other members in the CBET Cooperative. For example, some host families had a concrete experience with visitors' dissatisfaction with their stay because visitors misinterpreted host families' care as not respecting visitors' privacy. Community members then had an opportunity to reflect on this concrete experience, representing “reflective observation”. The

reflective observation passed through different stages from confusion about visitors' reaction and attitude, to analyzing, and finally clarifying what visitors' attitudes and reactions really meant and implied. From this reflective observation process, community members obtained a deeper understanding of different cultures. That is, community members were able to obtain the “abstract conceptualization” which posited that among Western individuals, privacy and freedom is of great concern. As a result, they changed the way they hosted visitors in an attempt at “active experimentation” to see if becoming more cautious of visitors' individual privacy and respecting visitors' food choices and eating customs could help avoid misunderstandings.

Even though community member learning in the Giao Xuan CBET project reflects some basic aspects of Kolb's experiential learning theory, it also shows the impact of power relations and individual contexts on experiential learning as conceptualized and discussed by Vince (1998) and Fenwick (2001). For example, when misunderstanding occurred between local host families and visitors, it was visitors who complained over their privacy being disrespected. On the contrary, instead of explaining that this was simply a common local practice for hosting people who live in the same house, community members just took in visitors' complaints, changed their own habit/daily practices, and adopted new behaviour when hosting visitors in their house. For example, Ms. Nga did not complain about the messiness that visitors created in her house, Ms. Kim did not ask visitors to stop showering in the rain in her front yard while wearing only underwear, and Mr. Long and his family members did not criticize visitors for staying up late. Local people were worried that visitors would not be happy if they were criticized by local hosts. All of these situations reflect the impact of power relations in understanding experiential learning as discussed by (Vince, 1998). It appeared that the tourism service providers in this case deferred

to the voices of tourism service consumers whereas the opposite was not true.

In addition, some of the above negative experiences that community members experienced was due to the difference between Western visitors' and local host cultures. Western visitors valued personal privacy and Vietnamese host families placed more value on communality. No similar misunderstanding between the local host families and local visitors was reported by community members. Thus, the same situation can be considered negative or positive depending on the view of people from different cultural contexts. This finding confirms the importance of context in understanding experiential learning processes (Fenwick, 2001).

Walter's (2009) study of a CBET project in Thailand showed that a substantial amount of knowledge and skills were obtained unintentionally by local people through “trial and error” with visitors (Walter, 2009, p. 525). Local people in the current study also learned substantially from “trial and error” not only with visitors, but also among the CBET Cooperative's members themselves. For example, host families individually and collectively reflected on both good and bad experiences while hosting visitors and transformed these experiences into specific knowledge and skills, such as what type of food to serve particular groups of visitors or knowledge on the difference between Vietnamese and Western cultures. Such knowledge eventually resulted in community members improving their experience in hosting visitors. Meanwhile leaders of the CBET Cooperatives learned from mistakes they made in managing CBET activities and working with other members in the CBET Cooperative. It is critical to note that the leaders were not discouraged by their mistakes and instead turned their unsuccessful experiences into an opportunity to learn. The fact that the leaders of the Giao Xuan CBET project acknowledged and embraced their mistakes helped them to redirect themselves in the learning

processes to become better leaders.

In addition, participating in local and national meetings on CBET development as well as joining study tours in other CBET sites was a powerful experience for community members to reflect on their ecotourism work and capacity. More importantly, for many community members, this was the first time they worked together with people outside of the village, such as MCD staff, CBET experts, local authorities, and Xuan Thuy National Park staff. Community members gained real social experience with people outside of their community and practiced discussion and public presentation skills. This helped them substantially improve their communication skills, which are essential in interacting with visitors and other community members.

8.1.3 From Incidental to Self-Directed Learning

The process of community member learning to develop and manage the CBET project could also be described as informal, incidental, and self-directed, as conceptualized by Foley and Schugurensky (Foley, 1998, 2004; Schugurensky, 2000). Foley (1998) argues that incidental learning often occurs when people are involved in collective action or a social movement such as "gardening or participating in a campaign to save a rainforest" (p. 141). Incidental learning in this study took place among individual community members when they hosted and guided visitors. For example, unanticipated visitor questions about the local community helped local tour guides and host families to improve their knowledge.

Even though learning new knowledge and skills was initially incidental and occurred in an informal setting such as interacting with visitors and other community members, community members formalized their learning by creating plans to obtain skills and knowledge. By doing

this, community member learning was also associated with self-directed learning - one form of informal learning described by Schugurensky (2000). Noticeably, in the learning process, local wisdom appeared to be one of the community members' most important learning resources. Community members reached out for knowledge from local Elders, relatives, neighbours, and friends. This finding adds to the evidence that community members are already the local experts and that their knowledge and wisdom is significantly important in CBET initiative development (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2009; Walter, 2009).

8.2 Learning to Protect and Conserve the Local Environment

The second focus of this study is on understanding the processes and outcomes of community member environmental learning that took place in the Giao Xuan CBET project. The second research question asked: 1) What environmental learning activities do community members experience in the Giao Xuan CBET project? 2) How do these environmental learning activities take place? and 3) What impact do these environmental learning activities have on community members' environmental knowledge, attitude, and actions? Study findings indicate that community members experienced environmental learning in both non-formal and informal settings and that local knowledge was greatly valued and incorporated into these learning activities. Environmental learning took place at both the individual and collective levels. Study findings also show that at least one community member experienced transformative learning through participating in the CBET project. Even though individual transformation occurred during the learning process, it was action-oriented collective learning that played a key role in making changes in the protection and conservation in the Giao Xuan commune and environment.

8.2.1 The Role of Local Knowledge

Clover (2002a) defines “conscientization” in environmental adult education as valuing ordinary people's existing ecological knowledge and taking local people's perspectives and daily experiences as the main source of learning and construction of new knowledge. The activities included in non-formal education and informal learning activities facilitated by MCD created space for local people to share their existing knowledge and experience. Local people's ecological knowledge was a valuable contribution to the success of various workshops on the current status of local wetland resources and management. Through the workshops, local people were also open to learning about socio-environmental issues such as an existing unequal access among people to local resources or traditional stereotypes of gender roles and relations. Notably, community members were considered local experts whose knowledge was greatly respected and became critically useful in various CBET activities such as building the Centre for Tourism Information and Community Climate Change Adaptation, conducting national and international research on conserving local birds and their habitats, and teaching traditional ecological knowledge to visitors on eco-tours.

Previous research has shown that the inclusion of local people's knowledge and perspectives in community development projects is critically important for (a) promotion of people's rights to economic and environmental resources (Walter, 2009), (b) helping local people affirm their ecological knowledge and practices to heal the lost harmony between their community and nature (Kapoor, 2003), and (c) helping indigenous communities to regain ownership to their ancestral land and natural resources (Zeppel, 2006). In contrast, other research has revealed that tourism development in protected areas that lacks local awareness, agreement

and consultation can result in ignoring or limiting local access to land and resources (Kent, 2006; Mackay & Caruso, 2004). In some cases, local communities even resist projects that go against their rights and might cause negative effects on their communities (LaRose, 2004). In the present study, the acknowledgement of local people's knowledge and perspectives helped MCD identify contextually appropriate solutions and strategies that responded to existing socio-environmental concerns (e.g. the purposeful inclusion of women as the centre of many CBET activities). Moreover, the inclusion of diverse local associations in the CBET project's activities helped MCD obtain support from both local government and ordinary people, which made the implementation the CBET project run more smoothly and effectively. More importantly, some local people even shifted their careers and actively contributed to the local environmental conservation movement because they found that their knowledge was acknowledged and greatly respected (e.g., Mr. Minh's case).

However, some aspects of local people's perspectives were not paid adequate attention. For example, local people's perspectives were clearly acknowledged regarding identifying local current socio-environmental issues, but the intervention applied by MCD in some cases seemed to focus more on the promotion of a long term environmental conservation agenda. The immediate needs of local people might have been given priority. For example, local people thought that more practical reading materials and technical guides on local livelihood activities - raising pigs and chickens or cultivating medical herbs - would have been more useful for them than general documents on the environment. Similarly, study tours for local students seemed to pay more attention to raising awareness of plants and endangered birds from professional experts and less to practical knowledge of aquatic species from local fishermen or aquaculturists.

8.2.2 Individual Learning and Transformation

Through non-formal and informal environmental learning activities in the CBET project in Giao Xuan, community members experienced both “instrumental learning” and “communicative learning”, as classified by Mezirow (1997). Instrumental learning refers to “learning to manipulate or control the environment or other people to enhance efficacy in improving performance” and communicative learning aims “to reach an understanding of the meaning of an interpretation or the justification for a belief” and often “involves understanding purposes, values, beliefs, and feelings” (Mezirow, 1997, p. 6). Regarding instrumental learning, through different workshops and environmental conservation promoting programs, community members learned knowledge of wetland resources, their impact on people's lives, and how to use and manage wetland resources sustainably. They also obtained information about pollution, climate change, and its consequences and learned environmentally friendly practices from visitors, such as sorting solid waste or how to turn organic waste into compost. Moreover, community members learned about the national and local rules and regulations protecting Xuan Thuy National Park, and ways to communicate with other people about environmental issues.

Communicative learning occurred among local community members and between community members and visitors. In different workshops and community dialogues on local socio-environmental problems and strategies to solve these problems, community members learned to listen to, understand, and be open towards other people's perspectives. Their communicative learning was also reinforced through an environmental awareness program in the commune collaboratively facilitated by MCD, the CBET core group, and representatives of other social organizations in the commune. Challenges that the CBET core group members faced in

this program helped to improve their communicative learning. For example, when the CBET core group members tried to confront and prevent other local people from harming the environment they had a chance to understand other people's feelings and beliefs on environmental issues. By communicating with other local people on environmental issues, the group members became critically aware of the connection between other local people's behaviour toward the environment and their socio-economic situation. Thus, this understanding helped the CBET core group both to find the most contextually appropriate strategies to cope with resistance from other local people against environmental conservation, and to convince them to get involved in protecting the local environment. In addition, community members had more awareness and responsibility for conserving the environment after they reflected on visitors' actions for the environment.

Community members also had an economic incentive for change towards protecting and conserving the environment. They were aware that protecting their local environment and maintaining their traditional livelihoods was a way to attract more visitors, and would help develop CBET and bring more income to their community. This finding has also been documented in other research on ecotourism projects (Kiss, 2004; Kontogeorgopoulos, 2005; Stronza, 2007; Walter, 2009). However, previous research revealed that CBET projects do not automatically change local people's sense of the need for environmental conservation. In order for community members to pay more attention to environmental conservation, the income that communities gain from CBET needs to be high enough to cover the local communities' basic livelihood first (Kiss, 2004). In the Giao Xuan CBET project, even though the income from CBET was just supplementary income, there was still a great increase in community members'

sense of protecting and conserving environment. It could be that community members changed not only because of an economic incentive but also because of traumatic experiences that they had with natural disasters in the past. Community members recalled severe storms and floods that occurred in the past. Community members also implied that the damage and loss of both human and material resources caused by natural disasters made them become more aware of the need to responsibly protect the local environment.

Other research (e.g., Stem, Lassoie, Lee, & Deshler, 2003) has shown that ecotourism activities and ecotourists do not influence local people's attitudes and behaviour towards the environment. In contrast, the influence of visitors on Giao Xuan local people's behaviour and attitude towards the environment was substantial. For instance, many CBET core group members, who had the chance to directly interact with visitors, developed a stronger sense of pride for their local wetland biodiversity and a broader sense of protecting the environment for the benefit of local people and surrounding areas. They also developed a better sense of responsibility for protecting their own natural resources and actively encouraged other people to get involved in activities to protect the environment.

In addition, the findings showed that one community member – Mr. Minh – experienced transformative learning. Based on Mezirow's (2000) concept of transformative learning, Mr. Minh's transformational process could be summarized into three stages. These stages were: 1) The context for transformation to occur; 2) The importance of reflection and relating to other people's experience; 3) The process of exploring options for new roles. Each of the above main stages of Mr. Minh's transformational process contains sub-components reflecting different aspects/steps of Mezirow's ten steps of transformative learning, which I describe below.

The context in which Mr. Minh's transformation occurred did not originate from a “disorienting dilemma,” but was the result of a long process of “assimilative learning” (Schugurensky, 2002) that took place when Mr. Minh worked collaboratively with researchers and scientists on different projects on bird and environmental conservation in Giao Xuan. During his collaboration with researchers and scientists, Mr. Minh gradually recognized that an extensive number of birds that he had hunted in the past were endangered and could become extinct. With this recognition, Mr. Minh self-reflected and felt guilty (“self-examination” and “critical assessment of assumptions”). On the one hand, he felt guilty of his excessive hunting; on the other, he believed that the bird hunting he and other local bird hunters did in the past saved their families from hunger and was necessary.

Mr. Minh's transformational process further progressed when he was offered an official job as staff member in a local bird conservation organization, then as a local mangrove forest guard, and lastly as a local CBET tour guide. These jobs not only helped him earn enough money to solve his family's financial difficulties, but more importantly, they also provided him opportunities to compare his experiences with that of other people (“Recognition that one's discontent and the process of transformation are shared”). Through his jobs, Mr. Minh had the chance to participate in different workshops and promoting programs on bird and environmental conservation. These workshops and programs created space for Mr. Minh to discuss and share his experience and knowledge with other experts/conservers, and to individually and collectively reflect on environmental issues. This helped Mr. Minh become confident in his knowledge, and gain more insight into the relation between local wetland resources and sustainable development. Mr. Minh also recognized that he did not want to and could no longer be an outsider to the local

collective movement for environmental conservation. He admitted that, “Sooner or later, you need to conform to the rules and regulations, so it is better to do it now.” Thus he became more certain of his decision to change his career from a bird hunter to a bird protector. All these changes reflect O'Sullivan's (2002) emphasis on how the transformative learning process often involves becoming conscious of the relationship between humans and the natural world, which results in shifting to a more sustainable way of life.

Even though Mr. Minh faced many challenges in his new jobs, he still found them very meaningful and wanted to permanently work in the bird and environmental conservation field (“Planning a course of action”). In order to fulfil his new roles, Mr. Minh participated in all training workshops organized for CBET participants, bird protectors, and mangrove forest guards. However, he did not necessarily need to learn new knowledge and skills for his jobs, as commonly described in Mezirow’s next steps of transformative learning (“Acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one's plans and provisional trying of new roles”). Mr. Minh viewed these workshops as a chance to share his knowledge rather than learning something new, because he himself was already a local expert on birds. As he said regarding books provided at the workshops, “I already knew about all the birds listed in here, so I don’t need the books. I just use them to show tourists as evidence if they seem to be in doubt of what I am telling them.” Even though he learned all the rules and regulations on local environmental conservation to fulfill his job as a local mangrove forest guard, his experience and understanding of local people in his homeland helped him have his own “soft” strategies to convince people to understand the importance of protecting the local environment. These strategies originated from his own intuition and experience and he found them very effective. It is clear that Mr. Minh's new roles

provided him with opportunities to share his knowledge and learn to work with both conservers and ordinary people, which made him find the value and meaningfulness in his capacity and contribution (“Building competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships”).

It is also noticeable that one's socio-economic status in this case had a great influence on the transformational process. If Mr. Minh had not been offered different jobs that helped him to support his family, it is unclear if he would have shifted his career and become involved in the local environmental conservation. In addition, Mr. Minh contributed to a societal process of environmental transformation by actively getting involved in raising other people's consciousness on the importance of environmental conservation.

In summary, Mr. Minh's transformative learning confirmed some phases of Mezirow's transformative learning. However, the findings also challenge two particular phases in Mezirow's transformative learning framework: “disorienting dilemma” and “acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one's plans.” In Mr. Minh's case, the transformative learning process did not originate from any specific disorienting dilemmas, and instead was the result of an accumulation of experiences. In addition, his transformative learning did not require the acquisition of new knowledge and skills, rather, it was more about how his existing knowledge of the local environment was respected and acknowledged.

8.2.3 Action-Oriented Collective Learning Activities and Social Change

Clover's concept of “educative activism” (2002a) calls for action, aims to empower people and help them recognize their capacity as agents of change. Community members in the Giao Xuan CBET project had a chance to apply skills and knowledge that they learned from non-

formal education programs into many informal collective environmental conservation activities. These included initiating an environmental awareness program, setting up community learning spaces, rehabilitating and protecting the local mangrove forest, and cleaning up the commune's coastal area. This informal learning was action-oriented and local community members took control in these learning activities, helping community members to empower themselves and become more aware of their capacity to change. One of the CBET core group's members affirmed:

MCD supported us with financial resources for these activities. They also gave us suggestions on the goal of each activity that we should obtain, but we participated in deciding the content and forms of these activities and it is us who implemented all of the activities. Thus, our activeness and creativeness were promoted. (Ms. Kim)

This finding is consistent with the view that people who are the most affected by a situation should be agents of change for socio-environmental change to occur (Clover, 2002a). This finding is consistent with other research on environmental adult education and community development (Clover & Follen, 2004; Tabiedi, 2004). Community members identified their existing problems and their learning needs together with educators, they contributed their own knowledge and experience to the design of curriculum, and consequently, took informed actions to solve and manage local socio-ecological issues (Kapoor, 2003). Moreover, study findings also show that local people were very creative in the action they took to promote local environmental conservation. In the Giao Xuan CBET project, art-based activities such as drama and songs were used by local people as an effective medium for conveying environmental education messages to their fellow villagers. They described the process of collectively writing scripts, practicing and performing dramas to be fun. This affirmed Clover et al's (2013) view that:

Arts-based learning is also fun and fun is a factor that is often missing in forms of adult

education that emphasize critique and address serious socio-environmental issues... the art had a very unique way of making a difficult subject easier to digest and process without taking away from the gravity of issue. (p. 22)

Local people in this case study were very active in joining all environmental activities incorporated into the Giao Xuan CBET project. However, they could have been more active in maintaining some activities that helped to promote local people's environmental knowledge. My impression was that, after the project ended, local people seemed to care less about promoting environmental conservation but more about running their tourism business. Simple examples include putting away documents related to environment and climate change and waiting for the project's staff to help with replacing torn menus that labelled with environmental concepts, which could have been easily replaced by local people.

Clover et al (2013) tell us that “collective learning and action is more powerful in terms of socio-environmental change than individual learning and action” (p. 3). In this study, with the assistance of MCD, community members collectively created learning spaces in their community by building the Ecolife Cafe and setting up the Community Learning Centre. The collective work not only made community members feel helpful when they contributed to the communal work, but also increased their ability to work together in pursuit of shared objectives. However, as pointed out above, some issues related to the Community Learning Centre's management and the inappropriateness and limited availability of reading materials made the Centre inconvenient for local people to access. This suggests that the learning resources could be more useful if they are contextually and culturally shaped and meet the needs and intentions of the people involved (Clover et al, 2013; Butterwick & Selman, 2003). In this case, besides MCD and other outsiders' support in providing more appropriate reading resources to the Centre, additional support from

the local government might have helped. For example, additional funding could be provided to those in charge of the library section in the Community Learning Centre to allow greater community access to the materials. This also underscores the necessity of collective work not only between MCD and local community members, but also among MCD, community members, and the local authority in order to enable socio-environmental change.

Finally, community members had the chance to collectively become involved in taking concrete environmental action such as rehabilitating and protecting the local mangrove forest and cleaning the coastal area. Such collective action-oriented learning activities were an empowering resource and consequently led to socio-environmental change in Giao Xuan commune. Community members were conscious of the trash issue in the commune, they responded to it, collectively found a solution for it, and finally managed to control it. Notably, the socio-environmental change in Giao Xuan commune has now spread to its neighbouring communes and to some extent, helped to form a waste management movement among the buffer communes of Xuan Thuy National Park. Thus, this makes the changes in Giao Xuan more influential and meaningful.

8.3 Impacts on Local Women's Empowerment¹¹

The last focus of this study is on the impact of the integration of a gender perspective into the planning and implementation of the CBET project on local women's empowerment. The third research question asked: 1) What do local people learn about gender equality in the Giao Xuan CBET project? and 2) What impact do learning about gender equality and the planning and implementation of the CBET project have on the empowerment of local women in the Giao

¹¹ This section draws on the analysis made in Tran and Walter (2014)

Xuan community?

The gender analysis of the Giao Xuan CBET project showed how integrating a gender perspective into the non-formal education in the local capacity building program, and the planning and implementation of community-based ecotourism project, may result in many positive benefits for local women. In terms of Longwe's (2002) empowerment framework, it is clear that women participating in the Giao Xuan CBET project experienced significant benefits in welfare, access, conscientization, participation and control.

Moreover, changes were experienced by both men and women in their understanding and performance of gender roles, and to a limited extent in gender relations and towards a more equitable division of labor. However, it is also true that in almost all cases, women's reproductive labor in hosting ecotourist guests in their homes was intensified, much in the same way as reported in research by Tucker and Boonabaana (2012), and Reimer and Walter (2013), respectively.

Unlike the Samsak women in Schellhorn's (2010) study of an ecotourism project in Lombok, Indonesia, however, women in Giao Xuan who took on new productive roles as tour guides did not experience social disapproval, and in some cases even gained the active support of their husbands, who themselves took on new gender roles in caring for children, cooking and household cleaning. In many respects, Giao Xuan women's experience was similar to that of women in Stronza's (2005) research in the Peruvian Amazon: they took on added burdens of domestic labor in tourism, but also assumed new roles which increased their decision-making power and community involvement.

The importance of psychological, economic, social and political dimensions of women's

participation in the CBET project was also evident (Scheyvens, 2000, 2007). Giao Xuan women reported not only more income, but also greater self-confidence, more involvement and voice in community activities, and the adoption of new leadership roles in the local political arena. Taken together, these changes reinforced Swain and Swain's (2004) argument for a focus on women's agency, gender awareness and equity in CBET development planning.

As findings indicate, the issue of inequities based on social class, childcare, and the problem of violence against women were not fully addressed by the Giao Xuan CBET project. In the first instance, families with more economic resources were more likely to take the risk of business loans to develop ecotourism accommodations, while those with less income could not do so, thus potentially reinforcing economic inequalities in the community. It was also clear that while a good number of men stepped up to take on new reproductive responsibilities in the family (mostly in cooking and cleaning), some women with childcare responsibilities were not able to fully participate in the project trainings.

Finally, male violence directed against women and the patriarchal gender norms which supported this was a continuing problem for women in the project, with no direct project-supported amelioration in sight for women, who nonetheless were organizing themselves in the community to resist and change the violence against them. Women took on this community leadership in no small part due to increased self-confidence, communication skills, organizing capacity and agency promoted by their participation in the CBET project.

8.4 Recommendations for CBET Practice in Giao Xuan

This section presents recommendations for how to improve the educational aspects of the

planning and implementation of the CBET project in Giao Xuan.

8.4.1 Improving the Educational Activities and Interventions in the CBET Project

Findings indicate that even though community members were quite satisfied with the training and workshops provided in the local capacity building program, some of them skipped workshop sessions or in some cases even gave up participating in classes because of the inappropriate educational setting and content (e.g. English classes). An application of some aspects of Freirian empowering education in the English training area of the Giao Xuan CBET project could be helpful in this case. For example, English teachers could apply the “problem-posing” strategy in English classes. Instead of just teaching community members English skills, s/he should have a “dialogue” with learners to understand their concerns over the content and pedagogy applied in the class. If such a “problem-posing” approach had been applied, English teachers might have been aware of senior community members' discomfort about studying English with local secondary students.

Moreover, the employment of “problem-posing” and “dialectical dialogue” strategies in English teaching may also help to improve the issue of inappropriate content in English classes that did not meet the practical desires of community members. Again, through having dialogues with community members, English teachers can understand their learners' particular goals in learning English. English teachers could involve local people in the design of English materials, such as asking learners what conversations they often have in hosting or guiding visitors, or what they want to ask visitors and then gradually incorporating such conversations into English lessons. If the English material is designed with the contribution of community members'

practical experience in hosting and guiding visitors, it may become more relevant to their particular needs. Moreover, findings also show that even though community members faced many difficulties in learning English and computer skills, some of them created their own ways to learn such new skills. Thus, through dialogues with teachers and other classmates, community members can have opportunities to share their difficulties in learning new skills as well as learn from each other different creative ways of learning.

According to the project staff, when community members skipped workshop sessions, their reasons focused on family or communal events. However, study findings indicate that in addition to the above reasons, other common reasons included a lack of practical utility in classes and workshops, a lack of child care, being exhausted from working in the wet rice fields, and cooking and other housework responsibilities. These existing issues might have been caused by the lack of an intersectional analysis in the Giao Xuan CBET project assessment phase. The assessment might have overlooked some important local issues. Thus, the findings confirm some critiques over the implementation of the gender mainstreaming approach in community development projects. Specifically, applications of the gender mainstreaming approach sometimes pay more attention to the link between number of women included in the development project, but lack adequate consideration of local social aspects that have impacts on the promotion of gender equality. Therefore, a more thorough assessment of the local social, political, and economical context and community needs in the CBET project may bring better outcomes for gender empowerment as well as community development in Giao Xuan.

Moreover, community members might have felt it inappropriate to criticize instructors in person, or some community members may not have been confident in sharing their thoughts

verbally with project experts or staff. Thus, short, anonymous written evaluations for local people might help provide more feedback about workshop attendance and utility. Local people may feel more comfortable to share what they really think about the content and pedagogy of the workshops and classes this way. With this feedback, project staff, experts, or workshop facilitators can revise and tailor their curriculum to address local people's needs.

More training on the learning of computer skills is also highly recommended. Findings provide evidence that the majority of the Giao CBET Cooperative's members are still computer illiterate. The short training time and lack of computers for local people to learn and practice their skills were two barriers preventing community members from learning computer skills. The lack of these skills has prevented community members from obtaining sources of new knowledge and ideas from the Internet; and to some extent from connecting to other people, including potential visitors. Lack of computer knowledge and skills was also one of the main reasons that the local community was still dependent on outside agencies in terms of marketing their CBET initiative. Thus, it is necessary to have a longer training time and more support so that community members can at least obtain basic computer skills. If possible, more funding could be allotted for buying used desktop computers and installing them in the local Community Learning Centre for local people to practice their computer skills. Or the CBET Cooperative could cooperate with the Giao Xuan secondary school (which is located close to many of the CBET Cooperative members' houses) so that CBET Cooperative members could use the school computer room. If available, the local government could provide funding for the CBET Cooperative so that it can invite local computer teachers to provide lessons to the CBET Cooperative's members. If community members improve their technology skills and attract more

visitors to the community, the local schools may also indirectly benefit. In fact, many delegations of visitors have already donated money directly to the local school to help improve its infrastructure or have shared their knowledge and skills with local teachers and students when they visit Giao Xuan (e.g offering free English class, buying or planting trees in the schools or repainting the school and cleaning the school campus).

To raise local people's awareness of environment issues, more reading materials that directly serve local people's needs and priorities might be included in the reading resources of the Local Community Learning Centre. It might be also useful to include more up-to-date readings, books, stories, pictures, animations, and so on. A solution to the limited hours and access to the Centre must also be found. For example, if additional funding were available, the person in charge of the book cases might be able to work more regularly and for a longer period of time. Alternatively, a different location for the resources and/or management of the resources could be found on a voluntary basis.

The curriculum content of the study tour for students could also be expanded to cover local aquatic species as well as mangrove plants and birds. The location of the study tour could include local aquaculture farming areas outside of the core zone rather than just in the mangrove forest. The tour might include consultation with the owners of these aquaculture farming areas who could provide students with practical knowledge and experience. Thus, local students would be provided with practical knowledge from real life in their commune rather than just purely “scientific” knowledge on plants and birds from environmental experts.

8.4.2 Promoting Critical Reflection and Experiential Learning

In learning to develop and manage the CBET project, critical reflection was a key component that helped local people obtain new knowledge and skills. Local people in the Giao Xuan CBET project individually and collectively reflected on their experience in hosting and guiding through discussions with each other at the regular CBET Cooperative meetings. However, it may have been more effective if an agenda had been developed before each meeting to draw CBET members' attention to a critical evaluation of their experience. For example, instead of just verbally sharing whatever they could remember of their experience during the meetings, individuals might have been encouraged to write down what they experienced, their thoughts, and observations they obtained from hosting and guiding visitors. They could then bring these notes to the communal meetings to share with their CBET colleagues. After sharing their experience and discussing possible solutions for difficulties and challenges, these notes could be compiled, collected and turned into a reference so that any member of the CBET Cooperative could read them later. Or this collection could be used as a curricular or reference for new local participants who want to join the CBET project.

Community members acknowledged that they also learned tremendously from study tours to other CBET sites. However, because of the financial constraints from the funding agency, local people only had a few opportunities to go on such study tours. After 2011, no additional funding has been provided to the Giao Xuan CBET project. It is thus advisable that the local authority and the Giao Xuan CBET Cooperative cooperate with each other on budgeting for such study tours to other CBET sites. Instead of sending a large group of people to visit and learn from other CBET sites, the Giao Xuan CBET Cooperative members could take

turns or go in small groups to save money. In addition to the CBET Cooperative members, representatives of the local authority and ordinary local people should also be included in the study tour. Even though the CBET Cooperative members directly participate in hosting visitors, other ordinary people who live in Giao Xuan also have an influence on welcoming visitors and should also know about CBET. If during the trips to other CBET sites, Giao Xuan community members find that certain sites do exceptionally well in managing CBET, they can budget and invite some active participants from these sites to come to Giao Xuan and share their knowledge and experience with the whole Giao Xuan community.

To make the learning experience more effective, a curriculum incorporating the four stages of experiential learning introduced by the Audubon Expedition Institute (AEI) based on Kolb's experiential learning model could be used for future study tours for community members in Giao Xuan (Wittmer & Johnson, 2000). The stages of experiential learning introduced by AEI include: 1) Preparation; 2) Direct experience; 3) Reflection and transformation; and 4) Application. In stage one - preparation, before each study tour, community members could have meetings to discuss about the learning objectives they have for a particular study tour. Community members could discuss which aspects of CBET they want to explore in the study tour site, such as ecotourism activities, food and accommodation services, organizational structures and management, and local tourism destinations. Community members might also discuss who they will talk to during the study tour (e.g., leader of the sites, tour-guides, host families, other ordinary local people) and what questions to ask. If people who plan the tours have information about the site, they can share this with the rest of community members ahead of the tour. In stage two, direct experience, during the study tour, community members could

take notes of their observations based on themes or aspects that they had discussed before the trip. Community members could write down what they observe, what they learn, what activities they participate in, whether these are good or not good, what activities they want to try out at the Giao Xuan CBET site, and what CBET aspects or activities they do not want to include in Giao Xuan. If the trip lasts for more than one day, at the end of each day, community members could gather and briefly share their observations and experience. In stage three, reflection and transformation, after the study tour, community members could hold meetings to discuss the study tour experience with each other and with other villagers in the community. In the future, if local people obtain better technology skills, it might also be useful if they take pictures or videos during their study tours and share these with other community members. There may or may not be any transformation that takes place at this stage after the study tour. However, reflection is a pivotal component and needs to be enforced. In the last stage, application, community members could collectively analyze, sort, and choose what they found the most useful and appropriate aspects to apply to the CBET project in Giao Xuan.

Finally, community members claimed that visitors' feedback on their stay in Giao Xuan was one important source that helped community members improve their knowledge of and skills in doing CBET. However, to date, community members only verbally asked for feedback from visitors. A short but more formal written feedback card for visitors could be much more useful and effective. Community members can systematically collect, synthesize, and discuss visitors' feedback with their peers for the overall improvement of CBET implementation and management.

8.4.3 Promoting Action-Oriented Collective Learning

Study findings illustrate that action-oriented collective learning activities played a significant role in making changes in the local community (e.g., environmentally friendly practices). Since environmental problems cannot be solved solely by community members of Giao Xuan commune, it is advisable that such action-oriented environmental learning include other neighbouring communes. For example, the key active participants of the Giao Xuan CBET project together with representatives of the Giao Xuan social associations (e.g., the Youth Association, the Women's Association, the Farmers Association, etc), and other ordinary local people who are interested in contributing to the communal work could work together with representatives of the social associations and ordinary people of other communes in the buffer zone of Xuan Thuy National Park to promote a movement for environmental conservation.

Other practices that local participants in the CBET project learned such as new household hygiene practices, cooking, food safety and nutrition, appeared to be very useful both for hosting and the improvement of their health. Thus, it might be useful if local participants of the CBET project organize some meetings or informal gatherings and share their knowledge about these practices with other villagers. Collectively learning about such practices could raise the public's awareness of better hygiene practices and contribute to local people's general health.

8.4.4 Increasing Community Participation

Not all people in Giao Xuan were confident and aware of their right to raise their voice about their needs. Some local people believed that because the community was financially supported in new livelihood development, it was inappropriate to make requests for what they

wanted. Therefore it is important to ensure that local people be made aware of their right to raise their voices and participate in decision-making processes. The project staff may want to ensure that all participants are encouraged to talk and share their thoughts to avoid the situation in which only local elites have input in the planning and implementation of the CBET project.

Encouragement should be continuously reinforced to gradually boost local people's confidence in speaking up. More informal talks and meetings between project staff, experts, and educators outside of organized workshops may also help local people be more confident and open.

MCD made an effort to promote local CBET ownership by giving the representatives of the Giao Xuan Women Association the right to choose potential participants in the CBET project. However, some local people who did not participate in the CBET project complained about the non-transparency and unfairness of this selection process done by people with power. Lack of information about the CBET project caused by internal power differences might have excluded some local people from participating in the CBET project. More control or surveillance from MCD on the selection process might prevent such situation from occurring.

Study finding also point out that inequities based on social class and lack of child care prevented local people, especially women, from meaningful participation in the CBET project. In addition to a more in-depth assessment of community needs and the local context as mentioned in the previous section, some specific interventions may help to avoid such inequities. For example, implications for enhancing a more meaningful involvement in the CBET project include interest-free ecotourism loans or a sliding fee structure for poorer families, and the provision of child care for women participants. In addition, the problem of violence against local women remained outstanding. Even though it is unclear if this problem has any influence on the

participation of local women in the CBET project, it is highly recommended that this issue be addressed in the Giao Xuan CBET project. MCD male staff can propose the formation of a CBET men's group to work at changing established patriarchal norms in Giao Xuan and pressuring male peers to understand and change their violent behaviour.

8.5 Research Limitations and Recommendations for Further Research

Although this study addressed community member learning, which is an under-researched aspect of adult learning in CBET, it was mostly limited to the learning of community members who participated directly in the CBET project. Other local people were also included in this research, however, it only explored their general views towards the CBET project and not the learning aspects they might have experienced. Further research might include the examination on learning of local people who do not directly participate in the CBET project to see what impact a CBET project may have on a community as a whole.

Further research could be conducted to examine how the Giao Xuan CBET project operates after a longer period of time since its inception (e.g 10 or 15 years). Such research may inform us if the Giao Xuan CBET project can still achieve its long-term goal of being a site for promoting community members' environmental knowledge and sense of responsibility for environmental conservation, changes in gender relations, and sustainable community development.

Further research can also examine whether Giao Xuan community members can still maintain the existing quality of the ecotourism product and attract visitors. This may be especially important to examine if community members are not receiving additional training for

ecotourism service skills and knowledge. Community members claimed that they now hardly have any opportunities to go outside of the commune to participate in workshops/meetings or visit other CBET sites. Considering that more CBET sites will soon be opened in Vietnam (because the development of ecotourism has become one of the national tourism strategies), the number of visitors to Giao Xuan may also be affected by such competition.

At the time of this fieldwork, local people and authorities claimed that there was not yet any negative impact on the local environment and culture due to CBET development. For example, Mr. Sinh, the director of Xuan Thuy National Park and a consulting expert, talked about the impact of CBET on the local culture and environment: “So far, everything is under control. No negative impact on the local environment and culture.” However, literature has pointed out that ecotourism development with an increase in visitors coming to local communities can cause negative impacts on the local environment and culture if there is lack of adequate management (Honey, 2008; Zeppel, 2006, 2007). Therefore, it is important for further research to focus on the possible impacts that CBET may have on the local environment and culture and how Giao Xuan community will handle such possible negative impacts to ensure sustainable development in their commune.

A great number of visitors in Giao Xuan were university students who visited Giao Xuan as voluntourists. In addition to participating in various local environmental and social activities, voluntourists, including both domestic and international students, spent much of their time helping the local secondary students with learning (e.g., teaching English or learning about environment). However, this study did not include students at the local secondary schools as research participants. Therefore, further research can explore the impact that voluntourists may

have on local school activities and students. Such research may provide important implications for both Vietnamese and international educational institutions in terms of constructing and implementing their curriculum on community service learning or student study abroad programs in such a way that benefits both students in such programs and the Giao Xuan secondary school and community.

For the most part, visitors in this study had a positive impact on the local community. They shared and contributed their knowledge to make changes in community members' environmental knowledge, attitude, and actions. Community members also widened their outlook toward other cultures through hosting visitors. However, even though CBET has been seen as an important site for educating visitors about local culture and human rights and for increasing visitors' environmental awareness (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2009; Honey, 2008, Suansri, 2003; Walter & Reimer, 2011) this study did not examine this aspect in the Giao Xuan CBET project. Further research should explore “what” and “how” visitors learn from their CBET trip and whether the learning outcomes that visitors experience in their trip lead to any changes in visitors' knowledge, attitude, and actions toward environmental and social causes.

Further research might be also be directed at understanding how changes in gender roles and relations in a community-based ecotourism project of this sort may be different or similar to other development projects; in particular, those centred on natural resources management or other forms of tourism. This study does not address, for example, the comparative advantage women may possess for ecotourism in their expert knowledge of particular wild foods, plants, food processing, marine life, wildlife, ecosystems, arts, crafts and livelihood production. Nor does it report in any great detail on the gender roles and relations of men in the project. These are

discussed only in as much as they enter into the picture presented of women. Furthermore, a more comprehensive community study might better capture various dimensions of social class, ethnicity, culture, kinship, leadership structures and social context, as these interconnect with gender.

8.6 Conclusions

This research has examined community member learning in CBET. In the Giao Xuan CBET project, community members learned to develop and manage the CBET project, to protect and conserve the local environment, and to make changes in gender roles and relations. Community members learned from both conceptual and action-oriented collective learning activities. Moreover, this learning took place in both non-formal and informal settings. The learning processes that community members experienced combined their existing knowledge with new knowledge and skills they learned from the local capacity building program, from hosting visitors, and developing CBET as a new form of livelihood in their community. Noticeably, the knowledge and skills that community members obtained from the planning and implementing the CBET project were transferable and helped them improve other areas of their lives. The research also identified a strong link between the approach employed in a community development project and the learning outcomes that community members obtain. The CBET project brought new source of income to the local community, and promoted powerful changes in environmental conservation and local gender roles and relations. In this study, MCD's community-centred approach incorporating a limited gender perspective enabled community members to empower themselves and learn to be lifelong learners, planners, and owners of the

CBET project, and agents of change in their community. However, a lack of an in-depth intersectional analysis on social aspects both in planning and implementation of the project has not alleviated existing inequities based on social class, childcare, and local domestic violence. In addition, inadequate time and inappropriate pedagogy in some capacity training sections such as computer skills and English had led to unsatisfactory learning outcomes. Even though there is still much room for the improvement of the planning and implementation of the CBET project, this research indicates that with the support of MCD and other stakeholders in the CBET project, community members have actively and successfully learned to make CBET an effective strategy to link the development of ecotourism with sustainable local development.

8.7 Closing Remarks

Conducting this research project was a long and meaningful journey to me. In addition to what I learned about community member learning in a CBET project, I learned new things about myself as a researcher. First, I learned the complexity of my role as a researcher even when I am a native Vietnamese person and conducting research in a Vietnamese community. This is not the first time I conducted research in Vietnam. However, in the past, my research was conducted in a university setting in the city and this is the first time I conducted research in a Vietnamese rural community setting. I came to learn that the role of the researcher is not as simple as roles I would read about in books before entering the field, such as that of an “indigenous insider” or “indigenous outsider” or both, but the role was complicated and changed based on how my relationship with community members progressed.

Regarding my role as a researcher in this project, I also faced a challenge of how to

balance my role as a researcher and a close friend to community members. For example, I needed to create close relationships so that community members could willingly share their stories with me as they would with a trusted friend or family member. I learned how to both understand their stories in CBET in-depth and listen carefully to stories about other difficulties in their life, even though many times the stories went beyond the scope of the research. I had to be careful not to make community members have a false impression or hope that I could solve their problems because of my position as a researcher with a high formal education. I also needed to learn how to distribute my time/attention to different community members. I have to say that balancing such roles was really a challenge.

I keep thinking about what can I do to give back to community members considering how helpful and supportive they were with this research project. I understand that in my position as a researcher, it is out of my capacity to solve many of their problems. However, what can I do or what do community members obtain from participating in my research project? I have struggled with this question for a long time with unease. On my last trip to Vietnam in May, 2014 to report back to community members, Mr. Long told me: “Thank you for coming back and thank you for giving us an opportunity to share our experience.” When I heard Mr. Long's words I happily realized that this is the answer that I have been looking for. I hope that my effort to conduct this research in a thorough and respectful way could make community members be aware of how important they are to this research project and how much I respect their invaluable contribution. In addition, I also hope that having shared with me their experience in doing CBET, community members might have had an opportunity to reflect on their experience in doing a completely new livelihood activity in their commune and that they might also better understand themselves in

many new important roles.

I also learned that as a researcher I needed to accept that researching is an unending process. Even at the moment, when I am writing these closing remarks, there are still many questions about the Giao Xuan CBET project that I want to learn about. However, these unanswered questions are not necessarily a bad thing because they also teach me that an unending curiosity can lead me to other research ideas in the future.

Last but not least, beyond all the findings that I obtained about the Giao Xuan CBET project, I wonder if I have been able to create a meaningful relationship with local community members – an important goal that I set out when I started this research project.

One week after I returned from my fieldwork in 2012, my home phone rang while I was putting my daughter to sleep. My husband picked up the phone and handed it to me. From the other side I heard: “Was that Linh? This is uncle Long. How was your dissertation defence? Was it a success?” It was Mr. Long from Giao Xuan commune – where I conducted my fieldwork for this doctoral research project. It was such a nice surprise that I received a phone call from one of the participants of my research project. Mr. Long simply thought that after finishing collecting data, I returned to Vancouver, and defended my PhD project right away. Giao Xuan local people's warm care made me feel so touched. Their invaluable care and support has been a great encouragement and to some extent a nice pressure for me to try my best with my research project not for the sake of finishing my degree but for them, lifelong learners, whom I have learned so much from and think of with much respect. Many small but invaluable gestures that the community made for me helped me realize that I might have created a meaningful relationship with Giao Xuan community members. These included: Mr. Long's phone call to Canada from

Vietnam, community members' willingness to share their personal and sometime sensitive stories, their warm welcome during my recent trip to Giao Xuan after two years, their kind, sincere words and wishes, the long holding of hands when I said good bye to Giao Xuan community members, a bottle of water and a fruit that a community member picked up in their garden to send along with me when I traveled back to Hanoi from Giao Xuan...And in the end, I do hope that community members share the same thoughts with me - together we were successful in creating a meaningful and trusted relationship.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: LETTER OF INITIAL CONTACT FOR PROJECT STAFF AND CONSULTANTS

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA



Department of Educational Studies
2125 Main Mall
Vancouver, B.C.
Canada, V6T 1Z4
Tel: (604) 822-5374
Fax: (604) 822-4244
<http://www.edst.educ.ubc.ca>

Letter of Initial Contact

Community-Based Ecotourism as a Site of Environmental Adult Education: A Case Study at Xuan Thuy National Park, Vietnam

Principal Investigator:

Pierre Walter
Associate Professor
Department of Educational Studies
University of British Columbia
Email: XXX
Telephone: XXX

Co-Investigator:

Linh Tran
PhD Candidate
Department of Educational Studies
University of British Columbia
Email: XXX
Telephone: XXX (Canada)
or XXX (Vietnam)

Dear Sir/Madam,

My name is Linh Tran. I am a doctoral student in the Department of Educational Studies at the University of British Columbia. I am currently conducting research for my PhD dissertation titled "Community-based Ecotourism as a Site of Environmental Adult Education: A Case Study at Xuan Thuy National Park, Vietnam," supervised by Dr. Pierre Walter.

As part of the dissertation, I am conducting interviews with the project staff and consultants who have involved in assisting the formation and implementation of the Community-based

Ecotourism Project in Giao Xuan commune. There will be two interview sessions. Each session will take approximately 1-2 hour(s). With your permission, I would like to audio record and take notes each session.

I will include the resulting analysis in my PhD dissertation and present it in my PhD dissertation defense. The dissertation will be submitted to the Department of Educational Studies at the University of British Columbia. The results of this study may be included as part of a scientific report, presented at conferences and/or published in article form in one or more scholarly journals.

I am particularly interested in finding the project staff and consultants who might consider participating in my research and sharing your experience and views about the Community-based Ecotourism Project in Giao Xuan.

Participating in this study may help you and other experts in the field identify ways of creating more appropriate policies and programs for the development of Community-based Ecotourism that might best support local communities. The information that you share will also help to set up a discussion of viable models of Community-based Ecotourism in Vietnam and beyond.

Your participation in this research project is completely voluntary and you have the right to stop or discontinue at any time during the course of the study with no negative consequences. If you would like to participate, please contact me at the email address or phone number listed on the first page of this letter. I look forward to hearing from you. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Yours sincerely,
Linh Tran

APPENDIX 2: INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM FOR PROJECT STAFF AND CONSULTANTS



THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Department of Educational Studies
2125 Main Mall
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Interview Consent Form

**Community-Based Ecotourism as a Site of Environmental Adult Education:
A Case Study at Xuan Thuy National Park, Vietnam**

Principal Investigator:

Pierre Walter
Associate Professor
Department of Educational Studies
University of British Columbia
Email: XXX
Telephone: XXX

Co-Investigator:

Linh Tran
PhD Candidate
Department of Educational Studies
University of British Columbia
Email: XXX
Telephone: XXX (Canada)
or XXX (Vietnam)

Purpose and Procedure:

My name is Linh Tran. I am a doctoral student in the Department of Educational Studies at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada. I am currently conducting research for my PhD dissertation entitled “Community-based Ecotourism as a Site of Environmental Adult Education,” supervised by Dr. Pierre Walter.

As part of the dissertation, I am conducting interviews with the project staff and consultants who have assisted with the formation and implementation of the Community-based Ecotourism (CBET) project in Giao Xuan Commune, one of the buffer zones of Xuan Thuy National Park, Vietnam. I would like to interview you about your views and experience with the CBET project that has been implemented in Giao Xuan commune. There will be two interview sessions. Each session will take approximately 1-2 hour(s). With your permission, I would like to audio record and take notes each session.

I will include the resulting analysis in my PhD dissertation and present it in my PhD dissertation defense. The dissertation will be submitted to the Department of Educational Studies at the University of British Columbia. The results of this study may be included as part of a scientific report, presented at conferences and/or published in article form in one or more scholarly journals.

Potential Risks:

There are no known risks to this research.

Potential Benefits:

Your participation in this research will help me understand about the formation and implementation of the CBET project in Giao Xuan commune and its impacts on the local community. Participating in this study may help you and other experts in the field identify ways of creating more appropriate policies and programs for the development of Community-based Ecotourism that might best support local communities.

Confidentiality:

Your identity will be kept strictly confidential. Your real name will not be used and will be replaced by a code number to identify all the information belonging to you. You will not be identified by name in any reports of the completed study. Instead, a pseudonym will be chosen.

All documents will be stored in a locked filing cabinet. Other information in electronic format (interview transcription, analysis of the interviews) will be stored in a computer password protected. Only the principal investigator and co-investigator of this research project will have access to the data.

Contact:

If you have any other questions or desire further information with respect to this study, please contact Dr. Pierre Walter at XXX or at XXX or Ms. Linh Tran at XXX (Canada) or XXX (Vietnam) or at XXX. If you have any concerns about your treatment or rights as a research participant, you may contact the Research Subject Information Line in the UBC Office of Research Services, University of British Columbia at 604-822-8598 or at RSIL@ors.ubc.ca

Consent:

Your participation is entirely voluntary and you may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time with no negative consequences. Please feel free to ask the co-investigator any additional questions that you have about the study.

If you are willing to participate in this interview, please indicate your consent by signing in the space provided below.

I, _____, give my permission for Ms. Linh Tran to interview me for her PhD research project as described above. I have received a copy of this letter.

Participant's signature

Date

Participant's full name (Print)

APPENDIX 3: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR PROJECT STAFF AND CONSULTANTS

- ♣ What do you hope the CBET project would achieve in Giao Xuan?
- ♣ What aspects of Giao Xuan community do you think should be included in the CBET project? And how?
- ♣ What do you think of the local people's role in the CBET project's formation and implementation?
- ♣ What do you think are necessary for the local people who participate in the CBET project in Giao Xuan to obtain? And how did you promote this belief into the local capacity building program construction for Giao Xuan people?
- ♣ In practice, what do you think of the local people's capacity to develop and implement the CBET project?
- ♣ What aspects do you think the local participants still need to improve?
- ♣ How do you expect the local participants to perform their tasks in the CBET project?
- ♣ In practice, what do you think of their task performance in the CBET project?
- ♣ What do you hope the visitors to Giao Xuan will achieve? And how did you promote this belief in the assistance of the CBET curriculum construction and implementation?
- ♣ What, if anything, would you like to see the change in the way curriculum is created and implemented? And how? Why?
- ♣ What, if anything, would you like to see the change from yourself and the local people who participate in the CBET project in terms of implementing and promoting the project?
- ♣ Is there anything that we haven't talked about and you would like to share?

APPENDIX 4: LETTER OF INITIAL CONTACT FOR LOCAL HOST FAMILIES

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA



Department of Educational Studies
2125 Main Mall
Vancouver, B.C.
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Letter of Initial Contact

**Community-Based Ecotourism as a Site of Environmental Adult Education:
A Case Study at Xuan Thuy National Park, Vietnam**

Principal Investigator:

Pierre Walter
Associate Professor
Department of Educational Studies
University of British Columbia
Email: XXX
Telephone: XXX

Co-Investigator:

Linh Tran
PhD Candidate
Department of Educational Studies
University of British Columbia
Email: XXX
Telephone: XXX (Canada)
or XXX (Vietnam)

Dear Sir/Madam,

My name is Linh Tran. I am a doctoral student in the Department of Educational Studies at the University of British Columbia. I am currently conducting research for my PhD dissertation titled “Community-based Ecotourism as a Site of Environmental Adult Education: A Case Study at Xuan Thuy National Park, Vietnam,” supervised by Dr. Pierre Walter.

As part of the dissertation, I am conducting interviews with local people and conducting observation at the local host families in Giao Xuan commune to help me understand the implementation of the Community-based Ecotourism Project in Giao Xuan commune and its impacts on the local community.

There will be two interview sessions. Each session will take approximately 1-2 hour(s). The observation will be conducted by me while I am living with your families for 2 days and 1 night. With your permission, I would like to audio record and take notes each interview session and take notes my observation.

I will include the resulting analysis in my PhD dissertation and present it in my PhD dissertation defense. The dissertation will be submitted to the Department of Educational Studies at the University of British Columbia. The results of this study may be included as part of a scientific report, presented at conferences and/or published in article form in one or more scholarly journals.

I am particularly interested in finding Giao Xuan commune members who might consider participating in my research and sharing your experience and views as community members about the Community-based Ecotourism Project in Giao Xuan.

Participating in this study may help you and other local members identify ways of improving the Community-based Ecotourism project in Giao Xuan community so that it helps Giao Xuan's economic development while preserving its culture and environment. The information that you share will also help to set up a discussion of viable models of Community-based Ecotourism in Vietnam and beyond.

Your participation in this research project is completely voluntary. You can freely decide to participate in either interview or observation part or both interview and observation parts. You also have the right to stop or discontinue at any time during the course of the study with no negative consequences. If you would like to participate, please contact me at the email address or phone number listed on the first page of this letter. I look forward to hearing from you. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Yours sincerely,
Linh Tran

APPENDIX 5: INTERVIEW AND OBSERVATION CONSENT FORM FOR LOCAL HOST FAMILIES

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA



Department of Educational Studies
2125 Main Mall
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Interview and Observation Consent Form

Community-Based Ecotourism as a Site of Environmental Adult Education: A Case Study at Xuan Thuy National Park, Vietnam

Principal Investigator:

Pierre Walter
Associate Professor
Department of Educational Studies
University of British Columbia
Email: XXX
Telephone: XXX

Co-Investigator:

Linh Tran
PhD Candidate
Department of Educational Studies
University of British Columbia
Email: XXX
Telephone: XXX (Canada)
or XXX (Vietnam)

Purpose and Procedure:

My name is Linh Tran. I am a doctoral student in the Department of Educational Studies at the University of British Columbia. I am currently conducting research for my PhD dissertation entitled "Community-based Ecotourism as a Site of Environmental Adult Education," supervised by Dr. Pierre Walter.

As part of the dissertation, I am conducting interviews with local people and conduct observation at the local host families in Giao Xuan commune, one of the buffer zones of Xuan Thuy National Park, Vietnam. I would like to interview you about your experience and views about the Community-based Ecotourism Project that has been implemented in Giao Xuan commune. I also would like to conduct observation at your house to understand about culture and lifestyles of local people.

There will be two interview sessions. Each session will take approximately 1-2 hour(s). The observation will be conducted by me while I am living with your families for 2 days and 1 night. With your permission, I would like to audio record and take notes each interview session and take notes my observation.

I will include the resulting analysis in my PhD dissertation and present it in my PhD dissertation defense. The dissertation will be submitted to the Department of Educational Studies at the University of British Columbia. The results of this study may be included as part of a scientific report, presented at conferences and/or published in article form in one or more scholarly journals.

Potential Risks:

There are no known risks to this research.

Potential Benefits:

Your participation in this research will help me understand about the implementation of the CBET project in Giao Xuan commune and its impacts on the local community. Participating in this study may help you and other local members identify ways of improving the Community-based Ecotourism project in Giao Xuan community so that it helps Giao Xuan's economic development while preserving its culture and environment.

Confidentiality:

Your identity will be kept strictly confidential. Your real name will not be used and will be replaced by a code number to identify all the information belonging to you. You will not be identified by name in any reports of the completed study. Instead, a pseudonym will be chosen.

All documents will be stored in a locked filing cabinet. Other information in electronic format (interview transcription, analysis of the interviews) will be stored in a computer password protected. Only the principal investigator and co-investigator of this research project will have access to the data.

Contact:

If you have any other questions or desire further information with respect to this study, please contact Dr. Pierre Walter at XXX or at XXX or Ms. Linh Tran at XXX or at XXX If you have any concerns about your treatment or rights as a research participant, you may contact the Research Subject Information Line in the UBC Office of Research Services, University of British Columbia at 604-822-8598 or at RSIL@ors.ubc.ca

Consent:

Your participation is entirely voluntary. You can freely decide to participate in either interview or observation part or both interview and observation parts. You may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time with no negative consequences. Please feel free to ask the co-investigator any additional questions that you have about the study.

If you are willing to participate in this study, please indicate your consent by signing in the space provided below for the section(s) that you are willing to participate.

I, _____, give my permission for Ms. Linh Tran to interview me for her

PhD research project as described above. I have received a copy of this letter.

Participant's signature

Date

Participant's full name (Print)

I, _____, give my permission for Ms. Linh Tran to conduct observation at my house for her PhD research project as described above. I have received a copy of this letter.

Participant's signature

Date

Participant's full name (Print)

I, _____, give my permission for Ms. Linh Tran to interview me and conduct observation at my house for her PhD research project as described above. I have received a copy of this letter.

Participant's signature

Date

Participant's full name (Print)

APPENDIX 6: LETTER OF INITIAL CONTACT FOR OTHER COMMUNITY MEMBERS

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA



Department of Educational Studies
2125 Main Mall
Vancouver, B.C.
Canada, V6T 1Z4
Tel: (604) 822-5374
Fax: (604) 822-4244
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Letter of Initial Contact

**Community-Based Ecotourism as a Site of Environmental Adult Education:
A Case Study at Xuan Thuy National Park, Vietnam**

Principal Investigator:

Pierre Walter
Associate Professor
Department of Educational Studies
University of British Columbia
Email: XXX
Telephone: XXX

Co-Investigator:

Linh Tran
PhD Candidate
Department of Educational Studies
University of British Columbia
Email: XXX
Telephone: XXX (Canada)
or XXX (Vietnam)

Dear Sir/Madam,

My name is Linh Tran. I am a doctoral student in the Department of Educational Studies at the University of British Columbia. I am currently conducting research for my PhD dissertation titled "Community-based Ecotourism as a Site of Environmental Adult Education: A Case Study at Xuan Thuy National Park, Vietnam," supervised by Dr. Pierre Walter.

As part of the dissertation, I am conducting interviews with Giao Xuan commune members to help me understand the implementation of the Community-based Ecotourism Project in Giao Xuan commune and its impacts on the local community. There will be two interview sessions. Each session will take approximately 1-2 hour(s). With your permission, I would like to audio record and take notes each session.

I will include the resulting analysis in my PhD dissertation and present it in my PhD dissertation defense. The dissertation will be submitted to the Department of Educational Studies at the University of British Columbia. The results of this study may be included as part of a scientific report, presented at conferences and/or published in article form in one or more scholarly journals.

I am particularly interested in finding Giao Xuan commune members who might consider participating in my research and sharing your experience and views as community members about the Community-based Ecotourism Project in Giao Xuan.

Participating in this study may help you and other local members identify ways of improving the Community-based Ecotourism project in Giao Xuan community so that it helps Giao Xuan's economic development while preserving its culture and environment. The information that you share will also help to set up a discussion of viable models of Community-based Ecotourism in Vietnam and beyond.

Your participation in this research project is completely voluntary and you have the right to stop or discontinue at any time during the course of the study with no negative consequences. If you would like to participate, please contact me at the email address or phone number listed on the first page of this letter. I look forward to hearing from you. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Yours sincerely,
Linh Tran

APPENDIX 7: INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM FOR OTHER COMMUNITY MEMBERS

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA



Department of Educational Studies
2125 Main Mall
Vancouver, B.C.
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Interview Consent Form

**Community-Based Ecotourism as a Site of Environmental Adult Education:
A Case Study at Xuan Thuy National Park, Vietnam**

Principal Investigator:

Pierre Walter
Associate Professor
Department of Educational Studies
University of British Columbia
Email: XXX
Telephone: XXX

Co-Investigator:

Linh Tran
PhD Candidate
Department of Educational Studies
University of British Columbia
Email: XXX
Telephone: XXX (Canada)
or XXX (Vietnam)

Purpose and Procedure:

My name is Linh Tran. I am a doctoral student in the Department of Educational Studies at the University of British Columbia. I am currently conducting research for my PhD dissertation entitled "Community-based Ecotourism as a Site of Environmental Adult Education," supervised by Dr. Pierre Walter.

As part of the dissertation, I am conducting interviews with local people in Giao Xuan commune, one of the buffer zones of Xuan Thuy National Park, Vietnam. I would like to interview you about your experience and views about the Community-based Ecotourism Project that has been implemented in Giao Xuan commune. There will be two interview sessions. Each session will take approximately 1-2 hour(s). With your permission, I would like to audio record and take notes each session.

I will include the resulting analysis in my PhD dissertation and present it in my PhD dissertation defense. The dissertation will be submitted to the Department of Educational Studies at the University of British Columbia. The results of this study may be included as part of a scientific report, presented at conferences and/or published in article form in one or more scholarly journals.

Potential Risks:

There are no known risks to this research.

Potential Benefits:

Your participation in this research will help me understand about the implementation of the CBET project in Giao Xuan commune and its impacts on the local community. Participating in this study may help you and other local members identify ways of improving the Community-based Ecotourism project in Giao Xuan community so that it helps Giao Xuan's economic development while preserving its culture and environment.

Confidentiality:

Your identity will be kept strictly confidential. Your real name will not be used and will be replaced by a code number to identify all the information belonging to you. You will not be identified by name in any reports of the completed study. Instead, a pseudonym will be chosen.

All documents will be stored in a locked filing cabinet. Other information in electronic format (interview transcription, analysis of the interviews) will be stored in a computer password protected. Only the principal investigator and co-investigator of this research project will have access to the data.

Contact:

If you have any other questions or desire further information with respect to this study, please contact Dr. Pierre Walter at XXX or at XXX or Ms. Linh Tran at XXX or at XXX. If you have any concerns about your treatment or rights as a research participant, you may contact the Research Subject Information Line in the UBC Office of Research Services, University of British Columbia at 604-822-8598 or at RSIL@ors.ubc.ca

Consent:

Your participation is entirely voluntary and you may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time with no negative consequences. Please feel free to ask the co-investigator any additional questions that you have about the study.

If you are willing to participate in this interview, please indicate your consent by signing in the space provided below.

I, _____, give my permission for Ms. Linh Tran to interview me for her PhD research project as described above. I have received a copy of this letter.

Participant's signature

Date

Participant's full name (Print)

APPENDIX 8: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Curriculum Construction

- ⤴ What knowledge, skills, and activities are included?
- ⤴ How are the topics/subject (curriculum) created?
- ⤴ Who decides the content and activities included in the curriculum?
- ⤴ What, if anything, would you like to see the change in the way the curriculum is created and implemented? And how? Why?
- ⤴ Is there anything else you would like to say about the curriculum of the CBET project?

Processes and Outcomes of Learning and Teaching?

- ⤴ What do you learn/teach through participating in the CBET? How do you learn/teach it? From/for whom?
- ⤴ How do the learning and teaching activities take place in the CBET project?
- ⤴ What do you believe are the outcomes of learning/teaching in the CBET project?
- ⤴ Is there anything else you would like to say about the processes and outcomes of learning and teaching in the CBET project?

Impacts of the CBET Project

- ⤴ How long have you been participating in the CBET project?
- ⤴ What did you do before joining the CBET project?
- ⤴ Could you tell me a little about how and why you started participating in the CBET project?
- ⤴ What are some challenges and rewards that you face as a participant in the CBET project?
- ⤴ Are there any changes in your life as well as in your community since the CBET project has been implemented?
- ⤴ What are some of the best and worst thing (if any) about the current CBET project?
- ⤴ Is there anything else you would like to say about the processes and outcomes of learning and teaching in the CBET project?

Additional Comments

- ⤴ Is there anything else that we haven't talked about and you would like to share?

APPENDIX 9: XUAN THUY NATIONAL PARK AND GIAO XUAN COMMUNE INTRODUCTION FROM TOURISM BROCHURE



XUAN THUY NATIONAL PARK

Xuan Thuy National Park in Giao Thuy District, Nam Dinh Province is the first wetland area in Viet Nam to be recognized for its international significance. The park is also considered as one of 150 ideal bird watching sites in the country. With a beautiful landscape of coastal wetlands, mangrove forests and significant biodiversity value, Xuan Thuy soon becomes an attractive tourism destination for visitors.

From September to April, the park looks like putting on total new face due to hundreds of migrating birds, especially the black-faced spoon bills – a rare bird species denoted as “threatened” in the Red Book. This is the best time to visit the park, but each season brings you its own unique beauty and attractiveness. The change in seasons is such a great experience for tourists in this well-known wetland area.



GIAO XUAN COMMUNE

Giao Xuan Commune is one of the five communes in the buffer zone of Xuan Thuy National Park. The commune is not only a convenient and interesting place to stay during your trip to the park but also a great destination for those would like to experience pastoral life in the Red River Delta.

It is a quiet and peaceful commune. You can enjoy your totally comfortable stay here, try different local dishes, listen to traditional folk songs and rhythms, participate in agricultural activities with local farmers or doing voluntary work for community development.

Local families provide community-based ecotourism services for your needs, such as a safe place for you to stay, food and beverage, bicycles and even a tour guide for your trip around. More than that, they bring you such a great chance to experience and enjoy their daily life in a typical coastal village.

Beside, just from the dyke around this peaceful village, you can find bird flocks searching for food or leisurely coming back to their nests every early morning or late afternoon.

(MCD, n.d)

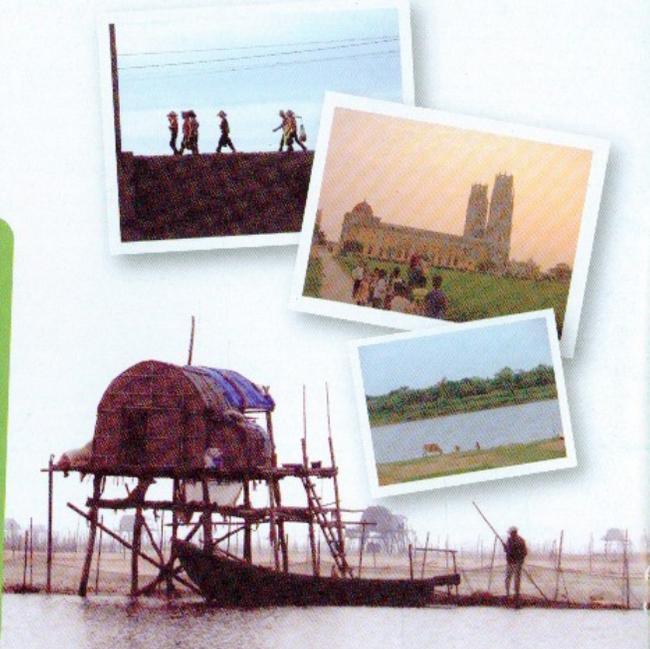
APPENDIX 10: COUNTRYSIDE VISIT AND RAMSAR SITE JOURNEY DESCRIPTION FROM TOURISM BROCHURE

TOURISM ROUTE 1

COUNTRYSIDE VISIT

The "Countryside Visit" is a combination tour between nature and local culture. Joining this trip, you will have a great opportunity to gain a better understanding of the culture and the lifestyle of northern Vietnamese and taste a sense of the peaceful life in the coastal area of Vietnam. The smiles of friendly locals and their stories bring you closer to the real Vietnam.

The highlight of the trip is watching migrating birds in the Xuan Thuy National Park and living a day with real farmers in the Red River Delta.



The background image shows a boat on a river with a person standing on the bank. The boat has a thatched roof and is supported by wooden poles.

TOURISM ROUTE 2

RAMSAR SITE JOURNEY

The "Ramsar site journey" tour is designed to bring to tourists an opportunity to explore special sceneries of the wetland ecosystem in the first Ramsar site of Vietnam, the Xuan Thuy National Park.

The tour also provides tourists a chance to gain better understanding about the daily life of fishing communities in the coastal areas of northern Vietnam.



The background image shows a group of people standing on a sandy beach near a thatched hut and a wooden structure. The ocean is visible in the background.

(MCD, n.d)

APPENDIX 11: EXAMPLES OF TOURISM DESTINATIONS AND ACTIVITIES FROM TOURISM BROCHURE

TOURIST DESTINATIONS

It is not only the place for cultural activities in the commune but also known as a museum for the education and development of the local community.

Visiting the Community Learning Centre is your great opportunity to gain an overview of Giao Xuan Commune, Xuan Thuy National Park as well as local activities of community development.

Fishing port

Community Learning Centre (Giao Xuan Commune)

Located in the People's Committee Office, the **Community Learning Centre** was established as a function of the commune's People's Committee is training and technology transfer.

In **November 2007**, the centre had been moved to the new building and continued its work as a centre for tourist information and community environmental education.

This is located in the foot of sea dyke, at the intersection between Giao Xuan and Giao Hai Commune in the buffer zone of Xuan Thuy National Park.

The Giao Hai fishing port is considered a "commercial port" for people in the two communes, where the boats gather together, bringing catches back home after a long trip on the sea. It is also the place for people not only to trade for all kinds of seafood but also to share their own great stories about the sea.

Enjoying the dense crowd will be your great experience of the local way of life. You can even buy some fresh seafood for lunch with your "family" at your home-stay.

Fish sauce (Nuoc Mam) production area

In Giao Xuan, as well as in other coastal communities in Vietnam, fish sauce ("Nuoc Mam") production is a typical traditional handicraft.

Raw material of making fish sauce is fish. Only fresh fish species makes the good quality fish sauce that is clear in color with a good aroma.

You can easily see in many coastal villages the image of local people sorting different kinds of fishes, putting ingredients and producing them in Vietnamese traditional recipes

of the commune society for the conservation of birds.

This wonderful place for sight-seeing was formed naturally, thanks to uncultivated alluvial grounds after aquaculture season. Many kinds of brackish water species here are special food for birds before coming back home to the mangrove forests.

Standing on the sea dyke, enjoying the view of bird flocks coming home in the late evening or leaving their nests to search for food in very early morning, the view will bring you peace of mind –invaluable in this hurried life today.

passed on through generations.

Watch and learn how to produce fish sauce in such a traditional way and talk to local people about any aspect of our life will be a second-to-none opportunity for you to understand the unique values of inhabitants in the Vietnamese coastal zone.

Bird watching area

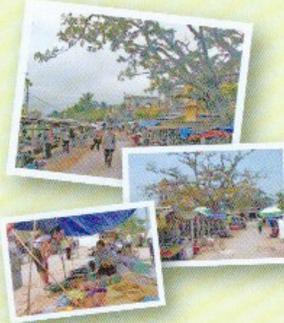
You can see the birds right in the sea dyke of Giao Xuan commune. The area is taken care and protected everyday by members

TOURIST DESTINATIONS

Giao Hai local market

It will be a missed opportunity to visit a typical Vietnamese village without seeing their market, ask a small wares vendor for the origin of native snacks, buy some locally produced products and learn about daily lives of local residents through the diversification of items sold in the market and how the markets are organized.

Giao Hai local market will certainly be an attractive highlight in your trip to Xuan Thuy National Park area. You can buy special kinds of locally produced products and enjoy a little



chat about fisheries as well as everyday activities of local residents.

Even though housewives are busy with their own business, you are always welcomed with the friendliest smile.

Phu Ninh Church

The church was built in 1915 with a great monetary and effort contribution of the entire population in Phu Ninh parish.



It displays Gothic architecture with unique engraved graphics displaying the grave religious beauty but still friendly and close to community lives.

Visiting the church and contributing to its embellishment or do charity in the area are all enjoyable.



"Boi" traditional house

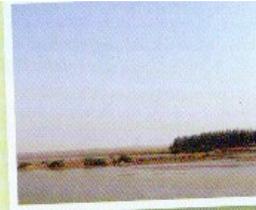
Only in this typical original area of rush in the Red River Delta, you can see such unique traditional houses.

The traditional houses were made from local building materials, especially the roofs tiled by rush – a special plant in coastal areas and often used to make sedge mats, fans, mattresses. This material is well-known for its capacity to regulate temperature and stand against a variety of climates.

Studying such an unique architectural heritage with a great history of these houses will not only enrich your knowledge of folk culture and architecture, but spending a night or just enjoying a short nap in the afternoon in these old houses and having interesting conversation with owners of such local "cultural heritages" also give you very special life experience.

Vanh Islet

Located in the eastern area of Nam Phu Commune, this sediment area extends to about 2,000 hectares with favorable flat terrain and an abundant mangrove



ecosystem. There are specific mangrove plants such as sú vẹt (Aegiceras), bần (Sonneratia) and other interesting species, especially birds.

You can make camp, go around by bicycle, take pleasure in a short walk along the sand-bank, explore the mangroves or swim in the sea. The sea water has a dark color, due to its closeness to the river mouth, however, your swim is still enjoyable.

Staying overnight in local hospitable homestay in Nam Phu, going around the typical peaceful village of the Red River Delta, swimming, trying fresh seafood, all of this will be a memorable countryside visit for your weekend.

TOURIST DESTINATIONS



lighthouse has a visible range of 18 nautical miles

Visiting the lighthouse, it is your great opportunity not only to enjoy the panoramic view of Ba Lat estuary, explore the journey of the Red River to the sea as well as the diversity of habitat types in the coastal estuary but also learn about the work of the border police and operations as well as significance of this "eye of the sea".



Traditional "Cheo" singing and dancing

Lighthouse of Ba Lat estuary

"The eye of the sea" in Nam Phu Commune, Tien Hai District, Thai Binh Province reports the location of Ba Lat estuary and helps boats operating in waters of Thai Binh - Nam Dinh areas to orient and locate themselves on the sea. Starting operations in 1962, the



After dinner, you will be invited to see "Cheo" performance - a form of traditional folk theatre of the country. "Cheo" originated and developed in the Red River Delta.

In the olden days, through smooth and touching singing that depicted rustic lives of Vietnamese peasants in the north, Cheo carried a message of satirical criticism of the existing social order and reflected the dream of peace in an unjust feudal society.

The scripts of Cheo performance derive from old stories and legends that are portrayed on stage with high realism and artistic values.

Cheo can be performed successfully on one or two bed mats spread in the middle of a communal house or village yard. You will always see that local villagers can not resist coming to enjoy the performance. There is even a folk verse that tells about a lazy guy who does not want to do anything but go to see Cheo:

*"Eating his fill then being in idleness
Upon hearing the drums, can not resist to come"*



Planting trees on the "ecotourism route" and catching up with their growth via email

Planting flowers to decorate the sea dyke

Learning traditional "cheo" singing and dancing

Learning how to cook local dishes

Being part of the performance by responding to questions of characters on the stage, using drums and learning few short singings with the "peasant artists" are certainly how you can understand more about the lives of people in the northern Viet Nam.



Other tourist activities

Participate in some sustainable aquaculture activities

Planting trees in mangrove forests



APPENDIX 12: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TOURISTS FROM TOURISM BROCHURE



RECOMMENDATIONS

Do and don't for tourists

In order to promote Giao Xuan as an attractive tourist destination for the future, your responsible action to nature, environment, local culture and community will be highly appreciated!

 **In the village:**

<p>Do respect locals' habits, customs and lifestyle; Do not touch the head of anyone; Do lower your head when passing in front of someone else Do not hug/kiss in public places or at temples/pagodas Do not wear shorts when visiting temples/pagodas</p>	<p>Do sleep in your area as arranged and follow home-stay owner instructions; Do put your belongings in safe place as assigned by the tour guide; Do not sleep together with a person of the opposite sex, except the case that it is your husband or wife and you are allowed – so please inform the Management Board or your tour guide in advance;</p>	<p>Do not come home late and make noise at night; Do not get drunk, take drugs or other illegal stimulants Do not try food dishes from protected species Do not give money, candies or gifts directly to local people, especially children. If you would like to contribute to the local community, please give it to the Management Board.</p>
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 **During the trip:**

<p>Do go in groups and follow your companion Do follow instructions of the tour guide Do ask for permission when taking photographs, especially of children and monks at pagodas Do try to consume locally-produced goods, especially agricultural products</p>	<p>Do try local food dishes to experience their food and encourage local people to develop their business; Do go only in small groups to bird watching areas and keep silent; Do not cut trees, remove branches or leaves,</p>	<p>catch birds or other animals; Do not throw waste on the ground when on the trip Do follow sign boards on the way (especially in the protected area) Do refer to the tide table in advance if you plan to join the "Ramsar Journey" trip</p>
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What you should bring along:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● If possible, some books to donate to the Community Learning Centre or primary school library 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Anti-insect cream ● Camera and binoculars ● Sun-block cream and hat in summer
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(MCD, n.d)