

COMMUNITY-BASED TOURISM ASSOCIATED WITH NATURAL RESOURCE PROTECTION IN NAHAU COMMUNE, VAN YEN DISTRICT, YEN BAI PROVINCE

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Received: 06/01/2022	Na Hau is a commune located in the center of Na Hau Nature Reserve, Northern Vietnam. The commune has 3 villages with 2,280 people who are nearly 100% of Mong ethnic. This study employed data from 60 households and used the five-point Likert to measure their opinion about community-based tourism and natural resource development in the commune. This study has two main objectives: (i) to explore the situation of community-based tourism development in Na Hau commune and (ii) to find out the opinions of local people who participate in community-based tourism activities and environmental protection. The results show that local people develop their understanding of community-based tourism and invest more in building homestays and their capacity to provide food for tourists. However, the level of awareness about natural resource protection of local people is not good. Especially, the linkage between community-based tourism and natural resource protection is rated very highly, which implies the importance of protecting the environment in the process of developing community-based tourism. The findings are of particular interest to poor households and in developing and transition countries as well as policy-makers in Vietnam and beyond to optimally support ethnic minorities.
Revised: 16/02/2022	
Published: 23/02/2022	
KEYWORDS	
Community-based	
Tourism	
Ethnic minorities	
Natural Protection	
Sustainable Development	

DU LỊCH CỘNG ĐỒNG KẾT HỢP BẢO VỆ TÀI NGUYÊN THIÊN NHIÊN XÃ NÀ HẦU, HUYỆN VĂN YÊN, TỈNH YÊN BÁI

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THÔNG TIN BÀI BÁO	TÓM TẮT
Ngày nhận bài: 06/01/2022	Nà Hầu là một xã nằm ở vùng lõi khu bảo tồn thiên nhiên Nà Hầu thuộc vùng Tây Bắc, Việt Nam. Xã có 3 thôn với 2.280 nhân khẩu, đa phần là người dân tộc Mông. Nghiên cứu này sử dụng số liệu thu thập từ 60 hộ và thang đo Likert 5 mức độ để đo lường ý kiến của hộ về mối quan hệ giữa phát triển du lịch cộng đồng và bảo tồn tài nguyên thiên nhiên trên địa bàn xã. Nghiên cứu này có 2 mục tiêu chính: (i) Đánh giá thực trạng phát triển du lịch cộng đồng ở xã Nà Hầu; (ii) Đánh giá ý kiến của người dân địa phương tham gia các hoạt động du lịch cộng đồng và bảo tồn tài nguyên thiên nhiên. Kết quả nghiên cứu cho thấy, các hộ dân đã nhận thức về vai trò của họ trong phát triển du lịch cộng đồng và đầu tư nhiều hơn vào việc xây dựng các homestay, đồng thời thúc đẩy năng lực cung cấp thực phẩm cho khách du lịch. Tuy nhiên, mức độ nhận thức về bảo tồn tài nguyên thiên nhiên của người dân địa phương chưa thực tốt. Tuy nhiên, các hộ được khảo sát đánh giá cao mối liên hệ giữa du lịch cộng đồng và bảo tồn tài nguyên thiên nhiên là rất quan trọng để đảm bảo sự phát triển bền vững. Các kết quả thu được có ý nghĩa với các nhà hoạch định chính sách, nhà quản lý trong quá trình hỗ trợ cho đồng bào dân tộc thiểu số.
Ngày hoàn thiện: 16/02/2022	
Ngày đăng: 23/02/2022	
TỪ KHÓA	
Dựa vào cộng đồng	
Du lịch	
Dân tộc thiểu số	
Bảo vệ tài nguyên	
Phát triển bền vững	

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.34238/tnu-jst.5431>

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1. Introduction

Na Hau is a commune located in the center of Na Hau Nature Reserve, Van Yen district, Yen Bai province, Northern Vietnam. The commune has 3 villages with 2,280 people belonging to 460 households, nearly 100% are Mong ethnic [1]. This is a particularly remoted commune, the number of poor and near-poor households accounts for approximately 80%. Na Hau is not a place where the Mong people have lived for generations. The main characteristic is that most of the houses are made of wood with fibro cement panels and wet rice cultivation. Therefore, this area has many other unique characteristics. The commune is both a place with a rich cultural tradition and a place with many natural products thanks to a system of biodiversity in old forests, unique products, and famous landscapes.

Although there are many potentials in tourism, agriculture, and medicinal herbs, so far these strengths have not been fully exploited and developed. The majority of people are poor, and the environment has not been well preserved. The cause of poverty in Na Hau commune is the capacity of local governance and the ability to participate in agricultural product chains in the direction of low commodity production, very low productivity of extensive production, and no new models. The start-up model and the ability to apply scientific and technical advances of ethnic minorities are still limited.

In the trend of globalization and international economic integration, community-based tourism (CBT) in ethnic minority areas always has a great attraction for tourists, especially international visitors. Some areas in Northern Vietnam, such as Lao Cai (Sapa and Bac Ha district), Hoa Binh (Mai Chau, Tan Lac, and Cao Phong districts) have developed this type and brought benefits to local people [2]-[5]. Community-based tourism (CBT) development also contributes to the protection and promotion of national cultural heritage, environmental protection, and natural resource management, creating relevant resources for economic development and improving the quality of life for local households [4]-[6]. However, there is no organization or individual to guide and organize local people to organize and provide these products and services in Na Hau commune. In particular, the role of ethnic minority youth forces is still quite weak, most of them are still passive and rely on the support of the local government, but have not yet aroused the spirit of entrepreneurship, overcoming difficulties, and having better lives [1], [5].

In addition, there are still gaps in research, especially in removing obstacles that are limiting CBT such as: increasing people's participation, benefit-sharing mechanism and chain development of CBT, strengthening cooperation between localities to link CBT products [1]-[3]. Especially, the linkage in CBT, Environment Protection, and Natural Resource Management for Sustainable Development is extremely weak [6]-[8]. It is necessary to coordinate in researching and guiding indigenous people to build attractive and non-duplicated products, ensuring the preservation of the landscape and environment, avoiding snatching, and gradually destroying indigenous cultural features. To limit the current spontaneous development of CBT, it is necessary to have a deeper understanding of family-owned CBT, a specific and clear plan, strengthen the state management function to guide and create conditions for local people to do right and effectively [8], [9].

This study has two main objectives: (i) to explore the situation of development CBT in Na Hau commune and (ii) to find out the opinions of local people who participate in CBT activities and environmental protection. This study uses data from 60 households (12 households are poor and near-poor) in Na Hau and used five-point Likert to measure. The results are of particular interest to poor households and in developing and transition countries as well as policy-makers in Vietnam and beyond to optimally support ethnic minorities.

The rest of the article is organized as follows: Section 2 describes the materials and methods. Then section 3 presents the results and discussion. Finally, the article closes with conclusions and

implications for policy-makers in developing countries regarding the development of CBT linked with environmental protection in remote areas.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Description of the research area

Na Hau is 25 kilometers of the Interchange IC14 Noi Bai - Lao Cai Expressway. It takes one hour to get to the commune by car or motorbike. Passing through the green cinnamon forest on the small roads crossing the sky brings tourists/visitors to immerse themselves in the space of the ancient primeval forest. The larger forestry and nice landscapes with nice caves and waterfalls are potential for developing CBT. The planted forest is mainly cinnamon trees. These products and indigenous medicinal plants are used to make herbal medicines to serve tourists [1], [5].

As a commune with extremely difficulties of Van Yen district, in recent years, Na Hau commune has made positive changes in socio-economic development thanks to the investment of the local government. However, the poverty rate of Na Hau was nearly five times higher than the rate of Van Yen district and two times the rate of Yen Bai province in general. The rate of near-poor households of the commune was approximate twice of the district and the province in general (See Table 1).

Table 1. Number of poor households and near-poor households in Na Hau commune

Unit	Number of households	Following by 2016-2020 poverty line			
		Number of poor households		Number of near-poor households	
		Number	%	Number	%
Na Hau	460	51	11.09	56	12.17
Van Yen	35,602	865	2.34	2,650	7.44
Yen Bai	219,775	10,454	4.76	15,854	7.21

MPI - Multidimensional Poverty Index

Source: [1]

Table 2. Land use in Na Hau commune (As of 31/12/2020)

Ord	Type of lands	Area (ha)	Proportion (%)
	Total area	5,639.52	100.00
1	Agricultural land	5,572.37	98.81
1.1	Agricultural production land	401.14	7.11
1.1.1	Annual crop land	201.97	3.58
1.1.1.1	Paddy land	128.53	2.28
1.1.1.2	Other annual crop land	73.45	1.30
1.1.2	Perennial crop land	199.17	3.53
1.2	Forestry land	5,167.80	91.64
	Specially used forest	5,167.80	
1.3	Water surface land for fishing	3.43	0.06
2	Non-agricultural land	67.15	1.19
2.1	Homestead land	15.81	0.28
	Rural area	15.81	0.28
2.2	Specially used land	18.09	0.32
2.2.1	Land used by offices	0.72	0.01
2.2.2	Land for construction of non-business works	2.06	0.04
2.2.3	Public land	15.31	0.27
2.3	Cemetery	3.39	0.06
2.4	Rivers and specialized water surfaces	27.71	0.49
2.5	Others	2.15	0.04

Source: [1]

Table 2 presents the land use by types of land in Na Hau commune. Most of the land is covered by forest (over 90%) that makes the unique climate for the commune. Agricultural production land is about 7%, on average one household has less than 1 hectare, including paddy,

annual crop (vegetables, beans), and perennial crop land (oranges, pears, plums, tea, cinnamon). Being a purely agricultural commune, the area of arable land is limited. Less agricultural production land is the main reason leading to the high rate of poverty in the commune, making life to be difficult for local people.

2.2. Methods

2.2.1. Household survey

Data collection was conducted in three villages in Na Hau, the poorest commune in Van Yen district, Yen Bai province. A total of 60 households were randomly chosen from 3 villages and surveyed using a structured questionnaire. All data concerned the 2020/2021 cropping season and were collected between September and October 2021. During the interviews, the head of households was asked about their source of income, the importance of each source, their willingness to participate in CBT, and environmental protection.

The judgments and assessments of the head of households are designed according to a 5-point Likert scale: 1- Very disagree; 2- Disagree; 3- Medium; 4- Agree; 5- Very Agree. Forms of interviewing household heads include both face-to-face interviews through questionnaires and online surveys. The main content of the questionnaire is the household's opinion about the linkage between CBT and natural resource protection in Na Hau commune

The average score obtained for the criteria to evaluate the results and effectiveness of state management for CBT will be evaluated as follows: The average score is less than 2.5 points: The corresponding criterion is assessed as poor; The average score is from 2.5 points to less than 3.5 points: The corresponding criteria are assessed as average; The average score is from 3.5 points to less than 4.5 points: The corresponding criteria are assessed as rather good; The average score is from 4.5 points to 5.0 points: The corresponding criteria are assessed as extremely good.

2.2.2. Statistical Analysis

Statistics of indicators on community-based tourism development (total number of community tourism business households, number of laborers, number of visitors, revenue/tourist, a total of land used, etc.) in Na Hau commune in the period 2018 - 2020.

2.2.3. Comparative Study

Compare the development indicators of state management and evaluate the results and effectiveness of Natural Protection and Natural Resource Management in different years, thereby drawing development trends and drawing appropriate conclusions.

2.2.4. Expert Interviews

The expert interview is a method of an in-depth investigation and interviews to collect the comments and assessments of several senior managers and experts on CBT development as well as environmental protection. The author conducts direct interviews with 03 experts to collect ideas and solutions to improve the effectiveness of natural resource management of CBT in Na Hau commune and solutions to improve the effectiveness in the following years.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Community-based Tourism in Na Hau commune

In 2018, a group of DAAD experts from Germany, Laos, Vietnam, Myanmar conducted a survey and analysis of the community-based tourism development conditions in terms of material conditions, ecosystems, socio-economic, culture, infrastructure. These conditions are mobilized from the local community that is suitable for the development of this place with CBT similar to many villages in Northern Vietnam. This was expected to be a sustainable direction for tourism

development in Na Hau commune. Before that time, the local households had no idea of CBT and its value for community development (Stage 0).

As a result of the expert panel discussion, the CBT development in Na Hau commune should be on a small scale, with a way of bringing visitors back to the real world, unspoiled nature, and the rustic life of minorities. Along with that, the local authorities mobilize local people to contribute and benefit by joining CBT activities in 2018 and 2019. (Stage 1) [5].

From 2020, several households invested in upgrading their facilities and identified the business activities (in Stage 2 and Stage 3). For more detailed information please see Table 3.

Table 3. *Community-based Tourism development by family-owned at Na Hau commune*

Stage	Homestays	Transport Access	No. Tourists	Attitudes of local people
Stage 0 (before 2018)	0	Very limited	The 'explorer' Traveler	Have no idea of CBT
Stage 1 (2018, 2019)	01 Pioneer homestay	New road to commune center	500 in the first year	Develop an understanding of CBT Investment in upgrading households' facilities Seek employment opportunities (part-time) Na Hau agricultural and tourism cooperative established Provide local foods and transportation service
Stage 2 (2020, 2021)	Expansion of 03 pioneer homestays	Road widened	2,000 per year	A much greater understanding of CBT development CBT Ban Tat village, Na Hau received OCOP certificates (4 stars)
Stage 3 (after 2022)	A growing number of homestays; Attract tourism enterprise	Very convenient	4,000-5,000 per year (depends on the Covid-19 situation)	Locals people able to identify business opportunities; The local government pay more attention to improving infrastructure and monitoring environment and natural resources

(Author's illustration, 2021)

Based on the survey, the authors collected some activities that the community tends to implement in the future. For example: (i) Strengthening activities of cooperatives with the participation of young ethnic minority members in Na Hau commune and surrounding communes; (ii) Training and transferring the best knowledge between ethnic minority youth participating in cooperatives and the community according to the method learning by doing; (iii) Teaching basic English for kids and young people of ethnic minorities to run community-based tourism; (iv) Organizing production and selling of ecological and indigenous agricultural products and participate in the OCOP program; (v) Strengthening education and training on natural environment protection for local people.

3.2. Natural Resource Protection and Community-based Tourism in Na Hau commune

3.2.1. Potential of natural resources and landscapes

The natural landscape of the commune is also very diverse, surrounded by mountain ranges from 1,200 - 1,789 m high, forming a large valley. There are many beautiful waterfalls and caves in the communes. Agricultural products and specialties are frogs and snails. This frog lives in its natural environment along streams. In addition, some medicinal plants have grown naturally, using them for treatment. In recent years, rare and precious herbs have been exploited, so there

are only remains such as areca ginseng, orchid needles, and yellow flower tea which are sold in the local market or directly to tourists.

3.2.2. CBT development and natural resource protection in Na Hau commune

The relationship between the stakeholders in the CBT process is shown through the Venn diagram below (See Figure 1).

Figure 1 illustrates the participation of stakeholders in CBT development and natural resource protection in Na Hau commune. All participants are divided into six groups, the most important are the management board of Na Hau nature Reserve and the Na Hau agricultural and tourism cooperative and livelihood groups. Other stakeholders are less important than those mentioned belong to the local government at commune and district level and other political-social organizations.

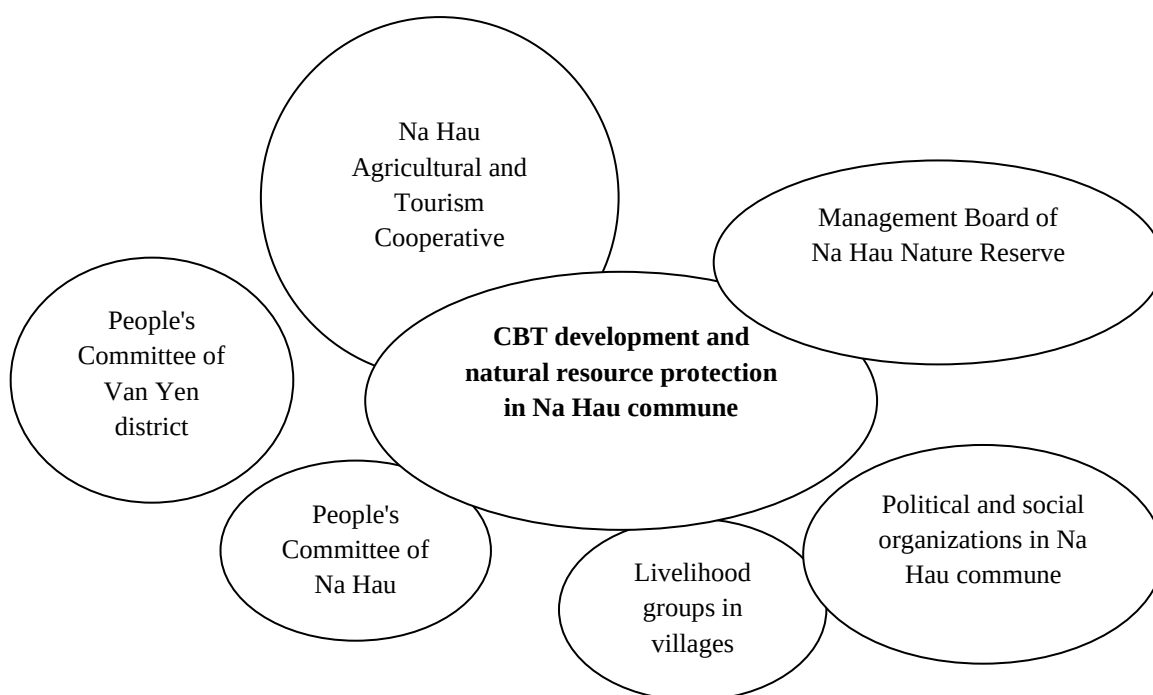


Figure 1. The coordination of stakeholders in the implementation CBT process in Na Hau commune

Source: Authors' illustration

Environmental protection activities include preserving, preventing, and limiting adverse impacts on the environment; responding to environmental incidents; overcoming pollution, improving and restoring the environment; rational exploitation and use of natural resources to keep the environment clean. These activities are paid more attention by the public in recent years. Table 4 shows the number of activities that have been implemented by the local authorities to protect natural resources (mainly specially used forests).

Table 4. Activities of natural resource protection in Na Hau commune

Forest management and protection	Total of cases	Number of cases		
		2018	2019	2020
Forest fire prevention and forest development	14	3	5	6
Prevention of hunting of rare animals	23	9	6	9
Prevention of deforestation for farming	13	6	4	3
Training on environmental protection	26	6	8	12
Numbers of participants	308	68	90	150

Source: [1]

3.3. Local people's opinion about CBT and natural resource development in Na Hau commune

Based on this fact, the selected households evaluated the conditions for CBT development and natural resource development with the following indicators (See Table 5).

Table 5. Local people's opinions about the linkage between CBT and natural resource protection in Na Hau commune

Elements	Evaluation indicators	Average of score
1. Natural and cultural resources		
1.1	Attractive natural landscapes	4.52
1.2	Abundant plant system	4.67
1.3	Specially used forest (old forest)	4.58
1.4	Locals have awareness of preserving natural resources	3.86
1.5	Preserving and protecting the environment	3.67
1.6	Unique 'Mong' ethnic minorities	4.72
1.7	Various cultural events and traditional festival	4.32
1.8	Special agricultural products	4.35
2. Participation of local community into CBT activities		
2.1	Local peoples are willing to take part in CBT activities enthusiastically	3.85
2.2	Local people are friendly and hospitable	4.45
2.3	Locals have awareness of preserving and developing CBT	3.45
2.4	Locals people able to identify business opportunities	3.16
2.5	Community tourism helps to the diversity of farmers' likelihood and improve income	3.89
3. How much is important of community-based tourism associated with natural resource protection in general?		4.16

Note: Author's calculation, 2021

There are 6 assessment indicators with an average score below 4.0, which reflects the fact that the level of awareness about natural resource protection of local people is rather good. Because of the low education levels and poor lives, many local people mainly rely on the forest to find food and hunt animals for selling purposes. However, most of the interviewed households are very proud of their culture and the landscapes where they are living. They know that CBT generates income and improve families' livelihood but they are unable to identify business opportunities or way of running their business (with the smallest score of 3.16).

In general, they rated the linkage between CBT and natural resource protection with 4.16 points that imply the importance of protecting the environment in the process of developing CBT. Thus, if local people are guided methods and trained relevant skills in CBT development towards nature protection, they will actively participate and apply in the process of tourism development.

4. Conclusion

This paper illustrates the development of CBT activities associated with natural resource protection in Na Hau, one of the poorest communes in Van Yen district. Those activities are the responsibility of the local government and homestay owners, and local households as a sure method of local community empowerment.

The community-based tourism development includes four stages, it began in 2018 and was expected to expand as the main source of income. Local people develop their understanding of CBT and invested more in building homestays and their capacity to provide food for tourists. The development of CBT in Na Hau commune is pretty small scale, with a way of bringing tourists back to the real world, exploring the life of minorities. Along with that, the local authorities mobilize local people to contribute and benefit from CBT activities and protect the environment by strengthening involved stakeholders. The most important is the management board of Na Hau nature Reserve and the Na Hau agricultural and tourism cooperative and livelihood groups.

Regarding people's opinions about CBT and natural resource development, the level of awareness about natural resource protection of local people is not good. However, in general, they rated the linkage between CBT and natural resource protection that implies the importance of protecting the environment in the process of developing CBT. Based on findings, the research proposes several suggestions such as: (i) strengthening activities of cooperatives with the participation of young ethnic minority members in Na Hau commune and surrounding communes; (ii) Training and transferring the best knowledge between ethnic minority youth participating in cooperatives and the community according to the method learning by doing; (iii) Teaching basic English for kids and young people of ethnic minorities to run community-based tourism; (iv) Organizing production and selling of ecological and indigenous agricultural products and participate in the OCOP program; (v) Strengthening education and training on natural environment protection for local people.

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