Exploring the Human Ecology Practical Area (HEPA) a practical model for living in harmony with nature in Northern Central Vietnam

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On behalf of Social Policy Ecology Research Institute (SPERI)
Human Ecology Practical Area (HEPA)
Outline

- Introduction to SPERI/HEPA, HEPA Farmers Field School (FFS)

- Focus areas
  - HEPA site
  - HEPA FFS ecological farming training program
  - Forest regeneration/conservation efforts
  - Biodiversity conservation activities (initial)
Introduction to SPERI

Social Policy Ecology Research Institute

Mission: study/research and take actions with disadvantaged EM communities to stimulate traditional belief towards nature, enriching ethical principles in nurturing human/nature relationships

Covers 5 key themes, 12 project sites in 3 countries in the Mekong region

A member of IPSI since 2011
Map of project sites

Project locations

- Current MECO-ECOTRA projects
- Implemented MECO-ECOTRA projects

HEPA site
Introduction to HEPA

- HEPA: in full term - Human Ecology Practical Area
- Located in the border (13km) between Vietnam and Lao PDR in the remote northern central
- Born 2002: 285.4 ha;
- Now 2014: > 400 ha;
Why birth of HEPA

- Extremely heavy deforestation/illegal logging/wildlife hunting occurred over the borders that causing landslides, great losses.
- => SPERI and local people, local government initiated a forest conservation movement to tackle issues.
- HEPA established as a conservation site 2002 and integrated a FFS ecological training program in 2006 for education.
Introduction to HEPA-FFS

● Farmers Field School (FFS): an important Functional Program within HEPA

● FFS training program started 2006

● FFS training dedicated to
  ● ecological farming practices,
  ● local knowledge to nature, traditional wisdom,
  ● indigenous forest species conservation;
Introduction to HEPA-FFS

Teaching framework combine traditional wisdom and Permaculture knowledge for our own-philosophy:

1. **Local knowledge**

2. **Belief and ethics towards Nature**

3. **Pattern and principles of Nature-based design farming landscapes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student A</th>
<th>Student B</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Making herbal and medicinal tea</td>
<td>same</td>
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<tr>
<td>Environmental awareness and consumption:</td>
<td>same</td>
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<tr>
<td>processing detergent and body soap from natural materials</td>
<td>Advanced diversity farm management (vegetable garden, ecological animal raising, design, planning, maintaining and developing eco-farm)</td>
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<td>Processing of different local food products</td>
<td>Managing ecological animal systems (buffalo,</td>
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<td>from Huong Son (fermented eggplant,</td>
<td>chickens, pigs, geese)</td>
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<td>jackfruit, taro)</td>
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<td>Techniques for harvesting and processing</td>
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<td>bamboo shoots according to Khmu local knowledge</td>
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<tr>
<td>Basic tailoring</td>
<td>Sowing methods according to local knowledge of Australian farmers</td>
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<td>Natural dyeing</td>
<td>Designing energy-saving stoves</td>
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<td>Technique for cotton cultivation</td>
<td>Technology for making and applying Biochar</td>
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<td>Knitting techniques</td>
<td>Field training in forest volume measurement</td>
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<td>Traditional weaving and dyeing</td>
<td>Water management and contour design on the farm (by swales, ditches, terrace fields, etc.)</td>
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<td>Advanced tailoring</td>
<td>Seed saving methods</td>
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<td>Technique for making liquid fertilizer with micro-organisms</td>
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<td>English language (intermediate)</td>
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Introduction to HEPA-FFS

- Up now, facilitate the opportunities for 70 disadvantaged ethnic minority students from local communities in Vietnam, Lao PDR, Thailand

- Indigenous elders, farmers, applied scientists, volunteers are key teaching resources;

- Hands-on learning; farms-based, 2-4 years length;
Introduction to HEPA-FFS

HEPA-FFS courses and number of students

Long-courses
- Course (2006-2008) on eco-farming foundation: 29 students
- Course K Lao1 (2010-2011) on eco-farming foundation: 7 students
- Course K Lao 2 (2012-2013) on eco-farming foundation: 7 students
- Course (2011-2012) on advanced eco-farming: 5 students
- Course (2012-2013) on advanced eco-farming: 7 students

Short-courses
- Permaculture in 2007: 50 people (including farmers and students)
- Re-fresh course on permaculture in 2009 and 2010: 30
Forest conservation activities

- Forest patrolling activities as part of the learning:
  - 2 times/a week; > 50 times/a year;
  - About 120 people joined/a year;
  - Learn ritual ceremonies to worship Forest Spirits and use this as to promote conservation “cutting the forests would affect the Spirits i.e. causing sickness or deaths”
  - Cooperation with local communities, local government, and Border Army
Key findings (data from January 2010 to now)

- Found > 500 traps;
- Found 6 illegal loggers into HEPA forests;
- Report to Border Army of 4 cases bringing guns into HEPA for illegal hunting;

Since 2000, forest quality improved (see NDVI)

Results from 2012 forests resources assessment
Forest conservation activities
Biodiversity activities

• Tree nursery of local species:
  – Early stage of development
  – To be better developed for 2015

• Documentation of high-valued local forest timber/forest fruit species:
  – Early stage of development and data gathering
  – To be further consolidation for 2015

• Photos of birds: ongoing.
Thanks very much for your attention and we are very much willing to learn from any inputs.