

“I am PROUD of being a COTU”

The Ha Noi Gift Show 2013 was held on October 26th to 29th, bringing together around 250 businesses in Hanoi and nationwide displaying crafts, textiles, gifts, jewelry, etc. This is one of the rare fairs specialized on handicraft and gift in Vietnam. Recognizing the potential of Cotu products and souvenirs, Vietnam Rural Industries Research and Development Institute (VIRI) invited Cotu CBT project to join this fair.

Seeing this as a great chance to get feedback for Cotu products as well as to introduce Cotu culture and Cotu CBT, a representative from TOU and two Cotu artisans, with the support of FIDR, participated the Gift Show. After 4 days of joining this event, Cotu people realized that their booth attracted a lot of visitors. They started to be aware of the uniqueness of their culture and be so proud. Mr. Briu Thuong – the Cotu tour coordinator of TOU – expressed that he not only learnt many lessons about PR, souvenir development but also gained confidence as a Cotu. Below we would like to introduce some insight thoughts from this young man.



Cotu CBT booth at Gift Show 2013



Cotu culture attracts visitors



“This trip marks many ‘firsts’ for me: first time I went such far away from my family, my village, first time I travelled by air and first time I visited Ha Noi – the beloved capital that all mountainous people wish to visit even just once in our lifetime. With all that eagerness, two Cotu artisans and I left our houses early to Da Nang airport to take the flight to Ha Noi. After 80 kilometers travelling by road and 1 hour by air, I finally reached the capital. Even though there are many things I wanted to discover, I didn’t forget my mission of coming to Ha Noi this time which was to join the Gift Show through the invitation of VIRI.

On behalf of my community, I would introduce Cotu culture and Cotu CBT in Nam Giang to national and international friends. We brought some typical weaving and rattan knitting tools in daily life of Cotu people to display at our booth. Standing at our Nam Giang CBT booth wearing our traditional clothes, welcoming tourists together with my two accompanies who demonstrated traditional bead weaving and played music, we made tourists curious, interested and admired Cotu people.

It was 3 days Gift Show that I was extremely proud of being a Cotu, introducing our tradition and CBT. It was 3 days that I learnt

and gained so many working experiences. My knowledge on tourism was also increased since I was also created the chance to visit famous tourist attractions in Ha Noi such as Sword Lake, enjoy water puppet show and enjoy Ha Noi foods, especially Pho. I can now really experience the images of Ha Noi, the characteristic of Ha Noi people which I once only knew on TV or through poems, songs. A line from a song by musician Nguyen Duc Cuong just comes to me “Ha Noi is tender, warm, gentle, poetry. A day being away, I feel missing”.

Briu Thuong, Tour Coordinator of Cotu Community-based Tourism



TUNG TUNG YA YA – COTU TRADITIONAL DANCE

We define our Cotu CBT as follows:
 1) Local community is the main actor and primary beneficiary
 2) To conserve and promote local resources such as traditional culture, natural environment, etc.
 3) Create diversified participation of local community, and strengthen social ties within community as well as with outside people.



Unique bead weaving

From July 2012 to December 2013: 21 groups, with about 300 tourists joined in our model tours. Customers are mostly Japanese, French, Australian and Vietnamese. They all enjoyed experiencing the culture of Cotu, and interacting with Cotu local people.

COTU COMMUNITY-BASED TOURISM in Nam Giang, Quang Nam

“One outstanding characteristic of this Cotu CBT is that, it involves as many as diversified villagers in the community”

Foundation for International Development/Relief (FIDR) has cooperated with Nam Giang District People’s Committee (Nam Giang PC) since 2001 through “Nam Giang district Community Development Project” (2001 - 2007) and then “Cotu Traditional Handicraft Assistance Project” (2008 - 2011). At the end of the second project, realizing the value of unique culture and society of Cotu ethnic minority, Nam Giang PC requested FIDR to survey for potentials of tourism promotion in the area. With high appreciation from an international expert of tourism from Japan, Nam Giang PC and FIDR cooperated to launch “Cotu Ethnic Minority Community-based Tourism” in 2012. This project is promoting Community-based Tourism (CBT) that is managed by local residents, to preserve and promote the local resources such as Cotu traditional culture, natural environment and economic values. The main strategy of developing this tourism is called “Treasure Hunting” that identifies and develops the tangible and

intangible values of locality. One outstanding characteristic of this Cotu CBT is that, it involves as many as diversified villagers in the community, and receives tourist as a guest of the community. Therefore, to visit this site tourists should applied with a group of at least 6 persons. For the community, receiving group tour once every week is more feasible to control the social order and to take care of the tourists, than receiving individual tourists without reservation. We are trying to explore and identify the types of tourism management that can contribute to the development of the community. Therefore, we discuss a lot among stakeholders such as Cotu people in the village, local government, and tourism companies.



Grang waterfall

Experience Colors of Cotu



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UBND HUYỆN NAM GIANG





STRUCTURE OF MANAGEMENT

Cotu CBT is a project cooperated by Nam Giang District People's Committee and FIDR. To help the project function well, different boards had been set up with clear role and responsibility. In this first newsletter, we would like to let you know how we join hands for developing our community.

BoM

Board of Management

Tourism is a sector that requires not only one but many departments to join hands together. Therefore, nearly all departments at district level are invited into BoM, for example Economy-Infrastructure, Culture-Information, Education, Police, Health, etc. They cooperate with each other to ensure that the planning and implementation of project activity are on the right direction.

Ms. Pham Thi Nhu
Vice-head of Nam Giang PC
Head of BoM of CBT project



Xin chao! We have implemented this project as a tool to develop our community through creating new income resource as well as to offer an opportunity for tourists to understand local cultural value and hospitality. Primary beneficiaries are local community. Let arrange your time and visit us!

WG

Working Group (WG)

WG comprises members from BoM and BoI to take care of specific tasks such as Hygiene, Security, PR, Guidelines and Monitoring.

Mr. Bui Cong Luong
Head of Nam Giang
Department of Economic-Infrastructure
Vice-head of BoM
Head of PR WG



Hello! Our mission is to support community to promote CoTu CBT to outside world. Last August, we had opportunity to join Festival and talk in Hoi An city to introduce our traditions and culture there. Our presence made tourists in Hoi An interesting and exciting. Let visit us to experience the colors of CoTu!

BoI

Board of Implementation (BoI)

BoI gathers various departments at commune level. In BoI, there are 2 units:

DU

(Development Unit)

DU works closely with the community to support them discover their treasure, develop into attractions and improve.

TOU

(Tour Operation Unit)

TOU works as a window through which tourist companies are connected to the community. It is in charge of tour operation and financing.

Mr. Bling Chon
Representative of TOU



Dear my honor guests! Our mission is to bring satisfaction to our honor guests when you visit us. We have received more than 20 groups of tourists last year. Most of tourists showed their satisfaction when enjoying beautiful and peaceful scenery as well as unique culture and hospitality of local residents here. These things left strong impression on tourists so that they expected to visit again. Recently we have promoted new attractions. We are very happy to welcome you to our community and enjoy these new attractions in near future.

CIG

Community Initiative Group (CIG)

CIG is formed by the idea coming from their own community of what they want to show to tourists. So far there are more than 20 CIGs to perform traditional dancing, cooking, weaving, basket knitting, lifestyle, etc.

"Life is more colorful



with differences"

Hideki Kozima (Ph.D.), Professor/Vice President of Miyagi University

"Real Asia"

It is the global human resource development project of Miyagi University in Japan. This program already sent two groups of students and professors to Cotu CBT site in March and September 2013, and plan to visit again in March 2014.

Prior to the visit to the site, we provided a half-day orientation in our Vietnam Office in Da Nang city, not only to introduce about Cotu CBT as a tourism site but also to share how FIDR contributes to Vietnam society and how Japanese staff build relationship and work with Vietnamese people. Then the following day, we take the participants to the project site of "Cotu CBT".

Among the participants, there are some students who visit foreign country for the first time. By visiting and interacting with Cotu ethnic minority people, students can discover and learn what they have never experienced before.

Miyagi University is a public university located in the outskirts of Sendai city, Miyagi Prefecture, Japan. It is rather small-scale university rooted in the community of Tohoku area; however, it aims to have worldwide opportunity for learning (especially to Asian countries).

With this vision, we have one program, namely, "Real Asia" study tour of our students to Asian countries. In this program, the students can visit and experience to observe the reality of contemporary Asian society. This program provides the students with the

opportunities to understand and respect the diversified culture, and realize that we can still feel something in common each other, and can learn from each other and respect as human beings even we cannot directly communicate through language. So far, this program has conducted 3 study tours in Vietnam with total of 40 students (from School of Nursing, School of Project Design, and School of Food, Agricultural and Environmental Sciences). Program duration is 2 weeks, and its 4th tour is scheduled in Feb-May 2014. The highlight of this study tour is the visit to "Cotu community-based tourism" site in Nam Giang district, Quang Nam province, which is supported by FIDR. In this visit, the



Experience Colors of Cotu



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students not only enjoy the tour to the ethnic minority people's area, but also learn how FIDR as a Japanese NGO has been contributing to community development in Vietnam.

Prior to the tour, students first visit the office of FIDR, to receive orientation about the history, back ground, and approaches of the cooperation among the local residents, the local government and FIDR in their community-development projects in this area since 2001. After this orientation, we visit the community-based tourism site. Here, the Cotu people warmly welcomed us, and showed the culture and value of Cotu life in the very original way, such as showing their traditional Tung Tung Ya Ya dance, serving traditional meal, demonstrating the traditional weaving, showing around in the village, etc. Enjoying these local programs and interacting with Cotu people, the students discovered what is common and different between Cotu people and themselves, and learn to respect and appreciate each other. Through such experiences the students can gain confidence to communicate with people who live in different cultures and contexts, and feel the pleasure to discover the beauty of cultural diversity in the world. They can

"Today I was amazed to know that there is such a wonderful culture in the world. I learned without words."

learn that the life is more colorful with the differences, and are encouraged to continue to explore the world. I, as a professor of Miyagi University and one of the organizers of this "Real Asia" program, would like to express our gratitude to Cotu people and FIDR staff, for giving us this opportunity of education. It is a very precious experience for the students to interact with Cotu people, and learn from FIDR project. Moreover, the interaction with FIDR Japanese staff and the opportunity to see how they work for the community development in Vietnam, gave hints to think the meaning and value of working for the society. All these experiences that the students can earn through joining this tourism was far beyond our expectation. It surely has a significant impact on their life towards the future.



Experience Colors of Cotu

Students' Feedback

- * I was able to feel the joy and happiness as human being, simply by interacting with other people.
- * Tohoku area in Japan, where Miyagi University is located, was hit and damaged by the earthquake in March 2011, then our community was broken. Today, we have been shown the strong community of Cotu people. We want to learn how to build the strong community like this again in our area.
- * Before I met Cotu people, I felt a little nervous since I could not imagine how we should communicate without speaking the same language. However, after I met Cotu people, danced together and got closer to each other, I felt that I could enjoy without words.
- * Today's experience gave me a chance to reflect on my own life.
- * Today I was amazed to know that there is such a wonderful culture in the world. I learned without words. We can communicate as human.
- * I hope that the warm hospitality of the people will stay as it is like today, even after this area will have developed in the future.

Project summary

Cotu Ethnic Minority Community Based Tourism Project (Cotu CBT)

Purpose: CBT is developed through promoting local resources such as traditional culture and natural environment, as well as increasing income opportunities of the community, under the following principles: 1) Initiatives from diversified participation of local community, 2) Local community as primary beneficiaries, 3) Conservations and promotion of local resources.

Duration: April 2012 to March 2016

Project site: Tabhing commune, Nam Giang district, Quang Nam province, Viet Nam.



UNIQUE CULTURE OF COTU UNDER AN EXPERT'S EYES

In September 2013, the project invited Dr. Luu Hung to support in researching and exploring Cotu culture, as well as to consult how to preserve and promote unique culture of Cotu people. Through this trip, he observed Cotu village precisely and recognized some main survived characteristics of Cotu culture conserved by Cotu people are Guol's architecture with the straw grass, decorated pictures and materials; traditional weaving; cuisine culture with the habit of using hands when eating and using available ingredients that are able to find in the forest (natural resources); hunting; house-making, etc. Especially, according to him the most interesting points that make Cotu different from other ethnic minorities are

architecture and sculpture of two typical constructions - Guol and tomb - and traditional costume with special decoration of colors (black, white and red). In additional, hamlet or community arrangement style with Guol in the centre, surrounding with villager's houses matches with the shape of Guol's roof and Tung Tung Ya Ya dance. That circular arrangement symbolizes social relationship of Cotu people with high community solidarity. After workshops with Dr. Hung, Cotu people had being reminisced their precious culture. They feel proud of being Cotu and owning a unique culture that is highly recognized by tourist and outsider. It reminds them the sense of preserving their valuable culture and creating motivation for them to take initiative in later conservation activities.



Cotu foods with ingredients from the forest



Traditional costume with black and red colors, decorated with white bead



Dr. Hung enjoyed his visit.

Dr. Luu Hung is a renowned and highly respected anthropologist in Vietnam. Currently Deputy Director of the Vietnam Museum of Ethnology, Dr. Hung has a long professional career and an extensive record of scholarly publications. His publications related to Co Tu people include many articles about customs of healing by magic, hunting, Guol, marriage, etc. published on national and international journals and magazines, and especially the book "A contribution to Katu ethnography".



Cotu people still conserve Guol architecture

Experience Colors of Cotu

