



Preservation of Garden Houses for Sustainable Urban Tourism in Hue City, Vietnam

Key Findings:

- **The tourism service providers in Hue city were estimated to emit about 0.5 million tons of CO₂ equivalent in the year 2011.**
- **For developing sustainable urban tourism, garden houses are perfect as they combine the values of nature and local cultural heritage with income from tourism.**
- **Income is generated for the owners and garden workers from the sale of fruits and vegetables from the gardens.**
- **Other income generating opportunities benefit the cyclo drivers and street vendors.**

Introduction

The policy brief presents the background and issue related to the promotion of garden houses in Hue city of Vietnam, and discusses how local city authorities can promote low carbon tourism through the promotion of this cultural heritage.

The policy brief is based on the research conducted for developing sustainable urban tourism through low carbon initiatives in Hue city (Vietnam) and in Chiang Mai city (Thailand). This research aimed to explore strategies for reducing carbon emissions while simultaneously alleviating poverty in the urban tourism sector of these cities.

The tourism service providers were estimated to emit about 0.5 million tons of CO₂ equivalent in Hue city and about 0.44 million tons of CO₂ equivalent in Chiang Mai in the year 2011. The recommended mitigation option to reduce GHG emission and to create clean and decent jobs to the local people included promotion of 'garden houses for tourism' in Hue city.

Traditional garden houses for eco-friendly city

Nestled between nature, garden houses can be a prime tourist attraction in the otherwise busy streets of Hue City. Garden houses are perfect for sustainable tourism as they combine the values of nature and local cultural heritage with income from tourism. The income from the sale of fruits and vegetables from the gardens benefits the owners and garden workers. Restricting motorized vehicles around the garden houses also provides additional income for cyclo drivers and street vendors.

Traditional garden houses for an eco-friendly city

Traditional garden houses of the Hue city, Vietnam are a unique urban architecture known for their harmonious design with nature, and are examples of buildings designed in consideration of local climactic conditions. The Hue city's garden houses creates closeness between people and nature, and between the villages with the city, adding to the charm of the city. The distinctive garden houses of Hue are generally not seen in other parts of the Vietnam. Though the number has fallen recently, policies for promoting garden houses could be important for developing green tourism and towards making Hue an eco-friendly city.

In spite of the existing policy for the preservation of garden houses in Hue, they have remained in poor state of repair. More than half of the 2,000 garden houses in Hue are currently in a state of serious deterioration.

For example, although there was a plan to restore 150 typical houses in disrepair, only 52 were restored. Similarly, although the provincial People's Committee had decided in 2009 that each garden house owner would receive VND 100 million (US\$5,000) in financial support to restore the houses, many of them did not receive any financial support as the local government had promised. The delays and inadequacy of the local policies on garden house conservation have resulted in the lack of interest among the owners to preserve the garden houses. As the garden owners lack resources and required skills to maintain, repair and embellish the deteriorating garden houses, they have often given in to outside pressure to sell off their heritage.

Potential benefits in developing garden houses for tourism

On 1 March 2012, Thua Thien Hue People's Committee directed the implementation of its policy on preservation of the Hue garden houses to promote sustainable urban tourism during 2012-2020.

The potential benefits of improving garden houses for tourism purposes include:

- Economic growth, employment creation in both new (tourism related) and existing businesses; trades and crafts; opportunities for income growth; the creation of new markets for agricultural products; and, a broadening of city's economic base.
- Socio-cultural development, the revitalization of local crafts, customs and cultural identities; increased opportunities for social contact and exchange.
- Protection and improvement of both the natural and built environment and infrastructure.

Implementing solutions

Prioritizing options for development of Hue garden house for tourism purposes could include the following considerations:

- Provide awareness to the garden house owners, community and society about the historical and cultural value of garden houses.
- Establish the Hue garden house "Conservation Fund" with annual budget of at least 4-5 billion VND.
- Establish a board of management under the control of Hue City People's Committee and the council of investigation for implementation of plans and assessment, evaluation, and classification of Hue garden houses.
- Promote Hue garden houses on mass media, campaign to attract organizations and individuals involved in the conservation, restoration and exploitation of Hue garden houses.
- Encourage garden house owners to be responsible for implementing and receiving preferential benefits under the garden house protection policy scheme.

- Encourage organizations and garden house owners to take part in activities, such as establishing local clubs, garden house group, associations, under the current legal framework, for conservation and promotion of Hue garden houses.

Policy recommendations

In order to further develop the garden houses for tourism purposes and to invest in tourism products and sharing of benefits, the following options are recommended.

- Plan and form a traditional village and small handicraft products center at Hue for tourists, with preferential policies on taxes for the village.
- Strengthen home-stay activities at Phu Mong-Kim Long areas as tourists normally do not go to that part of the city.
- Encourage organic vegetable farms in the garden houses, attracting both the local people and tourists for regular visits, in order to promote local practices on organic farming and to boost tourism.
- Organize regular tours to garden houses, especially the fruit gardens and famous trees of Hue.
- Promote environment friendly transportation such as bikes, horses, cyclos, etc. to visit the garden houses.
- Work in cooperation with travel agents to develop structured tours that combine non-motorized transport for the visits to garden house.

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