



**Countryside Conservation Funding Scheme
Nature Conservation Management Agreement Project**

**Forest Village –
Mui Tsz Lam and Kop Tong Sustainable Village
programme**

**Sustainable Management Plan
for Mui Tsz Lam and Kop Tong**

by

Centre for Civil Society and Governance

July 2024

Background:

Mui Tsz Lam and Kop Tong are two upland settlements in the northeastern part of the New Territories. Due to their remote location and inconvenient transportation, villagers gradually moved out, leaving the villages desolate.

While the ecological value of the surrounding forest is considered relatively high, the area near the settlement with low to moderate human interventions has also demonstrated its value in habitat diversification and other ecosystem services provision.

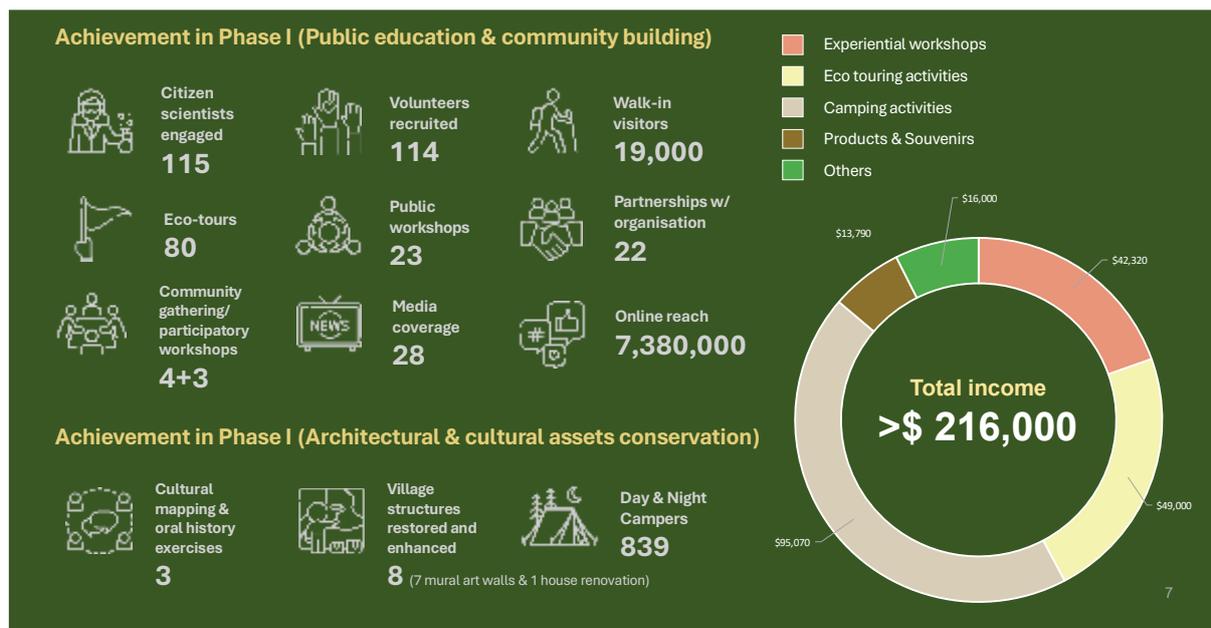
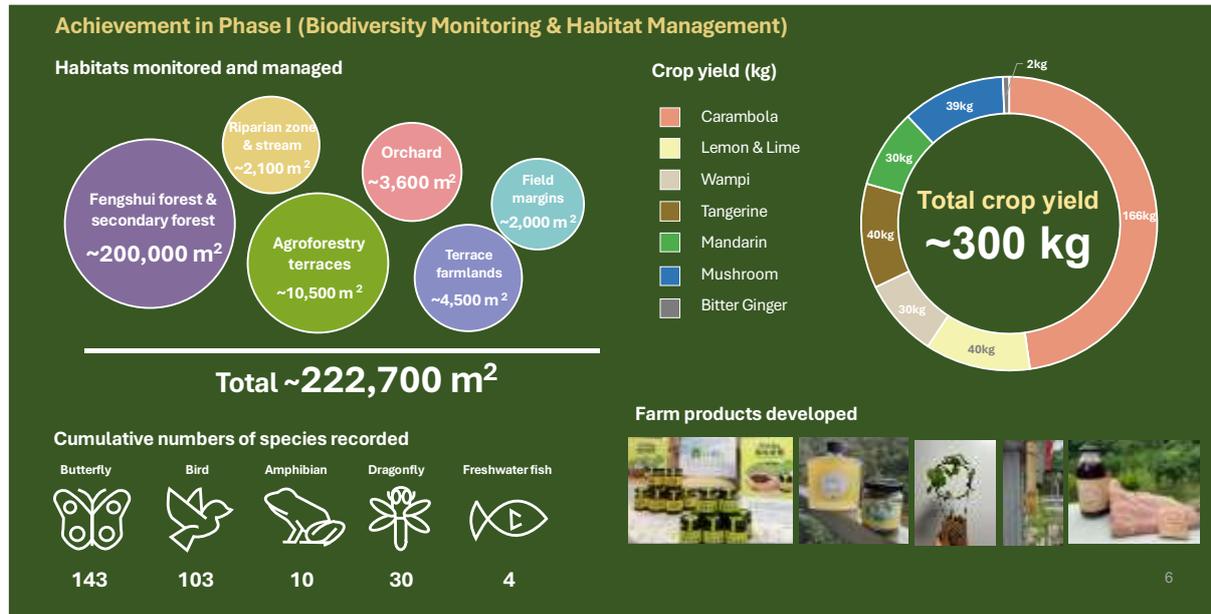


In phase I, the two villages were revitalized as “Forest Villages“ and have gradually regained vibrancy. Through various project activities, including adaptive use of village houses, community engagement, citizen scientist training and other education programmes, traditional human-nature interactions were re-established. Trials were conducted to explore new interactions between the rural community and other stakeholders. With these important foundations, it is vital time to sustain the revitalisation effort to ensure the long-term sustainability of the villages.

This sustainable management plan was prepared as part of the Forest Village – Mui Tsz Lam and Kop Tong Sustainable Village programme to guide the future direction of the project and achieve the long-term sustainability of the two Forest Villages, Mui Tsz Lam and Kop Tong. By reviewing the experience in the 3-year Phase I project, it is hoped that the effort and resources can be utilised more effectively in the next phase and maximise the impacts and value brought to both the local community and the wider society.

Achievement and Findings:

Below graphics provide an overview of the major achievements in phase I:



Mui Tsz Lam

Fungshui Forest & Secondary Forest monitored and enhanced

Story House restored

Butterfly gardens established

Agroforestry Terraces & Campsite established for production and recreation

Terrace Farmlands protected from wild mammals

Public engagement with annual festivals and interactive app

Kop Tong

Riverside Area enhanced with removal of invasive species

Fungshui Forest & Secondary Forest monitored

Orchard utilised as productive and recreational landscape

Field Margin enhanced with host and food plants for butterflies

Production from orchard developed into new products



While all the numbers and images showcase the tangible achievements of the project, it is the intangible connections between the people that make the forest village unique. Together with the rich ecological and cultural values. These are the key values of the site to be conserved and form the foundation to sustainability of the villages and its community.

Proposed management approach:

A collaborative management approach to enhance the **Ecosystem Services** provided by Forest Villages as a **Nature-based Solution for promoting the city’s sustainability & resilience.**



Ecosystem services provided by forests



Source: Forest Trends

Proposed management plan:

1. Improved and carefully expand the mosaic of different habitats:

The diversification of habitat demonstrates success in providing multi-functional values without compromising the existing ecological value. Efforts should be put into further improving the habitat created and consider expanding them to amplify the ecosystem services they provide. The biodiversity monitoring results shows that the thinning of understory vegetation for crop production or other uses can provide a favourable more open habitat for

birds and butterflies. The project team will continue to further enhance and diversify the habitats will planting of native plants and crop plus more micro-habitats creation. When suitable location is identified, expansion with carefully planning could further enhance the impacts.

2. Focus on conserving specific target species or functional groups:

After evaluating the biodiversity monitoring data, conservation of rare and folklore plants, birds, mammals and insects are considered as the priority. Together with the application of appropriate and smart technology, conservation effort and resources can be utilised more effectively. The effort in biodiversity monitoring surveys will focus on the selected taxa, other taxa, e.g. odonatan and freshwater fish will not be surveyed any more as the number of species observed peaked in the last 3 years. New native plant nursery is suggested to be set up at the site to enhance the facilities for seedlings propagation and better management.

3. Further expand and empower the pool of committed stakeholders

It was demonstrated through practice as well as research that stakeholders can be very committed with appropriate facilitation and training, and they can accomplish many things [for the remote villages where access to various resources is highly constrained](#).. Instead of working in silo, the team believes that collaboration and involvement of local stakeholders including villagers and volunteers are key to the long term success of the conservation efforts. Advance training programme and capacity building exercises will be conducted with the aim to empower the different stakeholders and local community members to work together in compatible goals that align with the project's vision. The aim is to equip them with the necessary skills to initiate their own conservation efforts, for example, organising educational and experiential activities for the public. In the next phase of the project, the team will also expand the participation of the project in order to reach out to the wider community to be involved in conserving Forest Villages and our countryside.

4. Improve hardware and software of the village for enhanced visitor experience:

While the villages now have basic infrastructure, it is not sufficient to meet the increasing demand of the community and visitors. People also have increasingly higher expectation on the goods and services that revitalised rural villages could offer. While the spirit of rural conservation shall not be compromised, it is important to provide a carefully and sensitively designed experience so that the visitors can enjoy the rural resources with pleasure. This can eventually become a form of economic activity that drive and incentivise the long-term conservation effort in these remote villages. The project team will continue to explore ways to

provide more open space for both local community members and other visitors. More iconic and experiential events utilising the unique natural and cultural features of the villages is also the focus of future design of education and public activities.

5. Adopt Ecosystem Services concept for effective management of forest villages:

Results of Phase I have shown that managing ecologically sensitive village areas requires a holistic approach to ensure their long-term sustainability at all social, ecological and economic fronts. To achieve this, a structured management mechanism using the Ecosystem Services concept is suggested. This mechanism should identify, measure, monitor, evaluate, and interpret the project impacts to the society. With the appropriate adoption of this mechanism, stakeholders can better understand the value of forest villages and their surrounding ecosystems, and make informed decisions about how to manage and protect them.