

# A dream of a social entrepreneur

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“ I have a dream that in the near future, Ecolife Cafe will become the bridge of knowledge for people in Phu Long and promote Community Ecotourism for the Protection of Mangrove so that tourists and foreigners will know and love the community initiatives to protect the green environment there, and then have a chance to experience life with local people in our island. Lying on the coastal island of Cat Hai, Hai Phong City, Phu Long commune's population is consisted of 70% people earning their lives by small-scale aquaculture and rudimentary fishing - their lives depend much on the nature and they often suffer from crop failure during the flooding season. Phu Long does not have conditions for produce growth, thus the locals' life totally depends on supply of produce from the outside. Phu Long is connected with Hai Phong City via Dinh Vu ferry.

It takes up to 3-4 hours to transport passengers and goods over that less-than-30km distance. The difficulties in transportation make the living cost in Phu Long high. In the tough economic time, with unstable prices of seafood like the recent years, the lives of people have become tougher and riskier. Getting over the obstacles, the people here are seeking for the new livelihoods, specifically with the Community Ecotourism having flourished.

People doing this work just have the simple wish of making more income for the family, feeding and educating their children, and at the same time caring and preserving the nature. This can be done by tours experiencing and planting mangroves to better off the biodiversity. Mangroves account for one-third of the Phu Long area. They are not only the “ green walls” protecting people's life and property from natural disasters, but the “ green lung” providing fresh air for the city.

Contributing to the effort of protecting humane values and the environment, Centre for Marinelife Conservation and Community Development (MCD) in coordination with Vietnet InformationTechnologyandCommunicationCenter (Vietnet) and the community's representatives led by a social entrepreneur in Phu Long mobilize investment from personal capital and social capital to establish and open the Tourist Information Center and EnvironmentEducationEcolife Cafe in Phu Long, Cat Ba in the summer 2012.

Ecolife Cafe Phu Long is primitive, simple, environment-friendly and close to the people in the commune, which is located on the area of more than 200m<sup>2</sup> on the family's ground of the social entrepreneur Vu Hong Hung. He is the Head of the Cooperation and Operation Board of Phu Long's Community Ecotourism. Initially, Ecolife Cafe has had a bookcase for community with more than 50 books on culture, environment, law, engineering, which partly met the reading demand of the people.

Hung has also finished installing a wireless Internet connection here. Hung shares that his wish now is to facilitate Phu Long Ecolife Cafe a number of used computers which can connect to the Network that he has set up. Every day, people in the commune can drop by and connect to the internet to read the news and search information about the new farming techniques which are economically efficient and environment-friendly to preserve the green space here.

In addition, households participating in his Community Ecotourism Board will have internet access to introduce the land to the domestic and foreign tourists. Talking about the cost, Hung expressed his willingness to pay for

utilities and take time to ask for experts coming to the commune to teach IT for local people, especially the young. Since then, Phu Long can reach millions of people loving the sea, people in the coastal areas and the mangrove and they will come to this land.

Summer 2013 is coming, this story intends to reach people loving sea nature and understand the difficulties of local people, with the hope to seek for the accompany with Social Entrepreneur Vu Hong Hung to realize the dream of Education Center, Phu Long Ecolife Cafe. Let wish that there will be more and more Ecolife Cafe like this presenting in every coastal areas throughout the country , with the spirit of social entrepreneur to enrich the knowledge, livelihoods and protect the environment for the future generations.