

Sustainable Development Fund (SDF)

Project:

“Green Culture Island – Peng Chau”

(SDF102)

Final Report

(June 2004 – May 2006)

Organizer: Green Peng Chau Association

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Project Summary Sheet

Project Details	
Project name: Peng Chau as a Green Culture Island in Hong Kong (first phase)	
Project period: 3 June 2004 – 31 May 2006	Project budget: HK\$ 1,522,170.00
Sponsor: Sustainable Development Fund	Implementer: Green Peng Chau Association

Objectives of the project				
To develop Peng Chau into a Green Culture Island that fully implements the concept of sustainable development in environmental, social and economical aspects. And the success of the building of Green Culture Island an bring to itself a showroom for demonstrating sustainable community based development to other communities. To achieve these objectives this first phase of the project was build around the following components: Eco-tourism, Eco-tourism education, Organic farm and Green market.				
Implementation data				
<i>Component</i>	<i>Achieved results</i>	<i>Implementa tion</i>	<i>Budgeted</i>	<i>Spend</i>
Eco-tourism	50%	80%	425,882.90	
Eco-tourism education	100%	100%	145,892.40	
Organic farming	100%	100%	640,373.40	
Green market	0%	30%	310,021.30	0.00 (0%)
Total	67.5%	75.6%	HK\$1,522,170.00	HK\$989,410.00(65%)
Project results				
Overall the project can be considered a success.				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Although we only managed to achieve 67.5% of the planned results, we did so with 65% of the funding released (HK\$ 989,410 out of HK\$ 1,522,170). • The project helped to put Peng Chau on the map as a eco-tourist destination for independent tourist, Green Peng Chau Association guided tours as well as by independent (commercial) tour operators. Peng Chau won the “most living village” award issued by the Home Affairs Department and South China Morning Post. • Eco-tour guides were trained and now collaborate with both the Association and independent tour operators. • The Sustainable Organic Farm is operational and becoming an established attraction in its own right, 1000 students used the education training centre and 100’s have visited the farm for training, weekend farming or as part of a tour. 				
Challenges				
Most challenges faced were of a bureaucratic nature: government institutions not being ready to collaborate with NGO’s or community initiatives. The SDF not being recognized as a regular part of government, also limited willingness to collaborate with and recognize the project’s activities. Internally, inexperience with project management and high staff turn-over burdened communications. Progress was further hampered by the SDF decision to change the rules halfway the game, the “reimbursement approach”, left us without working capital.				

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1. Introduction

The Green Peng Chau Association

The Green Peng Chau Association (GPCA) was established in 1991, as a non-profit making charity organization. It aimed to conserve the natural environment of Peng Chau and raise awareness on the importance of environmental protection Hong Kong wide.

The GPCA envisions a balanced world where communities live sustainably respecting the environment, cultural diversity and in reasonable material welfare. GPCA mission is to contribute to this vision by making Peng Chau a sustainable community and an educational centre for Hong Kong and Southern China. The GPCA works towards its mission through a holistic “Green Cultural Island Approach” working on economic, social and environmental issues through a number of interwoven activities including education, eco-tourism, organic farming, renewable energy and waste management known as the “Green Cultural Island Program”.

The Green Peng Chau Association successfully applied for the Sustainable Development Fund in 2004. A total amount of HK\$1,522,170.00 was approved to execute the Phase I “Green Culture Island – Peng Chau” project, which would boost the program. The first phase

commenced on the 3rd June 2004 and was completed on the 31st May 2006. A second phase was planned for, building on the strengths and experiences gained during the first phase. It is important to stress that the program is much larger than the project, and that the association continued its waste management, education, eco-tourism and advocacy work while implementing the project.

The “Green Culture Island – Peng Chau” project

The objective of the project, which has three phases, is to develop Peng Chau into a Green Culture Island that fully implements the concept of sustainable development in environmental, social and economical aspects. And the success of realizing the Green Culture Island can bring to itself a strong demonstrating case on sustainable community base development to other communities.

In implementing the concept of sustainable development, eco-tourism plays a key role in arousing the awareness for environmental protection and conservation through guided eco-tours. Eco-tours, on the other hand, increase the publicity for Peng Chau and attract more visitors. These visitors will use services which will help Peng Chau's economy.

Organic farms provide a vivid example of sustainable development. It makes the eco-tour more interesting and it provides choice to the customer. Green markets are a sign of successful sustainable development as it brings together different concepts, like local economic development, social activity and consumption of local produce.

As a whole, green education is the main idea we would like to bring to the society, through eco-tours, organic farming, education and green markets. Besides, green education within the island will attract more people to visit the island, which will help to maintain service levels and keep the island attractive to live.

From the financial sustainability view of the GPCA, eco-tours, organic farming, green markets and education programs can be profit making. The profits made will be ploughed back into the project and after the projects ending will help sustain the association and the ongoing Green Cultural Island Program, furthering the concept of sustainable development.

The first phase of the “Green Culture Island – Peng Chau” project had four components serving different target groups. These components are: Eco-tourism development on Peng Chau, Eco-tourism education, Organic farming and a Green Market. The targets and objectives were worked out in the project document. In the following chapter we will evaluate the result achieved for these components.

2. Evaluation of project results

The last two years have been a hectic time for the Green Peng Chau Association. The Green Culture Island – Peng Chau project was the first of its size implemented by the association. Many of the assumptions under the project were tested and the association has been learning along the way. The project gave us the opportunity to implement long held dreams, put Peng Chau on the map and share and develop our concept into a working and operational approach.

When writing a project one makes a “projection”. Projects are not implementation agreements or delivery contracts. Projects are used to cover new and uncertain grounds where there is no established routine to follow, we are happy the Sustainable Development Fund was willing to support us on this journey of learning. In this chapter we will evaluate the implementation process, the problems encountered and choices made. Many new insights

changed our assumptions and projections, and with it our goals, we are proud to show the results.

2.1 Eco-tourism

Eco-tourism was seen as a central component to the project as tourists bring economic opportunity to Peng Chau, use services as well as being a target group for environmental education. Tourist numbers visiting Peng Chau have increased dramatically, and Peng Chau has become part of the itinerary of many local tours. Peng Chau won the “most living village award” issued by the Home Affairs Department and the South China Morning Post.

Eco-labelling

When we started the project a number of activities were planned. We have produced a research study report detailing information about the natural resources on Peng Chau Island such as trees and herbs and the heritage history. We however, saw the eco-labelling end in many frustrations as government agencies brought up ever more ridiculous demands. Sign numbers were decreased, sign designs were adapted, expert inputs were solicited... all to no avail. The required labels would cost about \$500, which after the reduction in number was still feasible, but not acceptable to the SDF. Information collected was handed to the Island Office for their use in the future.

Interesting enough, putting the information on a map and the internet generated much attention while the rest enriched our tours. Several local (and international) newspapers, magazines and TV stations contacted us and we facilitated their reporting. This in turn generated new interest and more visitors. We thus learned that publishing our diversity might be more successful through the use of these media, then through the original labels. Table X. gives an overview of the publications. We also facilitate students from secondary to University levels, in doing their project and research work on Peng Chau.

Eco-orienteeing

The eco-orienteeing activity was planned as a closing event for the project. As the project drew to a close however, there was no money released by the SDF, this issue will be discussed in the last chapter. We had to lay-off our project staff and concentrate on those activities that would be most important for the long-term sustainability of the program. It was decided to change the timing and character of the event, and finance it through our own means.

The eco-orienteeing is now scheduled for November, and will be used to present the project results to the public and as a fund-raiser event. We will invite the SDF as it will present us with an opportunity to publicly thank the SDF for its support, making a lot of progress possible.

Translation

We have completed translation of our web site into English. Now our website is totally bilingual for reaching out more people including tourists overseas. One encouraging sign from the Tourist Board for a closer relationship and partnership is that they have invited us to lead a few tours for their overseas tourists in the coming months.

The production of bi-lingual materials has become a standard for all leaflets and posters. We have conducted English language tours, have piloted English language education programs for schools, NGO's and private sector companies.

Eco-tour instructor training

During the project we trained two batches of eco-tour instructors. The participants went through 10 Sundays of trainings, introducing the general concept of eco-tourism, tour guiding, nature appreciation and safety. Complemented by the history of Peng Chau, its heritage and its natural environment. A total of 25 tour guides were trained. It was interesting to note that many of the participants were students or people in the tourism field that used this opportunity to learn more about eco-tourism and the environment. Some of the trained tour guides are now part of the GPCA tour guide pool, others took their knowledge back to the commercial sector, hopefully introducing new concepts and behavioural guidelines there.

2.2 Eco-tourism education

School talk

Over the project period we gave 15 school talks at various schools and 5 more are scheduled as shown in the table below. Interest from schools was less than expected, probably partly for the same reasons as will be discussed under the teacher training.

<Table>

Teacher training

The teacher training proved to contain a lot of learning elements. The original plan was to provide training against charges. After repeated efforts and mailings, very little interest was expressed. When however, we were approached by the Environmental Campaign Committee (ECC) to do a training for them, the ceiling of 250 places available was reached quickly. The teachers were very enthusiastic about the training, and a series of trainings followed for the pupils. One of the teachers managed to successfully apply to the Quality Education Fund and invited the GPCA to help implement the project.

This is an interesting case: The same training but very different response. Obviously it was not the training that was the problem, it was the packaging. Hong Kong Schools are used to "free lunches", and asking them to pay puts them off. But not less important; teachers are overburdened and want to stay out of trouble. The course offered by a small NGO with a SDF label is not recognised, an ECC logo is! What we can learn from this is that instead of telling the NGO to advertise and advertise again the SDF could contact the Education and Manpower Bureau providing an institutional framework for the (partner) NGO to work in. But this would require an attitude change on the side of the SDF, to becoming partners with a shared goal and interest.

Library corner

The library corner was not part of the original proposal but was added to?????. The library corner was established as part of the education centre at the farm. Books and materials were purchased, catalogued and made available to the public.

2.3 Organic Farming

The Green Peng Chau Organic farm has managed to become fully operational. It was officially launched with an Opening Ceremony on January the 15th, 2006. It was very successful and well received. Hon. Mr Leung Yiu Chung, Mr. On Hing Ying, the Vice Chairman of the Peng Chau Rural Committee, and representatives from other organizations like Kadoorie Farm and Botanic Garden, Clean the Air, HKU and New World First Ferry have joined the ceremony.

The 30,000 sq.ft. farm combines an education centre, holiday farming plots and vegetable production. It showcases organic farming, renewable energy and waste reduction possibilities. The farm was established by leasing two plots from private land owners and a piece of government land that is leased to GPCA under a Short Term Tenancy agreement prepared by the Lands Department. The education centre was made available for a five year period (outside the project) by one of the association board members. Work on the establishment of the farm was hard and demanding. The area was abandoned for years and overgrown with climbers and deep rooted weeds. As the original work started in summer, progress was slow due to hot, wet and humid conditions. During the cooler months more progress was made. The establishment of the farm was a journey of discovery and learning on the way, but the result is attracting much attention and appreciation.

Over the last year the farm started to play a central role in educational activities (see table X), rented out 15 plots of 100 sq.ft to holiday farmers and produced HK\$36,054 worth of produce. Although the farm had a hard time due to the extremely wet weather this year, the revenue generated through education activities, plot rental and vegetable sales prove it is part of a viable organisational set-up for the GPCA.

On the whole, we have created a very unique farm project that practises fundamental principles of sustainable development like cutting waste and cost, recycling, and promoting self-sufficiency:

- We have recycled lots of waste and reused them as renewable energy and new materials and resources for our farm, in this way we save energy and cut cost for our project. For example, the government had cleared land for development in Tai Lei Island, we transported these cut-down trees, which would normally be treated as waste and rubbish, to our farm site and used them for the purposes of furniture, fence, road. We also reused construction wastes like granite rock for steps and platforms. Also, bamboo fences from Recreation and Leisure Dept. was reused for fencing our farm.
- We water the farm by operating a gravity based irrigation system based on a number of ponds and channels. In this manner, we do not need electricity-operated water pumps for irrigation. These water ponds could store water for the whole year long.
- We exercise good farming practices such as making organic fertilizers and implementing integrated pest management in our farm such as crop rotation, intercropping and planting specific plants to discourage the emergence of pests and encourage the emergence of beneficial insects. In short we prevent pest rather than to kill which is the main factor for the development of resistance of pest in many bad practices.
- We compost the leftovers of the organic farm and market wastes and use fish market leftover to produce organic fertilizer. This is the central idea for sustainable agriculture which does not rely on outside resources and chemical production, in this way, we could protect our water and soil and organisms that live in the ecosystem. We created multiple purposes of resources in the eco system of the farm

(agro-ecology), for example, our lotus crop and its pond and the fishes in water ponds will generate food; materials like pit soil and fibre for income generation and that for enhancing balance and biodiversity in the whole system.

2.4 Green market

We have reported to SDF that we have been putting a lot of efforts and time to prepare the green market project. We have even conducted a consultation with relevant Peng Chau merchants and the result showed that they welcomed the green market concept. However, the venue problem has been retarding us from any progress. Two application letters have been sent to the District Lands Office of the Island Lands Department, but our applications were rejected for the given reason; that no trading or any similar activities are allowed on public land.

On request of the SDF, we have submitted another application letter indicating that the green market aims as “educational only”. However, due to the lack of funding no sufficient manpower was available to organize and run these activities. It is important to notice here that, although the GPCA walked the extra mile and implemented more work than was originally budgeted for, no fund were released. Apparently the SDF adapted new rules half way the game, now demanding results before they would release fund (a reimbursement approach). The GPCA did however not have the funds to pre-finance and had to prioritise its efforts as the changed set-up would not serve the purpose of local economic development, so central to sustainability. It was therefore chosen to concentrate our effort elsewhere.

3. Financial section

<insert table and narrative>

4. Conclusion and recommendations

Conclusions

The project has allowed the GPCA the make a quantum leap from a small community organisation to a recognised NGO in the environmental framework of Hong Kong. The project allowed us to test our concepts and assumptions and adapt our approach. Judged by the results the project must be regarded a success.

Although on the surface it looks as if we only managed to achieve 67.5% of the planned results, it must be stressed that we managed to do so with only 65% of the funds. If we however look into the part implemented, the achievement becomes even greater, we executed about 75% of the activities planned, often completing all research, preparations and promotion, only to see our efforts frustrated. The extra implementation work was done through the help of our volunteers and financial contributions by our volunteers.

The project was a real challenge to the GPCA as it had never before attempted to implemented a project of this scale. The inexperience and insufficient management system in place made communications hard, and put a stress on the staff and management, resulting in a high staff turn over. Misgivings and jealousy lead to limited help and even some backstabbing. Anonymous complaints, although proven groundless, and delayed reporting must have unconsciously effected relations with government and donor as well.

Recommendations

We would like to share some of the experience we gathered over the last two years and hope the SDF would take some of it into consideration in further projects.

Sustainable development is not an individual effort, it demands an **institutional framework** to work, and a different set of attitudes. We are grateful the SDF gave us, as a relatively inexperienced NGO a change to implement this project, be feel it could take a more active role being a partner in the project with an interest in its successful implementation. Earlier guidance on the management and discussions on how we can supplement our efforts would have improved the results and **strengthened the organisation**.

Sustainable development is a new concept in Hong Kong and projects like ours are a way of exploring the subject. No established routine is available, the “project” is a **flexible approach** to test assumptions within a budget and timeframe (as opposed to improvising), we feel this flexibility and eagerness to learn and adapt was not optimally used. We know that sustainability is about finding local solutions and **appropriate technology**, complaints about the use of sandbags to support promotions boards are outright ridiculous.