

Update on the EMCD project progress In the second quarter of 2021

In the context of the uncontrollable spreading of the Covid 19 pandemic, the first six months of 2021 experienced humble progresses of the EMCD project, particular in relation to two key strategies in the following.

Strengthening of production capacity

Numerous efforts have been exerted to formulate new production groups, provide vocational trainings and technical support, deliver production means, promote learning exchanges and exposure visits, and improve R&D for product designing and technical standardization.

In the first half of 2021, five new groups in three communes were formed with 31 members, raising the total to 8 groups with 66 members. The percentage of official female members occupies around 23%.



Ethnic women in Chenh Venh checking bamboo straws

Total 6 vocational training courses were organized with the participation of 32 existing and new members; the last course ended on the 4th of July 2021. By design, each course last in five days, covering a wide range of contents: introduction of group production in connection with the sales and marketing interventions, overview of technical processes, use of equipment and tools, practice and acceptance of finished products, wrap-up meeting, and production plan development after the course.



New members practicing at vocational trainings

While the local communities contributed production facilities, MCNV had delivered sets of equipment and tools to the newly formulated groups. Basically, a whole set includes lathe machines, grinders, cutting machines, drills, electric dryer, protective accessories, boiling pans and plastic boxes for product storage. Among these, the lather machines, once reformed, really helped improve the production efficiency. In particular, the application of mechanic drying method, combining with the traditional one (sun drying), greatly shortened the materials drying process, thus accelerating the production progresses.



Combination of mechanical and traditional drying methods

In February 2021, MCNV organized one internal learning event in which key group members sit together to learn together. In this learning process, all the participants were encouraged to discuss technical issues, management and production plans, and bookkeeping, etc. This self-educating method really promoted the learning and exchange. Initial result of this event was satisfaction of the participating members' expectation.



Internal learning exchange in Ta Puong village

In various field trips in Huong Son commune, MCNV staff found that key members of the production group of Ra Ly Rao village also produced other bamboo products such as bamboo bed. They learned by themselves, and were able to produce such products for commercial purposes. This finding evoked an initiative to help this groups (and the others if appropriate) to diversify this type of potential products. As such, by late June to early July 2021, MCNV organized two exposure visits to production units in Thua Thien Hue province with the participation of representatives of provincial agency, local authorities, the vocational trainer, key member of the existing production groups and positive deviants in the project sites. Results of these events brought in solid understanding of technical process and management and production modalities; and especially a reinforced convincement about the potentialities and opportunities of producing and trading this product category.



First exposure visit to Quang Phu commune on 24th – 25th of June 2021



Second exposure visit to Quang Loi commune on 4th of July 2021

Special attention was given to R&D for the purpose of quality control, thus meeting ever-growing demand of customers. Focus of this task was to study the best methods of processing materials and polishing products. This effort resulted in a flyer "Technical Proposed Methods of Bamboo Product Defect Correction" enclosed with products bought by customers.

**TECHNICALLY PROPOSED METHODS
OF BAMBOO PRODUCT DEFECT CORRECTION**

Introduction: Produced in close conformity to a well-developed technical process, Krong Aho products are 100% natural, sophisticated and durable. Bamboo are, however, prone to mold and termites' attacks, particularly under the weather conditions in Vietnam. Even ceramic or stone surface of construction materials are susceptible to mold during prolonged winters or rainy seasons.

With this *Technically proposed methods of bamboo product defect correction* has been developed and regularly updated in consultations with experts, in reference to numerous sources of scientific researches and based upon our own practical experiences since 2018 as well. We expect our dear customers enjoy using our Krong Aho products as long as possible, and propose the following bamboo defect correction methods that are environmentally-friendly.

Product durability principles: FREQUENT USAGE AND TIMELY CORRECTION

Proposed corrective actions:

I. For a product prone to MOLD:

Step 1: Reduce the humidity in a product by: (i) letting it exposed to direct sunlight during 01 day; or (ii) drying it with a mechanical dryer or microwave oven under 150°C – 180°C temperature in 1 – 2 minutes.

Step 2: Softly clean all the surfaces of the product with tissues or cotton wool (please remember to wear a face mask).

Step 3: Use a clean cloth moistened with hand washing gel/alcohol/vinegar + baking soda powder to clean up all the surfaces of the product. Dry it in 30 minutes.

II. For a product susceptible to TERMITES:

Alternative 1: Clean up all the surfaces of the product with tissues or cotton wool, boil it in hot water with lime and/or salt at 100°C temperature in 30 minutes, then dry it under direct sunlight in 01 day or dry it with a mechanical dryer or microwave oven under 150°C – 180°C temperature in 1 - 2 minutes.

Alternative 2: Clean up all the surfaces of the product with tissues or cotton wool, fill a syringe with (lemongrass/orange/lemon) essential oil and inject it to the termite entry points in 2 – 3 times, and use wrapping paper to wrap up the whole product in 4 – 6 hours.

*** Notes:** (i) Please isolate and take timely corrective actions on bamboo or wooden defective products, or in case of need annihilate them to avoid large-scale termite intrusion – we are sorry for not proposing a thorough solution; and (ii) A sold product (within 01 months from the purchasing date), when found defective, can be sent back to us; in case we cannot do it, we offer a similar product with better quality to compensate for this problem.

Thank you very much for your trust and support!

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KHUYẾN NGHỊ KỸ THUẬT XỬ LÝ LỖI SẢN PHẨM TRE

Giới thiệu: Các sản phẩm tre Krong Aho được xử lý, gia công nghiêm ngặt theo đúng quy trình kỹ thuật, đảm bảo sản phẩm 100% tự nhiên, tinh xảo và có độ bền cao. Tuy vậy, tre có nhược điểm là rất dễ bị mối, mọt và mốc phá hoại, đặc biệt trong điều kiện khí hậu nóng ẩm như Việt Nam. Ngay cả bề mặt các loại vật liệu như đá hoặc ceramic trong mùa mưa ẩm kéo dài, nếu ít sử dụng hoặc lau chùi thường xuyên, tình trạng nấm mốc rất dễ xảy ra.

Khuyến nghị *Kỹ thuật xử lý lỗi sản phẩm tre* này được xây dựng và cập nhật thường xuyên trên cơ sở tham vấn chuyên gia, các nguồn thông tin tham khảo trong và ngoài nước cũng như kinh nghiệm thực tiễn từ năm 2018 đến nay. Krong Aho luôn mong đợi khách hàng sử dụng các sản phẩm tre Krong Aho lâu dài, và góp phần bù trừ xử lý các lỗi sản phẩm không mong muốn một cách an toàn đối với sức khỏe và môi trường.

Nguyên tắc đảm bảo độ bền sản phẩm: SỬ DỤNG THƯỜNG XUYÊN & XỬ LÝ KỊP THỜI

Các hướng xử lý đề xuất:

I. Đối với sản phẩm bị MỐC:

Biện 1: Giảm độ ẩm theo 02 cách: (i) phơi trực tiếp dưới ánh nắng mặt trời trong vòng 01 ngày; hoặc (ii) sấy bằng máy sấy/lò vi sóng ở nhiệt độ 150°C – 180°C trong vòng 1-2 phút.

Biện 2: Dùng giấy ăn hoặc bông (khô) chùi nhẹ toàn bộ bề mặt sản phẩm (mang khẩu trang để tránh bụi bẩn).

Biện 3: Dùng vải sạch nhúng cồn/gel sát khuẩn/dung dịch giấm ăn + bột baking soda để vệ sinh kỹ toàn bộ bề mặt sản phẩm. Phơi khô, sau 30 phút sử dụng bình thường.

II. Đối với sản phẩm bị MỐI MỌT:

Cách 1: Vệ sinh toàn bộ bề mặt sản phẩm bằng giấy ăn hoặc bông, sau đó cho vào nồi luộc, thêm với ít hoặc muối ăn vào trong nước và đun sôi ở nhiệt độ 100°C trong vòng 30 phút. Tiếp theo, phơi sản phẩm trực tiếp dưới ánh nắng mặt trời trong vòng 01 ngày, hoặc sấy bằng máy sấy/lò vi sóng ở nhiệt độ 150°C – 180°C trong vòng 1-2 phút. Sau đó sử dụng bình thường.

Cách 2: Vệ sinh toàn bộ bề mặt sản phẩm bằng giấy ăn hoặc bông, dùng kim tiêm (bơm sữa) ở các hiệu thuốc) bơm tinh dầu sả/cam/chanh... trực tiếp vào các lỗ mối mọt từ 2-3 lần, dùng màng bọc thực phẩm bọc kín toàn bộ bề mặt sản phẩm trong vòng 4-6 giờ. Sau đó sử dụng bình thường.

*** Ghi chú:** (i) Khi phát hiện tình trạng mối mọt trên sản phẩm hoặc đổ dăng khác bằng gỗ, tre gần kề, khoanh vùng và xử lý kịp thời; trong trường hợp cần thiết có thể phát tiêu hủy để tránh tình trạng lây lan trên diện rộng (chúng tôi lấy làm tiếc; vì chưa để xuất được giải pháp triệt để); và (ii) Khách hàng có thể chuyển lại sản phẩm bị lỗi (trong vòng 01 tháng từ khi mua hàng) cho Đại diện nhóm; nếu không xử lý được, chúng tôi sẽ hoàn đổi 1 sản phẩm tốt hơn.

Nhóm Krong Aho trân trọng cảm ơn sự tin tưởng và ủng hộ của Quý khách hàng!

Liên hệ Đại diện Krong Aho:
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Flyer on Bamboo Product Defect Correction in English and Vietnamese

Sales and marketing development

This second strategy of special concern includes a vast of interventions that have been carried out for the last two quarters. First, in May 2021 MCNV signed a short-term service contract with a local market facilitator to help circulate finished products from the production groups in remote areas to hands of customers, covering some further steps for product completion such as laser engraving, labeling and packaging, marketing, delivery and so on.



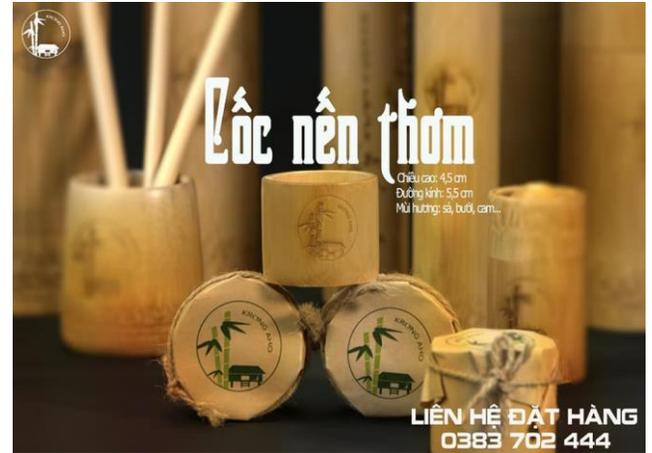
Contracting service of laser engraving

Second, an inventory policy was formulated in order to get products on stock, ready for timely delivery to customers. This method had been applied in the short term to collect as many on-shelf products as possible, then would be stopped some time later when number of monthly orders increase. At the reporting period, few orders have been responded, bringing a modest amount of income to the production groups.

Most importantly, under the support of MCNV staff, the market facilitator developed and implemented a marketing mix strategy, which consists of distribution channels, optimal use of social media platforms for advertisement, and preparation of an annual marketing plan (focusing on places, time and special events). Targeting customers in Quang Tri province in particular, in May to June 2021, the market facilitator introduced and deposited bamboo products such as incense-stick boxes and scented candles at pagodas, cemeteries, etc.



Gift set of bamboo box and coffee



Bamboo scented candles



Bamboo tea box



Incense stick boxes



Bamboo cutlery set

Way forward

The directions for the next two quarters shall continue the implementation of the above-mentioned strategies; i.e. production capacity strengthening and sales and marketing development, while gearing into program integration, networking and cooperation.

In this way, project interventions will be implemented differently. For the project component of strengthening of production capacity, membership growth will be taken charged by key persons of the participating groups, vocational trainings organized unofficially through self-training sessions within and among the production groups, and technical support by MCNV staff and provincial vocational trainer; and equipment and tools supplemented by retrieving those from inactive production groups or repairing those unused.



On-site technical support in Ra Ly Rao village

With regard to sales and marketing development, efforts in the third quarter shall be geared into developing distribution channels, applying price adjustment policy (if appropriate), and taking advantage of all social media platforms such as Zalo and Tik Tok. In the fourth quarter, there shall be a transition in the role of the local market facilitator by handing over this task to local enterprises and/or cooperatives that are capable and committed.

There emerge opportunities for the project to be sustained. In June 2021, MCNV in cooperation with relevant stakeholders conducted official investigations of bamboo (and rattan) reserve toward the participation in the Forest Stewardship Certification, whose report will definitely appeal for attention of numerous buyers. In this way, the production groups under a well-organized entity shall supply raw materials, semi-finished products and finished products.



Conducting a bamboo and rattan reserve investigation in the project site

In the recent years, Huong Hoa district has been well known for a blooming of attractive tourist destinations and products such as farmstays in Khe Sanh township, homestays in central Huong Phung commune, Ta Puong waterfall tourist area, Chenh Venh tourist area, etc.



Chenh Venh waterfall tourist area supported by MCNV

With an aim to making full use of tourism potentialities of the communities in the northern Huong Hoa district in the conjunction with the above-mentioned tourist areas, MCNV has been working with the local authorities to deploy a plan of Chenh Venh Eco-Tourism Village in Chenh Venh village of Huong Phung commune from June to December 2021. The objective of this initiative is to help preserve indigenous culture and create an extra income for local residents. The Chenh Venh Eco-Tourism Village is expected to be a collective point where agricultural products including bamboo handicrafts are put on-shelf for commercial purposes. Customers will also take a chance to observe the operation and production of the groups around this tourists destination.



Current status of the to-be-built Chenh Venh Eco-Tourism Village



Investigating for landscape improvement by planting bamboo and other trees



Houses in ruin to be upgraded as homestay



Excavating pond to raise fishing as food for family members and tourists

The initiatives of Chenh Venh Eco-Tourism Village and bamboo handicrafts production have attracted attentions and positive responses from provincial and district bodies and agencies. Huong Hoa District Division of Culture is developing a proposal on eco-tourism area development, supplementing missing works and services required for a sustainability of this tourist area. The local authority has cooperated actively with MCNV to ensure the local would meet the criteria of OCOP (One Commune One Product) issued by the Government and directly guided and supported by Quang Tri Provincial Division of Rural Development in the period of 2021 - 2025.



MCNV and District Division of Culture discussing the plan with local residents

SUMMARIZED REPORT OF PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

Project: Ethnic Minority Community Development (EMCD)

Period of report: Quarter 2 of 2021

Reported by: Le Minh Vu – Consultant

I. General information

Objective of project: To increase income of the participating production groups up to 40% by the end of the year 2021.

Expected outcomes of the project in 2021

- New groups of ethnic minority young people in Huong Lap, Huong Phung and Huong Son communes of Huong Hoa district get vocational trainings (basic and advanced) and have stable jobs from producing bamboo products.
- Production group members and their families (50 households) improve income and living conditions through the production of bamboo products.

II. Updates of activities in Quarter 2 of 2021

No.	Activities as planned (I-ToR HULZA/CMD/QT/21/01)	Budget (VND)	Progress of implementation
1	Organizing village meetings on membership growth	1,600,000 Not yet disbursed	This activity has been integrated in field trips and therefore will not require budget since the second quarter of 2021.
2	Promoting learning exchange inside and outside province	50,000,000 Partly disbursed	Decreased budget based on actual budget spending (outputs stay unchanged).
3	Providing basic and advanced vocational trainings for new members	44,000,000 Overspending	Increased budget due to an increase in number of 3 newly established production groups in an effort to improve the production capacity. This increase does not influence the total budget.
4	Developing bamboo materials sources	22,000,000 Not yet disbursed	This activity has been integrated in the other intervention (Chenh Venh Eco-Tourism Village development) and therefore will not require budget since the second quarter of 2021.
5	Improving the enabling environment to the market chain	70,000,000 Partly disbursed	
6	Strengthening the operational mechanism by financially supporting the production groups and cooperating with potential local market supporters/facilitators such as enterprises, cooperative or others involved	24,000,000 Partly disbursed	
7	Supporting the local market facilitators to implement a commodity inventory policy to timely respond to customers' requirements	30,000,000 Partly disbursed	Increased due to the establishment of new production groups, and the demand for on-stock products in line with the inventory policy.
8	Monitoring	18,400,000 Partly disbursed	
	Total	260,000,000	

Total spent budget until 30th of June 2021: around VND 143,000,000 (accounting for 55% of the total budget).