

2024 VGGN annual report

I. General situation

In 2024, despite catastrophic natural disasters (e.g. the Yagi typhoon) taking places throughout Vietnam, the Vietnam Global Geoparks Network (VGGN) coordinated with the Management Boards of the Geoparks: Dong Van Karst Plateau (DVUGGp), Non nuoc Cao Bang (CBUGGp), Dak Nong (DNUGGp), and Lang Son (LSaUGGp) to implement international/national cooperation activities, organize international/national workshops and conferences; conduct communication and promotion activities to raise community awareness about UNESCO's activities regarding Geoparks and conservation; build Geopark development models in the localities; and provide support for the revalidation of the UNESCO Global Geoparks etc.

II. Achieved results

1. Training, capacity building for staff, and communication, education to raise community awareness in Geopark areas

- DVUGGp organized a training course to enhance professional expertise and update knowledge and methods for community communication and education on Geoparks; and a training course in 2024 to raise community awareness on responding to climate change and geohazards within the Geopark area.
- CBUGGp organized 15 training sessions for 853 participants to communicate and educate on heritage conservation, environmental protection, and sustainable tourism development activities in the Geopark area; organized 11 training sessions for 560 teachers and students on Geopark education activities at secondary and high schools within the Geopark area; and in 2024, established 132 "Explore Non nuoc Cao Bang Geopark with Me" Clubs across the province with over 3,000 student members. At the 8th Asia-Pacific Geoparks Network (APGN) Symposium in Cao Bang in Sept. 2024, members of the Club participated in presenting papers at two specialized workshop sessions on the topic of the "Explore Geopark with Me" Club and Geopark education activities in schools.
- DNUGGp integrated the content of communication and education on heritage conservation, environmental protection, and sustainable tourism development activities in the Geopark area into the primary school curriculum for primary schools.
- LSaUGGp organized training and introduction sessions on the tourist routes, sites, and heritage values of the Geopark, with many communication and education activities to raise community awareness in 2024, such as: organizing an English public speaking contest on the Geopark's perspective at Hoang Van Thu High School, Lang Son City; a training course for community tourism interpreters at sites for volunteers from districts/cities along the four LSaUGGp experience routes; raising awareness among the drivers of DK Viet Nhat Electric Car Co., Ltd. about the value of the Geopark; and organizing field activities in the Geopark area, conducting surveys, and establishing practical routes for Hanoi University of Mining and Geology students on geotourism.

2. International/national cooperation activities: Organizing and attending workshops and conferences

- Attended the 2024 year-end meeting of the Vietnam National Commission for UNESCO (UNESCO Natcom) in Hanoi.
- Attended the Mid-year VGGN workshop in the LSaUGGp; Organized the Workshop on the Model for the Development of Vietnam Geoparks and the Vietnam Geoparks Network in July 2024.
- Attended the 37th International Geological Congress in Busan, South Korea, in August 2024.
- Attended the Asia-Pacific Geoparks Network (APGN) Symposium in September 2024 in Cao Bang and the extended meeting of the Vietnam Geopark Technical Committee under UNESCO Natcom.
- Organized the Workshop on the Finalization of the Operational Regulations of the Vietnam Geoparks Network and coordination with relevant organizations in 2024 in Hanoi.
- Attended the Workshop on DNUGGp with the Goal of Sustainable Development and the Ceremony to Receive the Revalidation Certificate in December 2024.
- Introduced, discussed and filled in SDGs reports.
- Introduced, discussed GGN 2025-2035 Strategies and Action Plans and selected those most applicable for VGGN.

3. Information, communication, and promotion of UGGps in Vietnam

- DVUGGp printed 5,000 leaflets, 2,000 newsletters, 1,100 tourist guidebooks, promotional brochures, 2 hardcopy newsletters, 2 electronic newsletters, and 2 clips on limestone formation and thrust faults within the Geopark; participated in 5 promotional exhibitions at festivals and events in the Geopark area; and posted news, articles, and images promoting the Geopark on the Geopark's website and YouTube channel (as of the end of November 2024, 147 news articles were posted on the website; 5,000 map leaflets were printed for communication and promotion; implemented contents according to signed agreements with Mudeungsan UGGp, South Korea, Mine-Akysoshydai aUGGp, Japan, and Arouca UGGp, Portugal).
- CBUGGp published 4 newsletters/year; printed leaflets and books introducing the 4 experiential tourist routes of the Geopark. Provided promotional materials for the Geopark to the Department of Education and Training, partners, tourism service businesses, Geopark Information Centers, and coordinated with units to promote during major events inside and outside the province; the CaobangGeopark.com Website (the only bilingual English-Vietnamese site in Cao Bang province) posted 77-102 news articles, attracting 3,877,932-4,115,499 visitors; the Geopark Fanpage posted 116-136 news articles.
- LSaUGGp maintained and developed the Geopark Website and the "Lang Son Geopark" Fanpage. Compiled over 150 news articles/posts on the Geopark's Website pages by December 17, 2024; regularly developed news, articles, images, and videos introducing the cultural and geological values, key products, tourist areas, and tourist sites of the Geopark area on electronic information pages; and reissued and newly published some publications about the Geopark.

4. Strengthening support for localities in raising awareness of the significance of UNESCO programs and activities

In 2024, the VGGN actively communicated, launched, and participated with member Geoparks in activities and events initiated and organized by the GGN and APGN to strengthen and expand cooperation with UGGps and countries in the region and internationally. Specifically, Earth Day (April 22), International Museum Day (May 18), World Environment Day (June 5); World Oceans Day (June 8); International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples (August 9), World Tourism Day (September 27); International Geodiversity Day (October 6) and International Day for Disaster Risk Reduction (October 10).

5. Coordinating and supporting localities in preparing new application dossiers, heritage conservation and management, and annual/revalidation reports for existing UGGps

- Reviewed and commented on the dossier submitted to UNESCO for the recognition of LSaUGGp; Coordinated with the LSaUGGp in welcoming the UNESCO expert team for the evaluation of the UGGp application dossier.

6. Conservation and promotion of the value of UNESCO titles and heritage types

- Regular inspection and assessment of heritage sites and infrastructure along the tourist routes of DVUGGp, CBUGGp and DNUGGp, including:
 - DVUGGp regularly inspected districts in the Geopark area regarding the exploitation of 59 geosites; Inspected heritage sites and sanitation work, checked the system of signage and interpretive boards introducing heritage in the Geopark area; checked and detected unauthorized construction works in the Geopark area; inspected and assessed the impact of natural disasters on the Cultural Space Museum of Ethnic Groups in the DVUGGp; and strengthened the management of construction projects in the Geopark area.
 - CBUGGp, to prepare and successfully organize the APGN 2024 International Symposium in Cao Bang City, managed the infrastructure system: signage, promotional billboards etc. and welcomed delegations and tourists to visit the experiential tourist routes of the Geopark: "Discovering Phia Oac - the mountain of transformation"; "Journey to the Freedom and Happiness"; "Experiencing Local Culture in the Fairy Land" and "A Time of Fiery Flowers".
 - LSaUGGp actively continued to complete the infrastructure of the sites along the four Geopark tourist routes; completed the system of interpretive signage for the sites along the four Geopark tourist routes, 2D models simulating ancient organisms and cultural values for some tourist sites in the Geopark area; installed 03 information centers at Bac Le Temple, Tam Thanh Pagoda, and the Bac Son Uprising Museum; renovated and decorated the landscape of some sites along the four Geopark tourist routes (Son Thuy Homestay, Peaceful Ancient Ocean, Chi Lang Pass, Tham Khuyen - Tham Hai Cave, Yin-Yang Tile Village, Tay Culture Village, Sea Memories).

8. Actively improving mechanisms and policies for the management of Vietnam UGGps

- Reviewed and appraised the proposal for the expansion of the DVUGGp; the proposal for the establishment of the DVUGGp Management Board directly under the Provincial People's Committee.

IV. General assessment

1. Strengths

- VGGN regularly exchanged and shared experiences on activities for building and developing Geoparks, and the newly established LSaUGGp was very active in networking and learning from Geoparks both domestically and internationally.
- The very close, enthusiastic, and direct guidance and support from the Vietnam National Commission for UNESCO.
- The active support from the Ministry of Science and Technology (Sub-Committee for Natural Sciences, Department of Social Sciences, Humanities and Nature, Department of International Cooperation), the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (Deputy Minister Tran Quy Kien, Department of Organization and Personnel, Department of Science and Technology, Department of International Cooperation).
- The enthusiastic and close coordination of international experts (e.g. Guy Martini) and between Vietnamese Geoparks.
- The National Assembly issued the Law on Geology and Minerals No. 54/2024/QH15 on November 29, 2024, which includes definitions for geological heritage and geoparks.

2. Shortcomings

- The system of legal documents and the legal framework for the establishment, development, and promotion of the UNESCO Global Geoparks in Vietnam are still lacking and not synchronized, leading to difficulties in implementation. Currently, the most recent Law on Geology and Minerals still does not provide guidance on the criteria for recognizing and ranking geological heritage.
- The utilization of advantages and the promotion of the Global Geopark title for socio-economic development and income improvement for local residents in some areas of Dak Nong Geopark have not yet been truly effective.
- The staff of some Management Boards are limited and lack personnel (professional positions in geological heritage, sustainable development, communication, etc.), which causes difficulties in the implementation of specialized tasks.