

CEPF SMALL GRANT FINAL PROJECT COMPLETION REPORT

I. BASIC DATA

Organization Legal Name: _____ Susie Lee Cecchi _____

Project Title (as stated in the grant agreement): A Study of Feasibility and Effects of Ecotourism at Baoshan Gushi Cheng, Yunnan

Implementation Partners for This Project:

Project Dates (as stated in the grant agreement): March 1, 2005 - February 28, 2006

Date of Report (month/year): April, 2006

II. OPENING REMARKS

Baoshan Gushi Cheng is a 0.5 sq. km. town, built 1,300 years ago on top of a rock jutting 220m above Jingsha Jiang in NW Yunnan, one of 3 endemic species centers in China and an area recognized for its unique ecological functions. The town, also known as Shitou Cheng, is nestled in the Jinsha River valley, within the First Bend of Yangtze River, and is in the NE range of Yulong Snow Mountain, a Provincial Nature Reserve.

108 Naxi families live in houses built on, and along, the precipice of this rock. They call their rock city Haluba - the golden rock. For years, isolation has helped maintain the area's natural environment. It has also preserved a culture, distinctive architecture, indigenous knowledge, and a dialect of the Naxi language unique to Haluba's people. The Yunnan government named it a Provincial-level Cultural Preservation Unit.

Except for lack of easy access, Shitou Cheng has all the potential to be a tourist site. The Historical Heritage Site Lijiang Dayan Town is only 126 km. south, and Haluba is within the Shangri-La Tourist Zone. It is in the right place, at a time of rapid tourism development. During the field study, we were informed that the construction of an access road has been approved; it was projected that within three to four years, the number of visitors to Haluba will reach 360,000 a year (10% of visitors to Lijiang).

III. NARRATIVE QUESTIONS

1. What was the initial objective of this project?

In order to find out whether it is feasible to implement some form of ecotourism as an alternative to mass tourism, the following were the focus during this investigation:

1. Research the physical, ecological, and socio-cultural environment.
2. Investigate and assess current actions and conditions.
3. Assess local community's preparedness for change. Assess infrastructures, accommodations, services, existing and potential organizational structures.
4. Identify local leaders and factors influencing change.
5. Community education and awareness started as a process of this study.
6. Develop a set of possible options and approaches.
7. Develop sample material: for marketing plan, and for education in local schools.
8. Develop a manual, in simple format, to be used as a reference for development.
9. Create a set of documentary photographs
10. Facilitate increased capacity for young professionals in community development.

2. Did the objectives of your project change during implementation? If so, please explain why and how.

- 1, Based on findings from the “Re-construction and development report on Shitou Cheng” provided us by the government, the approval of an access road while we were on-site, and the publication just after the field study of Yulong County’s request for investment, we concluded that development is imminent. The reference manual (objective 8) was not produced, because rapid changes would render it irrelevant.
2. There was an addition to objective 9: we found that a 16-year-old girl was accepted to high school in Lijiang, where she would have to live during the school year. I provided her and her mother with cameras to use for one day. Although it was their first time using a camera, they produced an excellent documentation from the perspective of two Naxi women, from separate generations, at the dawn of change.

3. How was your project successful in achieving the expected objectives?

1. In-depth research was done before the on-site study so the team was prepared with knowledge of the environment and appropriate interview questions. More research after the field study helped clarify and collate the information and data gathered.
2. The local government was helpful: we received cooperation from the Town Leader of Shitou Cheng. The Head of Baoshan District government met with us and assigned officers to assist the research team. We had an informative meeting with the Vice Director and also the Planner of the Tourism Administration of Lijiang, when plans and options were discussed.
3. The project staff was able to engage the local community immediately. Interviews with people diverse in background and occupation provided insightful information. We visited all the accommodations and interviewed the proprietor or manager of each. We visited 9.2% and 9% of the households in inner and outer Shitou Cheng, respectively; many of these were prepared to turn their houses into home-stays.
4. Several group meetings in various formats: with local leaders, families, associations, made possible community participation and, at times, lively discussions. During these times, the process of community education and awareness began.
5. Through these interactions, a core group of local leaders was identified.
6. The staff included 2 people from the community, who were capable translators and active team members. Their local knowledge and social contacts were very helpful.
7. Training sessions before each day’s activities and debriefing discussions afterwards helped maintain the team’s focus and facilitated our ability to adjust methods necessitated by new findings.
8. Three students from the Kunming Institute of Technology and Science participated in pre-field study preparations. One became an important member of the field research team. All contributed toward the project, at the same enhanced their own skills in research and community development.

4. Did your team experience any disappointments or failures during implementation? If so, please explain and comment on how the team addressed these disappointments and/or failures.

We discovered that the people of Shitou Cheng speak their own dialect of the Naxi language. With the help of staff members of a NGO and a friend from the local community, we were able to have two excellent translators on our research team. They helped overcome a difficult obstacle.

5. Describe any positive or negative lessons learned from this project that would be useful to share with other organizations interested in implementing a similar project.

While Shitou Cheng was not yet developed, plans were in place; preparations were being made. The place was at the cusp of change; this added a sense of urgency. In order to meet the objective of feasibility testing and information collection before design and implementation of any ecotourism program, it was important for us to maintain our focus on the tasks involved in the study, rather than the execution of unrelated activities.

6. Describe any follow-up activities related to this project.

1. A survey questionnaire was developed for Mu Shang Cheng, a translator on the team, to disseminate to visitors. Shang Cheng and his brother are professional guides for adventure and trekking tours; they and their family operate The Mu Family Guesthouse, the only lodging within the city walls of Shitou Cheng.
2. A cave nearby has been designated as a major tourist spot. In preparation for the large number of visitors anticipated, construction in the cave's vicinity and at the entrance has been planned. A Science Academy in the U.S. had expressed an interest in exploring the cave before too many people go through it.
3. A presentation is being created from the set of "Mother-Daughter" photographs.

7. Please provide any additional information to assist CEPF in understanding any other aspects of your completed project.



Photo by John Cecchi

Baoshan Gushi Cheng, more commonly known as Shitou Cheng, or Haluba (the Golden Rock), in Naxi language



Meeting with community leaders at stone house
Photo by John Cecchi



Stone house on Eastern Wall overlooking Jinsha Jiang
Photo by John Cecchi



One of the potential sites for home-stay conversion
Photo by John Cecchi

IV. ADDITIONAL FUNDING

Donor	Type of Funding*	Amount	Notes

Provide details of whether this project will continue in the future and if so, how any additional funding already secured or fundraising plans will help ensure its sustainability.

This project found a compelling need to move past the study phase to design and implementation of projects as alternatives to mass tourism. It does not require large amounts of funding to influence, by degrees, the direction of change. The sustainability of this project depends on organizations willing to undertake and support a project that, if implemented sensitively and pragmatically, will have far reaching effect.

V. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Without alternatives to existing plans, this fragile ecological area will be open to masses of people, which will damage the environment and the local culture. Tourism as planned at Shitou Cheng may not be sustainable, and if it fails, the sustainability of economic development at Baoshan, a poverty alleviation district, would be at risk. There are alternatives: findings of this study point to the need for a multifaceted and pragmatic approach to the planning and implementation of programs. Viable economic success and its potential as a stimulus to local economy are vital to the feasibility of new projects. Timely intervention, in concrete actions, not only can influence the direction of development at Shitou Cheng, but also the NW region of Yunnan. Some suggestions:

1. Micro-credit program: the cost to establish one of the 20 potential home-stays is estimated to be USD 750. Also there are skills that can be developed to provide economic alternatives to agriculture, the termination of which has been planned.
2. Capacity-building: in planning, management, and marketing. Convene stakeholders.
3. Education: Introduce environmental education. Support local schools and students, to increase available human resources and help prevent outward migration.
4. Methane conversion: continue a successful program subsidized with public funds.
5. Community Center: a place for conservation education, technical training, maintenance of traditional art form, community outreach.
6. Community-based ecotourism

VI. INFORMATION SHARING

CEPF aims to increase sharing of experiences, lessons learned and results among our grant recipients and the wider conservation and donor communities. One way we do this is by making the text of final project completion reports available on our Web site, www.cepf.net, and by marketing these reports in our newsletter and other communications. Please indicate whether you would agree to publicly sharing your final project report with others in this way.

Yes

No

If yes, please also complete the following:

For more information about this project, please contact:

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