

**Enhancement Awareness Of Local People  
to Protect Bats and Khmer Culture in The  
Mekong Delta of Vietnam**

**Rufford Small Grant Foundation 13200-1**



## Executive Summary

The project "Enhancement awareness of local people to protect bats and Khmer culture in the Mekong Delta of Vietnam" was funded by Rufford Small Grant Foundation (RSGF), the project implemented in Bat Pagoda community of Soc Trang City from February 2013 until December 2013, this project aims at enhancing students, local community, local government officers, monks and tourists in order to protect number of bats in Bat Pagoda.

The Large Flying Fox, *Pteropus vampyrus* (Linnaeus, 1758) and Lylei Flying Fox, *Pteropus lylei* (Anderson, 1908) are determined as residential in Bat Pagoda and their numbers are decreased very fast. The three groups of local people include Khmer (95%), Kinh (4%) and Chinese live in around Bat Pagoda community, their livelihoods mainly are agriculture, small business, handmade local traditional crafts and labor hired.

There are five activities implementing in the project field including (1) to improve sanitation issue in Bat Pagoda, which did with youth from high school, military and local; (2) to run environmental education program to primary students; (3) to organize painting competition for primary students "Action to Save the Bats Together"; (4) to evaluate and monitor the project by doing research in order to understand eco-social and environmental issues and efficiency of the project to stakeholders during running the project; and (5) to make short film in order to show and make more efficiency to stakeholders about the bats and the project objectives.

The project attracted 70 primary students, 100 youth, 10 local government officers, 5 monks, 10 volunteers from Can Tho University participating the project. There are two researchers from Mekong Delta Development Research Institute (MDI), Can Tho University (CTU). The project was influenced local people and tourists in order to improve knowledge about bats as they understand some points that the bats are very important in the environment and their lives. By this benefit, the students and youth from project activities transfer to them.

Ly Quoc Dang is currently researcher from Department of Socio-Economic and Policy, MDI, CTU. He has been working on bats issues many years in Soc Trang Province with Bat Conservation International from his undergraduate school. He did his bachelor degree on environmental sciences in Ho Chi Minh City National University, master degree on development studies in The Graduate Institute, Geneva, Switzerland. He is Khmer Ethnic Group and from Soc Trang Province in the Mekong Delta. Dang would like to develop this project becoming bat conservation program to work closely with local community and stakeholders. Lam Huon is currently researcher from Department of Socio-Economic and Policy, MDI, CTU. He is original from Bac Lieu Province and he is Khmer Ethnic Group as well. Huon did both his undergraduate degree and his master degree on rural development in Can Tho University. He has been working some issues in the Mekong Delta, which relate to social issues such as migration, rural labor, farming system and climate change. Even though, Huon is firstly working in bat issue, he does lots of things and would like to move forwards in working in the future.

Volunteers are ten graduate and undergraduate students from different background in Can Tho University. They take different roles and responsibilities in order to develop the project in the field. For example, they organize environmental education program, make short film, work with youth and interview stakeholder for evaluation the project, some of them are Le Thi Thu Thuy, Nguyen Tran Huynh Lan, Ly Van Loi, Nguyen Thong Tha, Thi Bich Nghia, Le Thi Thao Anh and Nguyen Khiem.

Rufford Small Grant Foundation (RSGF) is funded this project, from United Kingdom, concerning to conserve flora and fauna around the world. Mekong Development Research Institute (MDI) is established with the mission of improving the quality of life of rural people and ensuring the socio-economic and environmental sustainability of the Mekong Delta through collaborative education, research, and scientific consultancy as well as local human resources capacity building.

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## Together Movement to Save the Bats

The project gathers around a hundred youth from high school, military school, local youth in the community, volunteers students and local government officers participating in the project activity "Improving sanitation issue and Bat Pagoda" in Bat Pagoda, Soc Trang City in October 19th 2013. There is also some stakeholders involving in joining the activity too such as Board of Bat Pagoda, Department of Culture, Sport and Tourism, Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, Local Government People Committee, Schools, and Mekong Delta Development Research Institute, and local community.



Poor condition of sanitation is one of reasons to make the complaints from the tourists while they visit this pagoda, there are just few trashes in the pagoda, it is not enough to contain the waste from the tourists or local community, most of tourists and local visitors do not put their garbages into the trashes, the waste water is not managed well and those reason causes in poor sanitation at the Pagoda, it was not only effected to aesthetic to local environment, but also effected to people who is living around the Pagoda, visiting Pagoda and working in Pagoda.



Through discussion with local government officers and stakeholders in Soc Trang Province with the project coordinator, we saw that the Pagoda needs more trashes to contain the waste, more activities to encourage the local community and tourists to protect environment and improve sanitation. After discussing, the project decided to give 10 big trashes and 10 chairs to the Pagoda in order that poor sanitation may be improved.

The campaign "Improving sanitation with youth" was mentioned in order to promote and encourage youth participation inside the project as this generation is powerful factor in the society, they could be influenced easily and effectively to others factors, leadership skills development can be changed their minds and thoughts to become leadership in the project in the future.

During the campaign, more people also participated, it makes our activity running faster. After the campaign, the sanitation issue was improved, the waste was managed, the trashes were arranged, by participants in four hours long. It is really significant campaign to make "Attention" to save the Bats in the Pagoda and make "Concentration" of Bats species than before.



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Đặc biệt "Nâng Cao Nhận Thức Cộng Đồng Nhân Dân Về Đạo và Mối Tương  
Liên Giữa Văn Hóa Đạo, Học Trường"

Ngày nộp: 30/10/2011

2000-2001 40-49 years

Hãy viết bản nháp của con về Loài Dơi tại Vườn Dơi trong giờ học 150 phút, đưa an Dơi đi và trở lại trong môi trường và chúng ta sẽ đánh giá các hành động của bạn để xác định việc chúng.

11/15/2011

Dân số đã trở nên ngày càng đông đúc, đất đai là tài nguyên vô cùng quý giá, cần được bảo vệ và khai thác hợp lý. Việc trồng cây là một trong những cách để bảo vệ môi trường và cải thiện đời sống. Trồng cây giúp cải thiện môi trường sống, giảm thiểu ô nhiễm, và tạo ra không gian xanh cho cộng đồng. Ngoài ra, trồng cây còn giúp cải thiện chất lượng đất đai, giữ nước, và giảm thiểu biến đổi khí hậu. Vì vậy, chúng ta cần có ý thức và hành động để bảo vệ tài nguyên đất đai và môi trường sống của mình.

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Trần Thanh Hồng

## Moving Forwards to Young Generation

Conservational Education program to young generation from the project is the core action to save the bats and improve Khmer culture in the community. There are 40 students which majority factors in the program and twenty young students around also involve into the program as they are interested in curious activity from the project. From stakeholders sites, there are ten officers from different backgrounds and departments participating the program with the students including local government office, local authority, department of culture, sport and tourism, sub-department of forest protection, department of natural and environment, and the others from media including news, television, radio station and youth volunteers from Can Tho University.

There are four small games from the program and those are based on bat issue in order to develop and build from the project officers, those consist (1) starting game, (2) pollination to flowers and trees fruits, (3) eating the insect; and, lastly, (4) drawing picture by tearing papers. Four groups are divided by the organizers, each volunteer is following and taking care of a group which include ten students, girls and boys students are sharing to make balance among the groups.

At the first one "starting game", it spent around an hour, the students had to work together to find many requirements from the organizers such as small dried leaves, pen, signature from your teacher in the school, drawing a bat, answering some questions related to bat issue and knowledge, and so on. Those students played very well, funny and knowledgeable, they have almost answered all questions and found materials which suggested from the organizers.

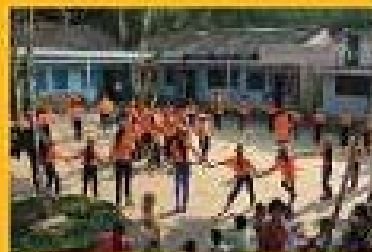
Moving to second game "pollination to flowers and trees fruit", all students have to run around 20 meters in order to make the sample "way of transferring pollen from the bats to the others trees as pollination ways", this game tries to make students more understanding the roles of bats in the environment which contribute the local people livelihoods and improve economic. This game spent around thirty minutes and all of students have to play at least one times, after this game some students discussed with others students about the game which tells how do the bats pollinate to the trees and make profit to local community in stead of destroying theirs.

Thirdly, the game "eating the insect", the students are more understood by the organizers because the students are made more sense to know that the bats are improving sanitation issues in their community. Some kinds of bats eat insect and it was improved sanitation and environment issues. In addition to, the bats provide fertilizers which contribute into eco-food in our lives.

The last one, "drawing pictures by leasing paper" game is aiming at encouraging and promoting the students "critical thinking skills" in order to build and draw picture in their community or bat pagoda. Four groups are raising different situations and colors in the Bat Pagoda, but all of them are similar situation which is decreasing number of bats in the Pagoda and the people kill them for food, the issue of sanitation is also mentioned on those pictures.



Four hours are made more than 60 students, volunteers and officers understanding much about the bats issues in the Pagoda, their voice is transferring very fast to their family and community, make more effectively the way of communication to the local people.

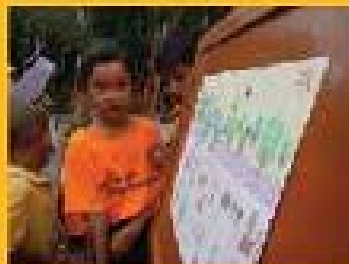
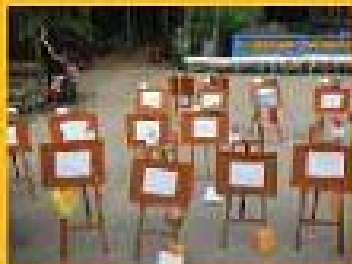


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## The Painting Contest "Action to Save the Bats Together"

It is from the conservational education program from the project and it is organized for four hours in the campus of Bat Pagoda where is concentrate many tourists, the local people, the monks and the students.

Twenty students from Le Hong Phong Primary School are involved in this activity and most of them are very interested in drawing the painting about bats, environment and others issues in the Bat Pagoda.

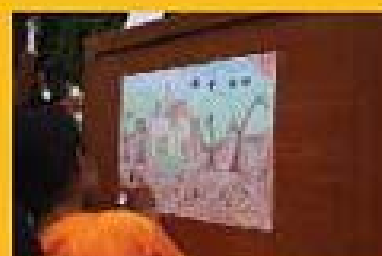


Girl and boy students are controlled to be equality as well as minorities of Kinh and Khmer Ethnic group. During the contest, many tourists and local people watched the students who are drawing the paintings, some students draw the gate and the road where head to main Pagoda, some students draw someone, tourists watched and observed the bats while they visiting the Pagoda, some students draw Pagoda building "Cính điện", it is centre of the Pagoda and some draw the habitat area where the bat living, sleeping, reproducing and giving birth. There are common points from all students, those students concerned very much on the situations which the bats are decreased by killing, shooting, catching and eating from the "people", the students emphasize that "people" tease the bats, throw stones the bats and shake the trees where the bats living during visiting the Pagoda. Almost the painting also mentions issue of sanitation in the Pagoda, which focuses on poor condition of waste management and sewage treatment.





Twenty paintings- twenty stories from twenty students in Bat Pagoda community, they want to raise their voices as the Bats in their community are threatened to disappear in near future, they would like to make somethings changing and improving, to make situations in Bat Pagoda better and better. It is first event in Vietnam which focus on Bat issue and the project wants to take this action to save the Bats in the next future in the region, it not only involves students from local community, but also students from the others.



The painting contest organizers are chose five painting for the winner as theirs are very meaningful and knowledgeable to the audience, but there are no winners or loser from this contest because all students made the event significantly in transferring the knowledge, information and messages from the project to others factors in the community.



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## The Assessment of Changing Knowledge, Perspective and Awareness of Local Stakeholders and Local Community

This evaluation and assessment aim to study the changing of behavior and awareness of local people, students and local government officers and the tourists. During the project implemented in the community, the investigators organized Participatory Rural Appraisal for local people, observed students during playing games from the project activities including environmental education program and painting contest, interviewed both students and local people in order to understand their perception about the bats from the project, interviewed local people in order to understand more backgrounds of social, economic and environment in the community, interviewed tourists, monks and others local government officers to get more sense their knowledges about the bats issues in the community.

In the result, all of them are enhanced by the project activities and their awareness and behavior are changing in different ways by reception different persons. The students from Le Hong Phong Primary School are core communicator to transfer the information and knowledge to the others one while they received from the project officers. Actually, the project aims at raising awareness of the students and make understanding the situation first, then the local people are effected by those student as they are from many households in the community. The students always tell their parents, their relatives and their friends everything they learned and their parents, friends and relatives also listen the students while telling to them from the school.

There are a hundred youth joining the event "improving sanitation" in the Bat Pagoda, the youth are from different schools and backgrounds in the province and the others locations in the Mekong Delta, all youth are divided small groups in order to "clean up" and "arrange" waste, material, and stuffs inside and outside the Bat campus. During working in the campus four hours, the others youth, children, local people and tourists are influenced by the campaign, the campus of the Bat Pagoda has been cleaning up and arranging till now by local community and students from high school, it means that the ways of effectively to make the campus cleaning is influenced by youth to others stakeholders, made the environment better and sanitation more hygienic.

The project did assessment to 40 students from Le Hong Phong Primary School before and after two activities with them, those their knowledge and action change very much when comparing two forms. At sending same question and requirements, before implementing the environmental education program and painting contest, most of the students have just mentioned very simple opinions about bat roles in the environment and social, but after two activities the students write their comments more deeply, longer writing and putting more action into the answer. One student from the primary school commented that ".....at the Bat Pagoda, the number of bats are decreasing, the people catch the bats and sell to the restaurants. They also have some materials in order to catch the bats including stones, nets, the guns, crossbows and so on and they use those material to catch the bats. We must do actions to save the bats and prevent the bats catchers, I wish I am becoming very excellence student in order to save the Bats in my hometown." Meay Thanh Hoang said. We can see that this student told how does the situation in the community face and how would he want to do? This quotation is commented after the activity, Thanh Hoang receives a lot from the education program, he tried to make solution to make situation better. In this talks, we may see that he also tells his knowledge and his wishing to his relatives too.

For the painting contest, the students are learning before one month how to draw the bats, raise and develop their ideas for the painting. They almost draw the paintings which consist "cảnh diện", bats, local people, children (themselves) and visitors. During painting, many visitors and local communities watched them as they are very curiously seeing how is that! This way can be influenced them to tell their relatives and friends while they come back home. Furthermore, the students may tell to their relatives as well while they go back home about the stories this day as what do they learn, see, talk and discuss to many people.

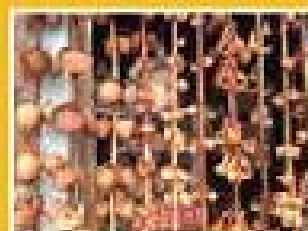
Understanding local livelihood and social, economic and environment issues are one of objects for evaluation and assessment, the investigators did meeting with local people by group in order to understand their common issues and situations in the community. In addition, the investigator also interviewed fifth-teen local people with differentiate background of social and economic, stakeholders from local government officers, monks, tourist, students, Forest Protection Sub-department and experts. We found that local livelihoods are affected by the company investment in front of Bat Pagoda as the local people cannot compete to that company, some people are lose their employment and incomes, they do not want to work in the restaurants even though the owners try to encourage them to work there. In fact, there is no strategies for local people in order to improve their capacity time by time and the owner just forces them in making their requirements. There are the competition of doing business between local people and the company, we found that the local people are loser in this case, so the inequality is analyzed by the investigators. The number of bats are decreased because there are some catchers, sellers and eaters the bats from the local community, restaurants in Soc Trang Province and others Provinces in the Mekong Delta. One case is found in the research area, one case is searched in Soc Trang City, two cases are identified in two restaurants in Can Tho City and two cases are showed from Hau Giang and Tra Vinh Provinces. The price is quite expensive, small one is around 30 US dollars and big one is around 50 US dollars, they can make porridge and groove. Local people catch the bats and sell them because of money and it is quite easy to gain money from this activity if they can get two to three bats per day. In the past, 50 years ago, the bats were around hundred thousand individuals, it is decreased. Thong (2005) found that there was around 500 individuals for Large Flying Fox and 1.500 individuals for Lylei Flying Fox in the Bat Pagoda. At the moment, we found that it is around 200- 300 individuals for both. There are not many documents, policies and laws in order to prevent the situations in the community and region, we found it is only one document law from Soc Trang Province People Committee till now and the province puts this issue into urgent case in order to save the bats, improve local people income and employment, develop eco-tourism and environment in the Bat Pagoda campus.

And last but not least, local stakeholders from Forest Protection Sub-department, People Committee, Monks and teachers from schools in Soc Trang Province are involved in the research, we found that they were transferred by students and youth actions from the project, they heard some messages from the local people, tourists and their colleagues.

In addition, there are some news on television, news papers, internet, radio and so on, which mentioned and raised actions from the project. We can find at [www.mdic.chu.edu.vn](http://www.mdic.chu.edu.vn), [www.laodong.com.vn](http://www.laodong.com.vn), [www.baomoi.com](http://www.baomoi.com), [www.vov.com.vn](http://www.vov.com.vn) [www.lhsl.vn](http://www.lhsl.vn), and so on. Those make strong efficiency impact to the audiences, stakeholders and researchers in order to pay more attention to the bats.

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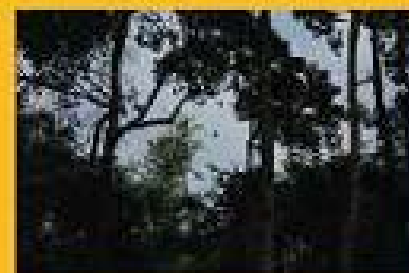
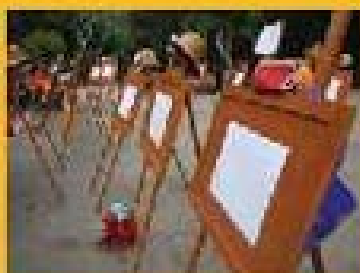
## Falling in Love....to the Bats!

The film tells the Khmer guy, Ly Quoc Dang, owner of this project, original from Soc Trang Province. During studying at high school in Soc Trang Province, Dang and his friends used to visit the Bat Pagoda during weekend while he did not come back home in order to watch the bats in the Pagoda, which is hanging on the trees' branches and flying around "Chánh Điện" before going to find the food at night.

After graduating high school, Dang was attending to environment studies in order to learn more about the bats issue. Year by year, Dang read many books, reports and documents on bats in Vietnam and the others countries and he decided to do his final thesis on bats research in his hometown, Soc Trang Province. At that time, he tried to find as much as information he could, tried to contact many people who are working on bats issue in Vietnam and his hometown and some organizations around region and the world, such as Mr. Vu Dinh Thong from Ha Noi- Vietnam, Mr. Ly Hoa Khuong from Soc Trang- Vietnam, Bat Conservation International from United States, his classmates from 02MT- Environmental Studies 2002 from University of Natural Sciences in Ho Chi Minh City and his special supervisor Mrs. Duong Thi Bich Hue. His thesis concerned on social and environmental impacts and educational issues to the bats, Dang was get high score 9.5/10.0 from that one after defending in 2006.



In stead of keeping the thesis report in the cabinets and shelves as his colleagues, he planned to translate his report and contacted to Bat Conservation International to apply for GrassRoot Small Grant in 2008, finally he got the grant and he implemented his project in the community for six months. His project tried to focus to primary students in the community, he also got another grant from bat Conservation International in 2010 in order to make his activities broader to community. He thinks that young generation is made the change of behavior to the local community and others ones.





After few years of studying in Switzerland and working in Ho Chi Minh City, Dang is currently starting his small project with Rufford Foundation and Bat Conservation International, this project is supported by his friends and Live and Learn too. In this project, Dang tried to organize few activities with the students who are from primary school, high schools and local youth first in order to understand their perceptions about bats. In addition to, he did assessment and evaluation of local people on social, economic and environment backgrounds in order to understand more their participations into the project and bats situation in the community. Dang and his colleagues are working closely with local government officers, the monks from the Pagoda, Soc Trang Province People Committee, Forest Protection Sub-Department and the others one. He perceives that everything is solved by human and we have to understand humanity issue first in the community, try to understand how the relationship between humanity and the bats, those so-calls eco-humanity.

Dang is developing and building another proposal with his colleagues and local government officers in Soc Trang Province in order to save the number of bats and improve Khmer culture in his hometown and Mekong Delta area. He focuses on conservation education and this promotes to enhance young generation about the bats situations, to train young development leadership skills, to improve income and employment for local people, and to improve governance system in the local and region.

The challenges are the cooperation, financial and supporters from outside, he needs more from them and put this project as the program in his hometown in order to keep the bats moving and flying, to change behavior of the local people and to improve governance system in the community. In this way, the bats would be increased, sanitation issue would be improved, local people's livelihood would be developed and the culture would be not lose.



**Please contact him for supporting and cooperating:**

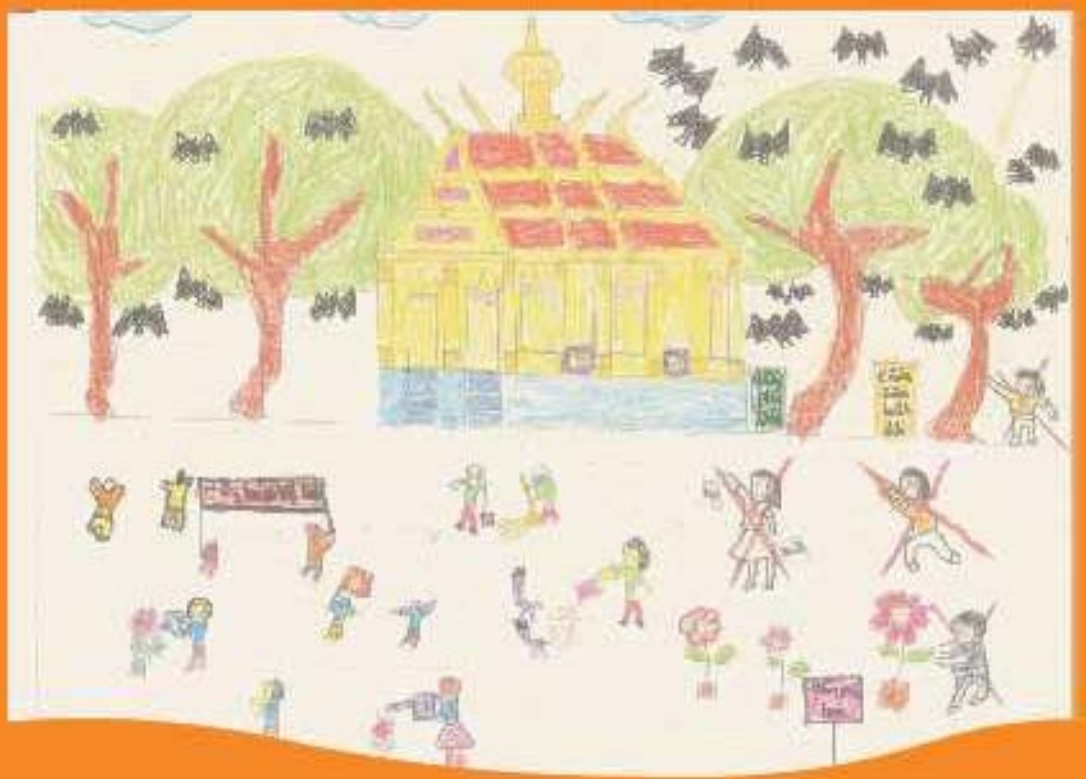
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Meay

Thanh

Hoàng

Lớp  
4/2



Action to Save the Bat Together  
Painted by: Meay Thanh Hoang,  
A Khmer Student from le Hong Phong  
Primary School, Soc Trang City, Vietnam

*From*

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*To*

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The project "Enhancement awareness of local people to protect the bats and Khmer culture in the Mekong Delta, Vietnam."  
For donation and more information, please contact Mr. Ly Quoc Dang via: [lqdong@ctu.edu.vn](mailto:lqdong@ctu.edu.vn) or  
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