



# Media Trip: Sustainable Tourism Development in Natural World Heritage Sites

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INTERNATIONAL UNION FOR CONSERVATION OF NATURE



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## 1. Media talk and field trip

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### 1.1 Context

The number of visitors to the World Heritage Site of Ha Long Bay is rapidly increasing year on year. The incredible levels of biodiversity and sheer natural beauty are resulting in Ha Long Bay becoming more popular than ever. The visitor figures here coincide with the tourism industry booming across Vietnam with the Government considering tourism one of the most prominent industries for the country based on Resolution No. 08-NQ / TW of the Politburo issued on January 16, 2017. The Government's objective is to bring more tourists to the country by increasing the number of visitors from 1.3 to 2 times by 2020. At the end of 2016 visitor numbers were reported at 10 million for international and 62 million for domestic.

Considering the already high level of visitors is only going to increase, it is of paramount importance that the construction of infrastructure and services is prioritized to meet the increasing demand. In some parts of the World Heritage Site, rapid investment into the tourist sector is degrading the valuable natural landscape and is being instead replaced by artificial constructions.

These artificial structures are encroaching upon key protected marine areas and threatening the natural resources that are protected here. Another big problem that comes with increased visitor numbers is water pollution. As there is no proper waste treatment in the area, ships have been discharging waste directly into the marine environment at an enormous level.

News disseminators, messengers and media journalists hold a position of responsibility to convey the message of environmental sustainability and of sustainable development to the community and society. Together, society must make changes in order to sustain longevity of valuable assets and the environment. In order to promote sustainability, it is essential to recognize the challenges posed by economic development and the negative effects that come with it. Journalists play a crucial role in conveying messages that promote the maintenance of the area.

To assist in enabling the transmission of this message, a media briefing on the topic of "Sustainable tourism development in the World Heritage Sites" was held. This was based on the case study from Ha Long-Cat Ba and was followed by a field trip to Ha Long Bay and Cat Ba National Park.

### 1.2 Objectives

On the basis of the media as a means to convey the urgent need for sustainable tourism, environmental-oriented and life-sustaining tourism, the program creates opportunities for journalists to have a direct dialogue with managers, experts and international organizations. Media providers then have more diverse sources of information about the impact of tourism development on the environment in general and about ecosystems in the region of Ha Long Bay - Cat Ba. Most specifically, the objective of this media briefing is to give these journalists a better idea as to how to provide solutions to ecological damage and to explore avenues of sustainable development.

Through press publications, the program helps to raise awareness among stakeholders and media readers about their role in sustaining the living environment in the Heritage areas and outlines the continued importance of broadcasting sustainable tourism.



### 1.3 Overview

Objectives	Interventions	Outputs
Raise awareness, assess needs, and create filters for appropriate coordination	Input survey activities	Gained insights from journalists about Ha Long Bay and their expectations; Classification of participants
Save time and enhance in-depth discussion	Group discussion	Conclusion of 4 topics Discussed, gave out more ideas and ways on how to implement for 4 chosen topics
Connect journalists and professionals; Enhance interactivity according to topic orientation, more in depth information	Promoting experts to participate in group discussions	Deepened the content that groups focus on; answer questions Identified the orientation of the stories/features (E.g: contact government, people, and field observation).
Supplement and consolidate knowledge; Improve field acquisition skills and processing skill; Support the building the network of experts - journalists - government and people	Consulting during field trip to BTC, to experts, and orientating individual participants	The group and individual journalists had greater knowledge and information of issues in a comprehensive, practical way. Questions for government representatives, managers got more focused Journalists planned to collect information by images in a timely and non-passive manner, ensuring the correct route is outlined.
Improve and consolidate knowledge and systematic orientation from individuals to participating journalists	Facilitating the group presentations after the 12/3 talk and at the end of the field trip	Boosted the interaction between groups, contributing more ideas to each topic being discussed or opening new topics.
- Assess the quality and expectation of the trip  - Determine if the purpose of the program has been achieved	Providing then collecting the survey filled-in after the program	Number of selections on writing articles after the trip: 24 selections Number of selections on accumulating and sharing information from the program to their colleges: 12 selections Number of selections on keeping as materials for later writings: 17 selections

### 1.4 Anticipated outcomes

- Improving the quality of the press products; increasing the amount of information and practicality of media products.
- Set up a network of journalists specializing in writing the same column so that they can share and exchange information on the topic of environmental protection and sustainable development.

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## 2. Assessment Activities Performed

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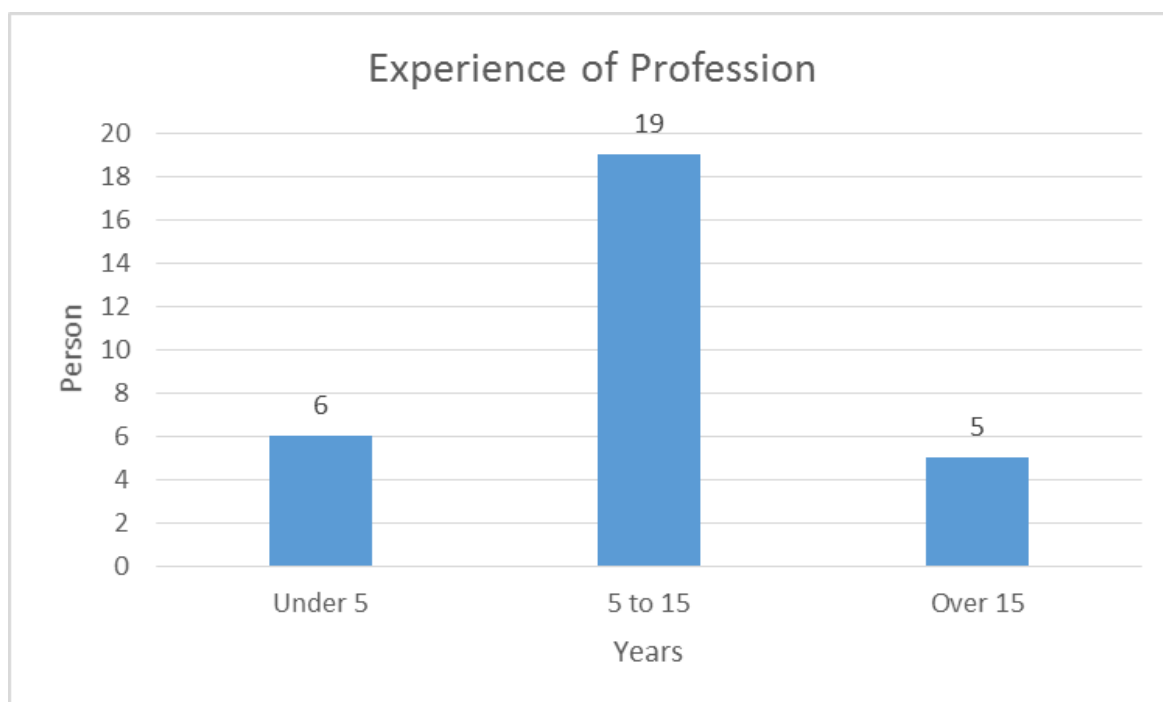
### 2.1 Training needs assessment of journalists

**Methodology:** The evaluation was conducted primarily by collecting questionnaire responses from participating journalists. The design assessment questionnaire consists of two main types of questions, one for multiple-choice questions, and one for open-ended questions for journalists to demonstrate their understanding and needs. With multiple-choice questions, some have only one answer selected; some give more than one selection. For open-ended questions, answers are grouped into similar and different groups.

**Object:** 30 journalists were selected and filled in the evaluation form. They came from various press agencies and represented a broad depth of diversity with their respective number of years of experience in the profession.







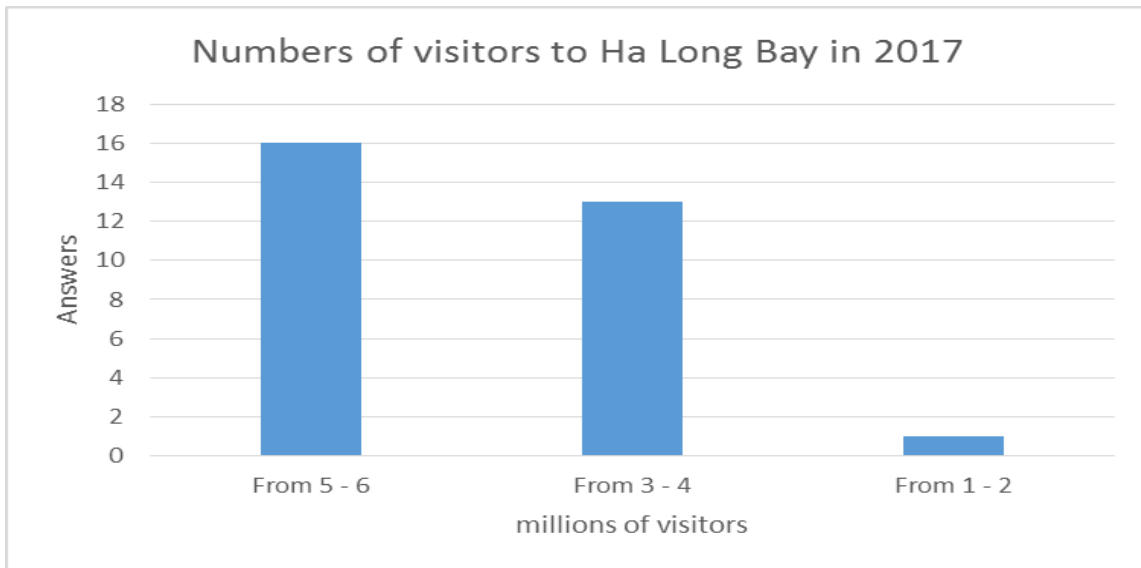
**Figure 1: Professional experience**

The table above shows that the majority (19 out of 30) participating journalists have an average of 5 to 15 years of experience, 5 journalists have more than 15 years of experience and 6 people under 5 years of experience. The longest duration of experience is a 25-year duration, while the lowest is a one-year duration.

Through surveys, journalists' primary areas of interest are environmental issues, cultural tourism, and some of the journalists specializing in the field of economics; others are in agriculture, forestry, fishery, tourism, life, foreign relations, etc.

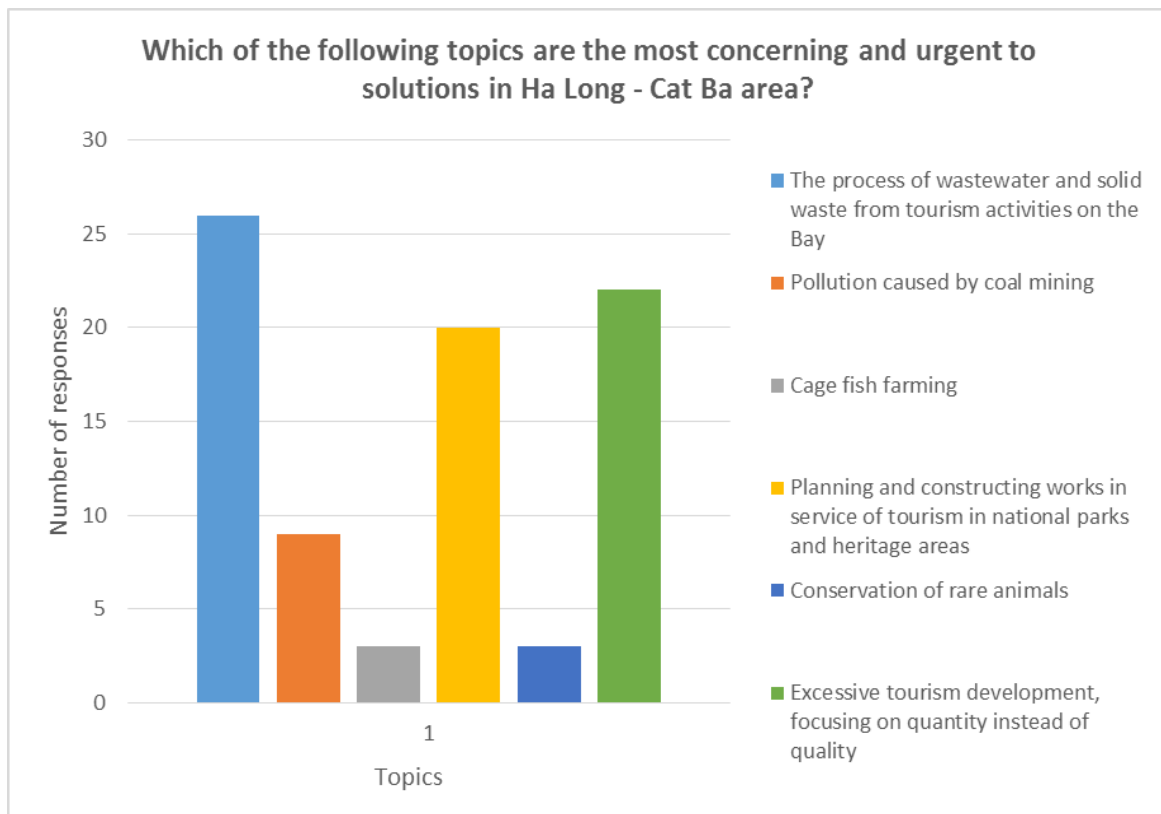
Compared with the content of the trip, the expectation of journalists, which was collected before the program, is generally quite close to the content prepared by organizers. Journalists mentioned and addressed the need for information about the natural environment in general and in Ha Long Bay in particular. Journalists also expressed a clear concern about the "hot" development of the tourism industry, wanting to hear and share solutions to preserve and maintain the landscape and to promote the development of tourism in a sustainable way to enrich the content of their journals. For the majority on the trip, the main content was the specialization of professional subject matter for them.

When asked about relevant knowledge about the heritage of Ha Long Bay, specifically about *"the number of tourists visiting the Bay in 2017 and their concern about pressing issues in the area of Ha Long Bay - the Cat Ba archipelago"*, the number of responses was sufficiently collected and there was a determination of which subjects most journalists were interested in.



**Figure 2:** Opinions of journalists on the number of visitors to Ha Long Bay in 2017

In summary, more than half of the respondents considered that in 2017 Ha Long Bay welcomed between 5 and 6 million tourists. Slightly less than half (13) respondents believed there to be less than 3 million to 4 million visitors, and only one person chose the option that proposed that only 1 to 2 million visitors traveled to Ha Long Bay in 2017.



**Figure 3:** Topics of interest

Respondents could select more than one option in this question. Questions asked respondents "according to your knowledge, in the areas of Ha Long - Cat Ba, which of the following topics are the most concerning and urgent to solutions" which helps collect and show clearly which of the topics journalists are most interested in. The order of concerned topics is as follows: The issue of how wastewater and solid waste from tourism on the Bay are treated ranked first with consent of 26 out of 30 respondents. The second and third

themes of interest are “the over-development of tourism, focusing on the quantity instead of the quality” and the “planning of the construction of tourism facilities in Cat Ba National Park and the heritage area”. Pollution from coal mining, topics related to cage fish farming and conservation of endangered species had less concern overall as dictated from rate of response.

## 2.2 Analyze collected data

As can be realized from the above charts, there are 2 clear points:

First, only 13 of 30 journalists selected the correct answer for the question about visitor numbers to Ha Long Bay in 2017, the correct numbers being 3 to 4 million visitors within the year. The exact number of visits to Ha Long Bay according to what information from the Ha Long Bay Management Board was 3.559.227 (three million, five hundred, fifty-nine thousand, two hundred twenty-seven). It appears as though most journalists expected a higher number, while only one of them considered the lowest visitation number.

Secondly, concerning chart 3, and based on the agreed adjusted consensus results from participants and organizers, the panel selected four topics out of the six mentioned for further investigation and discussion and solutions to these four topics. These are: (1) Process of Wastewater and solid waste from tourism activities on the Bay (2) excessive tourism development, focusing on quantity instead of quality; (3) planning of the construction of tourism facilities in Cat Ba National Park and the heritage areas; finally based on the consensus of journalists, the fourth topic is the (4) Conservation of wildlife and biodiversity.

## 2.3 Conduct the rapid assessment about journalists’ knowledge on provided topics at the media talk

Most of the journalists who participated in the fieldwork expressed a certain understanding and interest in the topic that was oriented. Those journalists who were interested in many topics expressed that the trip met their expectations. Some journalists with years of outstanding experience helped in leading group discussions.

The two themes with the highest number of interested journalists are "Planning services for tourism" and "Wastewater and solid waste treatment on Ha Long Bay" which underline the urgency of the topic and further demonstrates the need for the program.



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## 3. Implemented Activities

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### 3.1 At the media talk

The talk on the morning of March 12 had many activities to enrich journalists' knowledge within the content framework of the discussion. Under the guidance of the consultants, the journalists were divided into groups and discussed key issues related to tourism development in Vietnam's heritage sites and additionally discussed the collection plan of materials for writings in reference to the 4 topics mentioned above.

The consultants divided the 30 journalists into 4 groups, each of which led 20-minute discussions with suggestions and recommendations from one or two experts provided for each the group. With the grouping and handing over of topics for each group, this activity saved time and the results were still very diverse.

Specifically, the groups identified: (i) the main contents to be addressed in the group's topic; (ii) an information gathering plan (using images, recordings) from the government, experts, local people, and through field observations. Some groups (mainly television media) actively developed the plan to collect information on the site, which ensured information needs, while passively avoiding the organizers and ensuring the journey for the delegation.

At the end of the discussion, representatives of the groups presented their works, and members of the other groups contributed their views on the content of each topic. The main messages drawn from each topic after being led and discussed were expressed both clearly and coherently. The best presentation team received a small gift from the organizers.

Participants continued working in their groups as divided in the field trip to Cat Ba Island.

### 3.2 At the field trip

At the field trip in Ha Long and Cat Ba, the four groups of 30 journalists gained a great deal of information, mainly from the local government, local authorities, experts and representatives of international organizations; they also gathered information from local people and from other journalists' individual observations.

During the field trip, the consultant made appropriate suggestions, showed journalists how to select content, suggested ways to get information, and also answered the specific questions of each journalist. Through the on-going discussion and consultation during the trip, new writing topics were explored in the field. These ideas were immediately consulted when in each location. For example, the consultant provided guidance and informational support on the topic "Diversifying Biodiversity in Ha Long Bay" by proposing and connecting specialized guides to provide further knowledge, etc.

Besides, subjects which were deemed voluntary enterprises, consisted of joining hands to solve water waste; the involvement of NGOs of the Ha long – Cat-ba Alliance; some journalists asked for the presence and consultation of the Sun Group corporation; Green Lotus Standard, etc., which was subsequently completed.

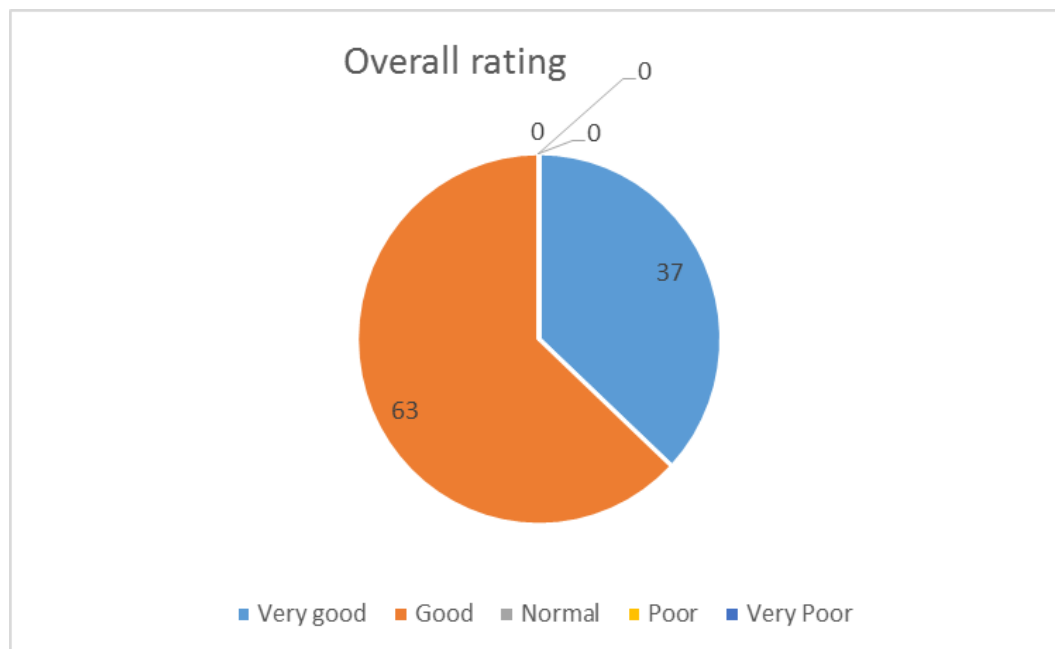
The trip ended with 15 further separate themes, extending out of the four themes that were available, such as the theme of mangrove clearing on golf courses; additionally, these consisted of challenges of the 3rd nomination of Ha Long - Cat Ba Natural Heritage and so on, with journalists being very eager and responsive.

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## 4. Evaluation results

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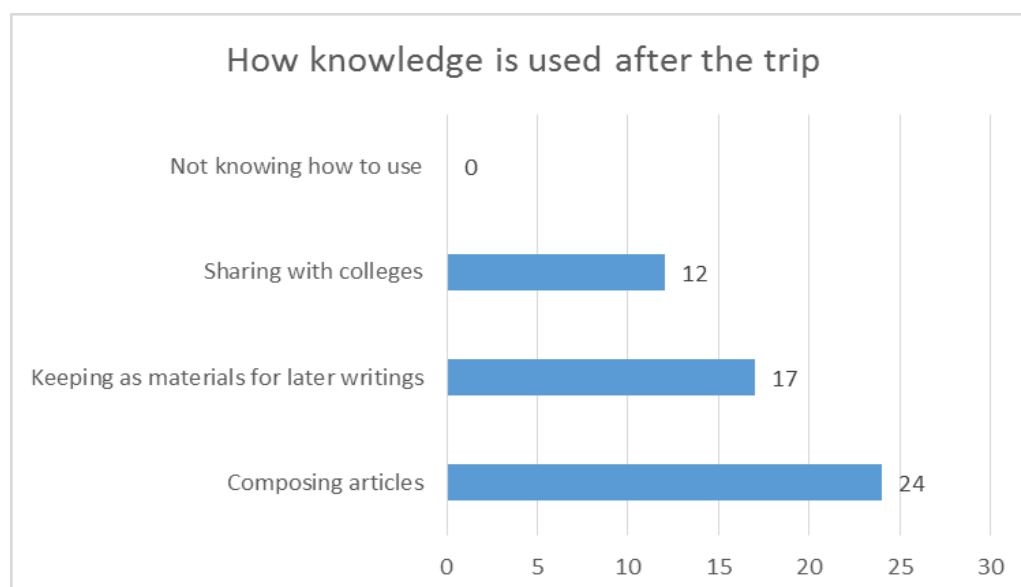
Feedback after the trip, evaluated by 27 total journalists, was 100% positive.



**Figure 4:** Overall rating of trip participants

When asked about the journalists' perception of the program, the only 2 evaluation options selected were "good" (63%) and "very good" (37%). There were a few small remarks, thus, the program did not fully achieve 100% "very good" ratings. Recommendations by journalists are mentioned below.

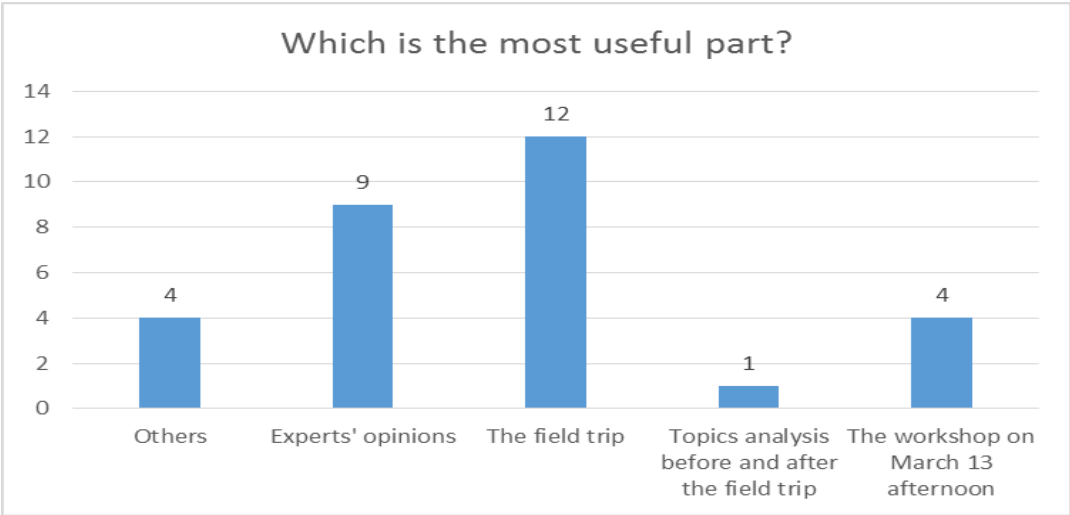
The success of the program is reflected clearly through the activities of journalists after the trip.



**Figure 5:** How journalists will apply gained knowledge and skills to after-trip activities



When asked how journalists will apply acquired knowledge and skills, many of them have more than one plan for how to use what they gained from the trip. There were 24 journalists, representing 88.9% of the attendees that determined that they would compose journalistic works related to the themes. Additionally, 17 participants chose to accumulate the contents and keep them as materials for later relevant works. Aside from these outputs, the contents of this program will be spread out to other like-minded journalists, with 12 more selections by attendees confirming plans to have more articles created within the scope of sustainable development and tourism.

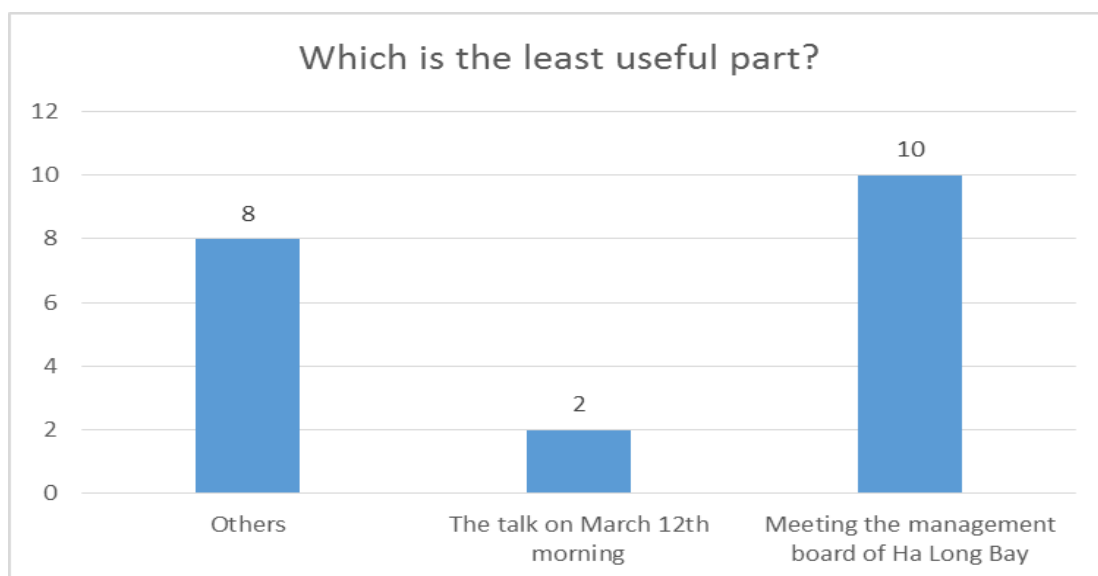


**Figure 6:** The most useful part in the program to journalists

The usefulness of the program was different for each person. This above question was open-ended, and every journalist offered a variety of activities that they think brought the most benefits to them. 12 journalists considered the field trip to Cat Ba as the most valuable output. Some of them explained that the field trip was the most practical and most effective information gathering aspect, providing them with not only information but also real-life stories full of pictures for later articles. At the same time, the experts' opinions or the seminar on the afternoon of March 13th concerning: a feasibility study results of the application of Green Lotus standards for the cruise ship, the opinion of enterprises for Investment in waste water treatment systems at tourist ship terminals, World Heritage Management proposals from international experience, etc. were recognized as useful. Several factors, such as the analysis of the topics before and after the field trip, were also highly appreciated.

On the contrary, when asked about the least useful activity in the program. Of the 20 respondents, 2 responded that every activity was useful and important.



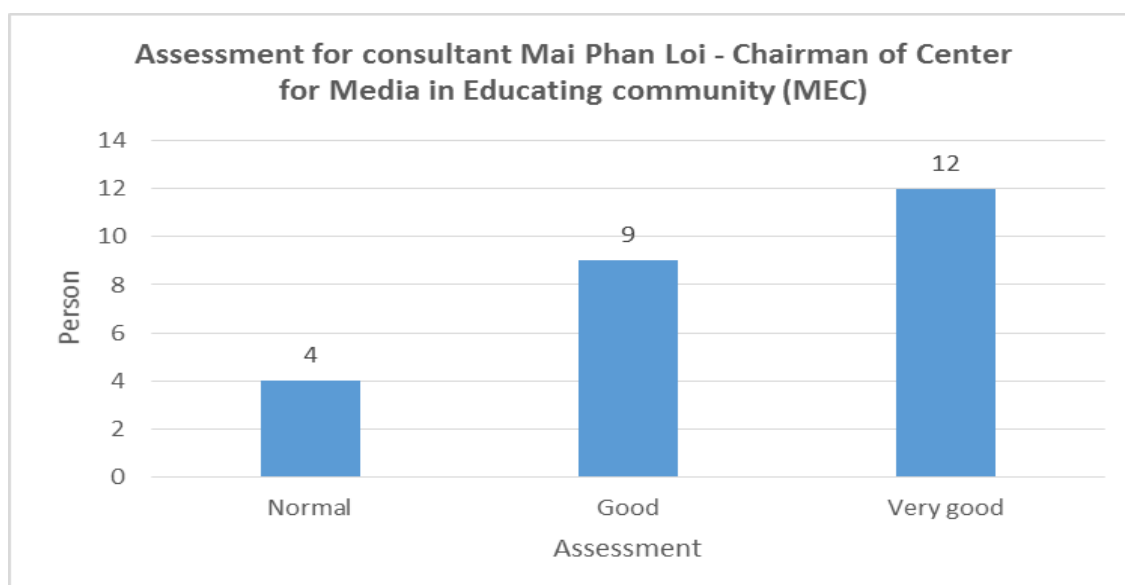


**Figure 7:** The least useful part of the program to journalists.

Out of the 20 respondents, 10 reported dissatisfaction with the Halong Bay Management Board's meeting, which was concurrently deemed the least useful part of the whole program. Respondents claimed that the meeting did not achieve their information needs. Some claimed that the Management Board avoided questions and their answers were too general and lacked detail. Most responses mentioned that the additional documents provided were ineffective. Additionally, two journalists said that the first workshop on the morning of March 12th was less useful to them but provided no reasoning. The remaining 6 journalists did not see certain activities as helpful, such as: The 13 March afternoon activities (1 journalist), or the 13 March morning activities (1 journalist), with comments mentioning how similar opinions were expressed in both and it was not as varied as it could have been. Contrary to the majority of other journalists, one journalist did not find much use in fieldwork portion. However, most did say that more time should have been designed for fieldwork. The remaining feedback did not directly correspond or relate to the survey questions.

## COMPREHENSIVE ASSESSMENT OF JOURNALISTS FOR PROFESSIONALS

- **Consultant Mai Phan Loi:**



**Figure 8:** Assessment of journalists for consultant Mai Phan Loi

This information involves the assessment of 25 people out of a 28 possible, 3 left assessments blank. 12 people rated Mai Phan Loi "very good" with the mentor's coordination and support during the trip. Alternatively, 9 people rated the Chairman as "good" and 4 people rated Mai Phan Loi as "normal" or average.

- Other consultants and experts:

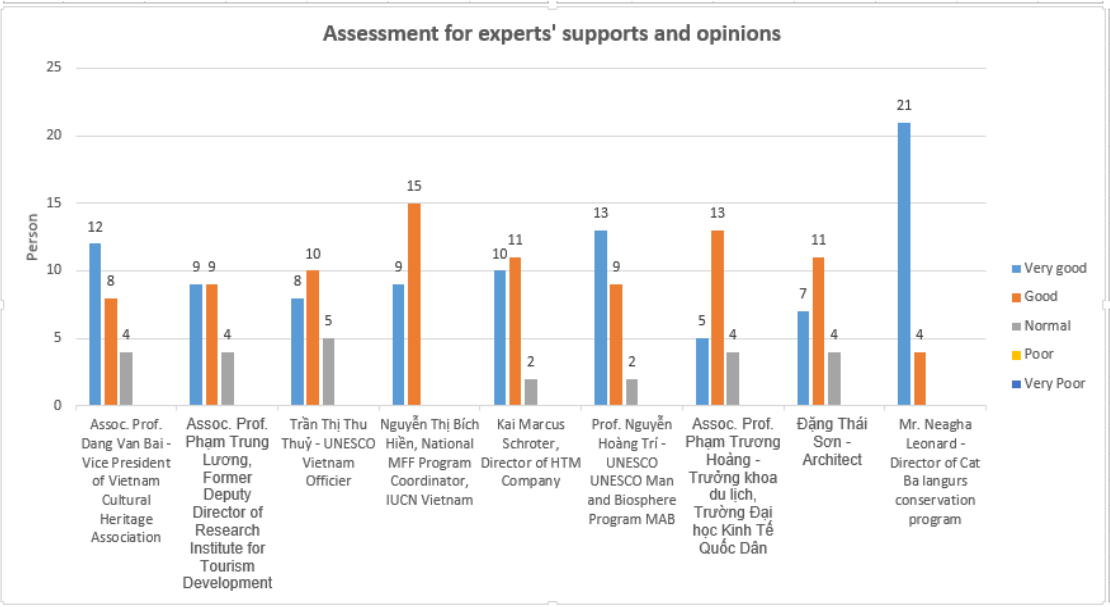


Figure 9: Assessments of journalists for experts, consultants

The chart shows the level of satisfaction of the journalists for each of the program's specialists and mentors. No expert or consultant who presented or advised throughout the trip received a "poor" or "very poor" rating as can be seen in Figure 10. It can be easily observed that the Director of the Cat Ba Langurs Conservation Project, Mr. Neagha Leonard, received a "very good" rating by most people when compared with other advisors and experts

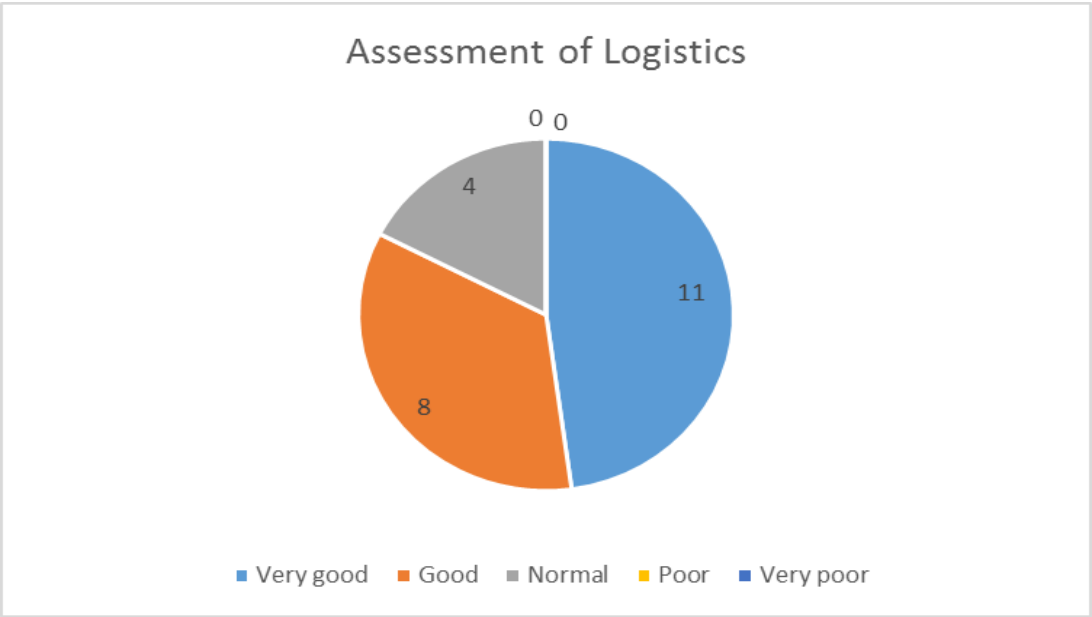


Figure 10: Assessment of journalists for logistics during the program

"Good" and "Very good" results make up the majority. Some individuals were not satisfied with their meal arrangement, as they were not being informed about their need to be self-sufficient for dinner.

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## 5. Recommendations

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Compared to the initial expectation of the journalists, the content and discussion topics carried out during the entire meeting 100% fully achieved their initial expectations.

- However, journalists also gave some recommendations for the future trip to be more complete. One of the journalists thought that the fieldtrip should have been extended, as the duration was too short, and that journalists could not adequately work with 3 functional departments on the same morning. There were many journalists recommending for the field trip to extend its duration, which they believe may help it be a more realistic and in-depth in experience.
- In addition, the meetings should be with authorities most able to provide valuable and relevant insight, improving the overall efficiency and use of time. There are also ideas that "if possible the program should give reporters direct access to local people".
- Meanwhile, two reporters recommended "The organizers should better inform journalists about self-sufficiency in advance"



### RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE CONSULTANTS:

In terms of time and schedule: The journey of the field trip was basically consistent with the expectations of the media, but, the timing of the launch should have been closer to the upcoming events (e.g. file completion of submissions in September), there will be a higher possibility of posted press publications due to the adherence to current news. The trip duration of 3 days and 2 nights was a bit short, especially with the support for journalists to work individually (arranging for journalists to work by their own volition is a good initiative, satisfying journalists' needs, and reducing risks when the delegation is too crowded, it reduces unnecessary attention as well). The journey should include the location details of where local people are met (farmers, fishers, service workers who must move for planning, etc.) this provides journalists' work with a more multidimensional aspect.

- In terms of content, topics, and experts: The main content of nature preservation at the heritage / tourist site and theme groups oriented basically met the needs of the media and the objectives of the project. However, over a very short period of time, there were four quite detailed topics that lacked many connections (such as planning and conservation of species) whose deliverables might not yet meet the needs of some journalists. In the future, one or two topics may be chosen to further invest in, concerning terms of expertise, time, and destination. This increased investment may increase the chance of specialized articles being created. Organizing media talks before the trip to Ha Long was necessary, but the amount of knowledge may have been so complex that it could have been deemed a partial waste. Furthermore, it may be possible to arrange media talks for the representatives of central agencies which would involve exchange and sharing ideas further (such as Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, etc.).
- Concerning the participants: Selected members of the press meet the requirements of the project, most of them are in compliance with the requirements of the Organizing Committee and consultants, those who all have the desire to create the articles after the trip. However, in order to create a network of journalists - experts - CSOs engaging in and after the trip for the long-term goal of the Union, additional support is necessary, this includes organizing conversations, group meetings; giving rewards for good articles after trips, and introducing other opportunities implemented by the organizations of the Union or other networks, etc.





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