



Sustainable Rattan Design in Vietnam: Junior Designer Clara Lindsten

As part of the WWF Sustainable Rattan Programme in Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam, this activity aims to build long-term design capacities with local rattan producers through a designer exchange. Three Swedish designers – Mr Per Brolund, Ms Therése Broberg, and Ms Clara Lindsten - have spent six months in the Mekong region working with rattan producers to strengthen their product design skills.

Clara has been working in Vietnam designing sustainable products for the European market as well as providing training for local companies. Based in Hanoi and with the support from Vietcraft (Vietnam Handicraft Exporters' Association), she has been collaborating with six rattan companies all over Vietnam: Halinh, Ngoc Dong, Au Co, Vinh Long, Nam Phuoc, and Hiep Hoa.

The companies have learned about sustainable design both by working together with Clara and by attending a WWF design workshop where they collaborated with students from the Hanoi Art Academy. The goal was to implement a holistic approach to the life-cycle of a product, including energy efficient production and transport and the creation of quality products with long durability and design for reuse and recycling. The design copyrights belong to WWF. The companies have the right to use the designs in return for a continuously sustainable development of rattan products.

During the design process, Clara worked closely with skilled craftsmen, experimenting with traditional methods and rattan materials, all based on the concept of increasing value by reducing material. The objective was to not only to develop designs but also to allow for this development to continue after the project is finalized. Focus has been on collections rather than unique products. Examples of this are the new Halinh weaving technique, where a simple twist within a traditional weaving pattern has generated a unique appearance while reducing the material usage by one third, and the Vinh Long doormats which derived from the inner layer of rattan skin; a material resource previously considered waste. Each design has the potential to be extended and applied on various products.

These designs aim to be an inspirational starting point, suggesting a re-conceptualization of rattan as a beautiful, raw and exotic material that carries a story of the past, of nature, and of handicraft - properties that calls for high-end, timeless, and authentic products.