

Asian Turtle Program, PO Box 179, Office # 1101, Hacisco Tower, Ngo 107, Nguyen Chi Thanh, Hanoi. Tel.: +84(04)37737858  
28<sup>th</sup> August 2009

**Application Code: 55431**

## **Research and Conservation Action for Tortoises and Freshwater Turtles in Indo-Burma**

### **Social Assessment (including Indigenous Peoples Planning Framework) for CEPF**

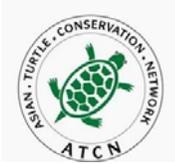
#### **1. Background**

The project was developed based on the existing activities to conserve priority tortoise and freshwater turtle species (TFT) in both Vietnam and Cambodia. The four focal species are the Mangrove Terrapin (*Batagur affinis*), the Vietnamese Pond Turtle (*Mauremys annamensis*) and Indochinese Box Turtles, *Cuora bourreti* and *Cuora picturata*, (formerly *Cuora galbinifrons*). These species were initially selected as high conservation priority based on range restriction, endemism and status as critically endangered. An additional Seven CEPF priority species will also benefit from our research and conservation activities. The activities proposed under this application will increase the current available knowledge on range, distribution, status and threats to these focal species. While local community support for the species' protection will be mobilized through engaging local stakeholders, work with provincial leaders and wildlife protection agencies will promote their conservation from the provincial level. Community patrol activities will also ensure ongoing protection while collecting valuable additional information on the species.

In central Vietnam the project will focus on three endemic and critically endangered TFT species, *Mauremys annamensis*, *Cuora bourreti* and *Cuora picturata* for which very little is known of species distributions, abundance or habitat requirements. Activities since 2004 have comprised rapid interview surveys primarily in Quang Nam and Quang Ngai provinces to identify habitat, with field surveys some field surveys conducted. For *Mauremys annamensis* a local team has been established focused on core habitat in Quang Nam province. The areas in Vietnam on which this project focus's has varying habitat, environment and socio-economics. Ranging from relatively affluent urban area in the lowland coastal region to the western highlands where some of the poorest communities in the country can be found. Many of these remote districts contain diverse indigenous communities, low human population densities and some of the best remaining forest habitat in the country. These forest areas are likely the best remaining habitat for the forest dependant *Cuora bourreti* and *Cuora picturata*. While for *Mauremys annamensis* activities will focus on low lying coastal areas where wetland habitat on which the species depends have been lost or severely degraded and fragmented. Largely due to activities such as agriculture conversion of land and increasingly for development of industrial zones by the large human populations comprising Kinh dominant ethnic group. Few protected areas occur in the believed range of *Mauremys annamensis* increasing the urgency for conservation of this species. To date activities have focused only on Quang Nam and Quang Ngai provinces in Vietnam with the Forest Protection Departments (FPD) introduced to the importance of species, initial rapid interview surveys conducted and community meetings held at two priority areas confirmed in these provinces. made aware of the importance of this species.

In Cambodia the project is actively conserving Indochina's last known population of the Critically Endangered River Terrapin *Batagur affinis* (hereafter referred to as Batagur) in the Sre Ambel and Kaong rivers, south west Cambodia. Activities were first launched in 2000, after the Fisheries Administration (FiA) re-discovered a population of Batagur in the Sre Ambel area of Cambodia's coastal region. Thought to be extinct in Indochina animals were first re-identified in trade networks and subsequent research identified suitable habitat and eventually discovered nesting turtles.

Since 2001, the Fisheries Administration and WCS have worked with communities in the Sre Ambel area to conserve the Batagurs through the implementation of a variety of conservation interventions. These interventions are targeted to protect in-situ populations through guarding nesting beaches and adjoining sections of river throughout the nesting and incubation seasons, and implementing patrols in remaining habitat. These activities are complemented by an ex-situ conservation hatchling centre. The in-situ project activities are based around the two remaining rivers where the animals occur. One team comprised of three conservation personnel work along the Sre Ambel River and another team of four concentrate on the Kaong



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River. The focus of activities is the protection of the *Batagur* nests and during the nesting season the conservation teams attempt to locate all nests along each river. They then construct enclosures around the nests to provide protection against predators.

Activities proposed here which should be considered for the indigenous peoples planning framework are as follows:

- Support the inclusion of CEPF priority species *Cuora galbinifrons*, *Cuora bourreti* and *Cuora picturata* in Vietnam's principal wildlife protection laws.
- Capacity building of local wildlife authorities in central Vietnam

Activities that could affect indigenous communities include indirectly through wildlife authority training and directly through establishing community patrol teams. The training of wildlife authorities will only be completed following the initial interview surveys, assessment of local livelihood dependence on TFT and community meetings and discussions where necessary. Meetings will be held in indigenous areas for which important TFT populations are identified, consultations will be held to explain the need for conservation and broader benefits of protecting certain TFT. The possibility of limiting access to TFT will be explained and community support sought for future project work at sites where community patrols are to be established if indigenous peoples are present. As with all project sites compensatory livelihood alternatives will be sought to encourage longer term commitment to TFT conservation in these areas where involuntary restrictions have been applied.]

Community patrols will only be initiated/continued for the *Batagur affinis* and *Mauremys annamensis* projects in field sites which have no indigenous communities, as such only the involuntary restrictions framework will be required. Through information collected from Peoples Committee and gained in interview questionnaires in central Vietnam we will ensure no indigenous peoples are in *Mauremys annamensis* project sites.

To ensure that affect on indigenous people are identified, accounted for and mitigated during these activities a number of measures will be taken. Dependence on TFT will be measured through socio-economic questionnaires while field surveys will provide additional information on species occurrence, distribution and status in priority areas. Strategies to assist affected communities will be developed where necessary and will involve community participation to ensure site specific variables and needs are considered.

## 2. Identifying Indigenous Peoples in the project areas

For activities in central Vietnam it is already known that Indigenous people do occur within the project areas, specifically for the *Cuora bourreti* and *Cuora picturata* in the mountainous regions. Additional information on the distribution and occurrence of indigenous communities throughout the project area will be collated from available reports and sources including provincial and district peoples committees. Interviews and socio-economic questionnaires will also include questions which relate specifically to indigenous people, traditional TFT use, and dependence. In Table 1 below the ethnic minorities that occur around various protected areas in all the provinces work will be conducted are show. From the table it is clear that many protected areas in central Vietnam have indigenous people. As such we expected habitat identified as priority's for *Cuora bourreti* and *Cuora picturata* to have indigenous communities in close proximity. For *Mauremys annamensis* all habitat so far identified for the species has been lowland and coastal, and as such has not had ethnic minorities.

In Cambodia the local communities in the Sre Ambel area are not of ethnic minorities and as such will not trigger the safeguards. Furthermore interviews have already shown that *Batagur* are not targeted by these communities. Rather that they are occasionally caught by local fishermen as by-catch. Several years of education activities implemented by the conservation project mean the vast majority of fishermen are happy to release any live animals that they find in their nets.



**Table 1. Information on provinces and protected areas to be visited during survey activities.**

Province	Location	Status, Protected area (PA), non-PA, PA to be established	Indigenous populations use the area	Restrictions to natural resource use or only research
<b>Vietnam</b>				
Thua Thien Hue	Bac Ma National Park	PA	Believed, additional information required	No restriction, research only
	Sao La Nature Reserve	PA	Believed, additional information required	No restriction, research only
Da Nang	Son Tra Nature Reserve	PA	Not expected	No restriction, research only
	Ba Na-Nui Chua	PA	Believed, additional information required	No restriction, research only
Quang Nam	Ngoc Linh Nature Reserve	PA	Believed, additional information required	No restriction, research only
	Phu Ninh Nature Reserve	PA	Not expected	No restriction, research only
	Song Thanh Nature Reserve	PA	Ka Tu, Gieng and Mhong ethnic minorities	No restriction, research only
	Duy Xuyen and Dien Ban districts	Non-PA	No ethnic minorities	Yes community patrols
Quang Ngai	Cao Moun Cultural Historical site	Non-PA	Hre ethnic minority	No restriction, research only
	Bin Son District	Non-PA	No ethnic minorities	Yes community patrols
Kon Tum	Chu Mom Ray National Park	PA	Gia Rai, Muong, Xe Dang, Thai, Ro-mam, Ha Lang and Brau ethnic groups	No restriction, research only
	Ngoc Linh Nature Reserve	PA	Xe Dang, De and Trieng De	No restriction, research only



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			ethnic groups	
Binh Dinh	Nui Ba Nature Reserve	PA	Kinh ethnic group, non-minority	No restriction, research only
Gai Lai	An Toan Nature Reserve	PA	Ba Na and Hre ethnic group	No restriction, research only
	A Yun Pa Nature Reserve	PA	Believed, additional information required	
	Bac Plei Ku Nature Reserve	PA	Ba Na ethnic group	
	Chu Prong Nature Reserve	PA	Ede (originally in area), Nung and San Chi ethnic group	
	Kon Cha Rang Nature Reserve	PA	Ba Na and Kinh ethnic groups	
	Kon Ka Kinh National Park	PA	Ba Na ethnic group	
Binh Dinh	An Toan Nature Reserve	PA	Believed, additional information required	No restriction, research only
Phu Yen	Deo Ca Hon Nua Cultural and Historical Site	PA	Not expected	No restriction, research only
	Krong Trai Nature Reserve	PA	Ede ethnic group	No restriction, research only
Dak Lak	Chu Hoa Nature Reserve	PA	Believed, additional information required	No restriction, research only
	Chu Yanh Sin National Park	PA	Mnong and Ede ethnic groups	No restriction, research only
	Dak Mang Nature Reserve	PA Believed, additional information required	Believed, additional information required	No restriction, research only
	Earal Nature Reserve	PA	Believed, additional information required	No restriction, research only
	Ea So Nature Reserve	PA	Believed, additional information	No restriction, research only



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			required	
	Ho Lak Lake Cultural and Historical Site	PA	Mnong ethnic group	No restriction, research only
	Nam Ca Nature Reserve	PA	Believed, additional information required	No restriction, research only
	Nam Nung Nature Reserve	PA	Mnong Ethnic group	No restriction, research only
	Ta Dung Nature Reserve	PA	Unk, but expected	No restriction, research only
	Trap Kso proposed Nature Reserve	PA	Believed, additional information required	No restriction, research only
	Yok Don National Park	PA	Yes, Unk	No restriction, research only
Khanh Hoa	Hon Ba Nature Reserve	PA	Needs researching	No restriction, research only
Cambodia				
Koh Kong	Sre Ambel	Non-PA	No ethnic minorities	Yes, community patrols and nest beach protection

Note: information from Birdlife Sourcebook of existing and proposed protected areas in Vietnam second addition

### 3. Impact assessment

For all sites where community patrols and the Species Habitat Conservation Area (SHCA) are to be developed in Vietnam and Cambodia no indigenous communities are present as can be seen in Table 1. At sites where indigenous communities are present activities will only be survey and research focused. Information will still be collected at these sites through questionnaires to determine the extent of dependence on TFT by local Indigenous Peoples and to allow a social assessment to be completed at the same time as the involuntary restrictions process framework. This will allow the dependence on TFT for either economic or dietary requirements to be determined. The only indirect restriction that could arise is as a result of training activities focused on wildlife protection authorities. Where training of provincial Forest Protection Department (FPD) and mobile enforcement teams may indirectly impact upon indigenous communities. Training of wildlife protection authorities will only be focused on reducing large scale commercial and illegal trade in TFT not on local subsistence use.

### 4. Free, prior and informed consultations with affected communities

Community meetings will be held in priority areas identified for focus species following interview and field surveys to present information to local communities and seek input, support and suggestions on project developments. Community meetings have already been developed and undertaken in a number of communes for *Mauremys annamensis*. These are structured to be informative and participatory with discussions on TFT status past and present in local communities and local opinions combine with a short



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presentation or video. These would be adapted and further developed for Indigenous communities in priority areas still to be identified. If necessary these would include discussions on possible restrictions for local communities to explain clearly who and how our activities may impact local livelihoods. But as stated this should not be applicable due to no restrictions in indigenous areas. Where necessary a translator will be used for community meetings to ensure it is clearly discussed in local language.

Table 1 shows how no restrictions or negative impacts will be imposed on indigenous communities through our activities as these will be purely survey and research focused. It should also be considered that due to the rarity of many TFT this is likely to be at a low level or for only a few individuals within the community. If significant negative impacts are identified during the project plans to mitigate this will be developed through community consultation to ensure that culturally appropriate benefits could be provided. Already alternative income generating schemes will be considered for priority areas surveyed to be included in the British government Darwin award application to be submitted by the team in 2010.