

## Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund Process Framework

**Project Title:** Strengthening community conservation of priority sites within the Ba Be / Na Hang Limestone Forest Complex, northern Vietnam.

**Organization:** People Resources and Conservation Foundation (PRCF)

**Application Code:** 57059

**Date:** April 2010

### 1. Project Background

The overall goal of the Project (Strengthening community conservation of priority sites within the Ba Be / Na Hang Limestone Forest Complex, northern Vietnam) is to improve the conservation of globally threatened species of primates, the White-eared Night Heron, and globally threatened species of conifers and magnolias at sites of high biodiversity interest within the Ba Be / Na Hang Limestone Forest Complex (Tuyen Quang and Bac Kan Provinces).

Forests along the north-eastern and north-western boundaries of Bac Kan and Tuyen Quang Provinces respectively constitute the Ba Be / Na Hang Limestone Forest Complex (BNLFC). This forest complex holds high global biodiversity significance, particularly in primates such as the highly threatened Tonkin Snub-nosed Monkey (*Rhinopithecus avunculus*) and the Francois' Langur (*Trachypithecus francoisi*). The forest complex also holds species of Conifer and Magnolia with conservation value, and forms part of the restricted home range of the largely unknown White-eared Night Heron (*Gorsachius magnificus*).

The Ba Be / Na Hang region contains conservation hotspots scattered throughout a landscape that has undergone degradation due to shifting cultivation, increasing population density, and the construction of the Gam River Dam in Tuyen Quang Province. The latter has had significant impact on the surrounding forest areas. Moreover, since the completion of the "Creating Protected Areas for Resource Conservation using Landscape Ecology (PARC) Project" in 2004, there has been little in-field action focused towards direct *in-situ* conservation of the highest priority biodiversity values.

#### 1.1. Current Experience of Partners

In Bac Kan Province, the PRCF has implemented community-based biodiversity conservation and collaborative management activities since 2004, and more recently in Cao Bang (2007) and Tuyen Quang (2010) Provinces. The thematic focus of PRCF activities at these sites has been on conservation of primate species, threat abatement, conservation of freshwater and lakeside forest resources, and measures into sustainable livelihoods. All activities have been implemented though or with the support of community based organizations.

The Project sites located in Bac Kan Province including Ba Be National Park (BNNP) and South Xuan Lac Species and Habitat Conservation Area (XLSHCA) are current field sites of the PRCF Vietnam Program, whilst those in Tuyen Quang Province are new to the PRCF. However, the PRCF President Director / Chief Executive Officer has substantial extensive experience throughout the BNLFC including the Tuyen Quang Province sites through his former role as Chief Technical Advisor of the PARC Project, and thereafter supportive activities to the Forest Protection Department (FPD) in Vietnam.

Since 1998, Flora & Fauna International (FFI) has worked in northern Vietnam, particularly in the northern highlands limestone region where they have been involved in site-based conservation initiatives in several provinces. Species based conservation experience, especially for primates; include the Tonkin Snub-nosed Monkey, and Eastern and Western Black Crested Gibbon. All related conservation activities have involved collaborative community management akin to those proposed by the Project.

FFI will be the principal implementing partner of the PRCF during this project, as many of the activities included herein are complementary to processes implemented under FFI's CEPF project<sup>1</sup> within the same region, such as the Site-based Participatory Action Planning.

The Centre for Plant Conservation (CPC) is a newly emerging Vietnamese non-governmental organization established under the Vietnamese Union of Science and Technology Associations. FFI has worked with representatives of the CPC for several years in botanical studies in the Northern Highlands Limestone Priority Corridor (NHLPC), particularly at the Bat Dai Son Nature Reserve in Ha Giang, and the Cao Vit Gibbon Conservation Area in Cao Bang. Further, members of the CPC have previously worked within the BNLFC under the direction of the PRCF President Director / Chief Executive Officer during the PARC Project. Under the FFI's CEPF project, the PRCF has started to work with the CPC to implement Conifer and Magnolia conservation at XLSHCA.

The Vietnam Birdwatchers Club (VBC) is a local civil society organisation active in recent years within the BNLFC, including their participation in surveys to locate White-eared Night Heron (WENH). At present, members of the VBC are undertaking an 18 month research program at Ba Be National Park to examine the biology and habits of a number of WENH breeding pairs.

### *1.2. The Project Approach*

The PRCF CEPF project approach complements that of the FFI's CEPF project, of which PRCF is an implementing partner. The premise of these two projects (PRCF CEPF and FFI CEPF) is that flagship species can act as umbrellas for broader conservation values. A focus on charismatic and clearly identifiable flagship species can assist to raise awareness and interest in conservation management by local communities and relevant government agencies.

Four sites are included in the Project herein, with differing levels of intervention and often targeting different flagship species at each location. At two sites: XLSHCA and BBNP the Project will supplement ongoing interventions where partner organisations (PRCF, CPC, VBC) have well-established working relationships with local government agencies and communities.

There are five main field-based activities funded by the Project, all involving local communities:

1. White-eared Night Heron conservation activities (Component 1);
2. Primate (Francois' Langur and Tonkin Snub-nosed Monkey Primate) surveys and threats analysis (Component 2);
3. Conifer/ Magnolia tree surveys and threat analysis and Conifer/ Magnolia species propagation trials (Component 3);
4. Community-based Conservation Action Planning (Components 1 - 3); and,
5. Natural Resource-use Inventory and Participatory Demarcation of 'multiple-use' areas within the protected area, for potential sustainable utilization through collaborative community management initiatives (Component 4).

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<sup>1</sup> Promoting Community Based Collaborative Management to Strengthen Long Term Conservation of Globally Threatened Primates and Trees in Priority Sites of Northern Vietnam"

Responsibility for implementation of activities within Component 1 will be led by the VBC, in close liaison with the PRCF. Likewise implementation of activities in Component 3 will be led by CPC supported by PRCF field staff. The PRCF will maintain close contact with both VBC and CPC to ensure that activities are implemented as intended, and that sought outputs are delivered to meet defined objectives. Community-based conservation action planning activities will be implemented across Components 1 to 3, for each of the three flagship species at three of the four target sites.

The primate and tree surveys, with associated threat analysis and conifer/ magnolia propagation trials, will have no adverse impact on local communities. The main objective of these activities is to gather biodiversity data. Activities will include consultation with local communities in order to identify locations where target species are most likely to be found. For each survey, local people will be invited to participate as informants, guides, or provision of logistical support. Surveys will be carried out at NHNR - for surveys on Tonkin Snub-nosed Monkey and Francois' Langur, and at the pFLSHCA - for a survey on Conifers/Magnolias and threat assessment for Francois' Langur. Survey results will enable protected area staff to steer management more effectively to target key biodiversity values at the long-established NHNR. The pFLSHCA at present is not included within Vietnam's protected area system; it is envisioned that new information gathered through the project will assist Provincial authorities to enhance future conservation at this location. A collaborative management approach is sought for future conservation management of this area, similar to the one in place at XLSHCA.

The NHLPC, and in particular within the BNLCF, forms part of the known worldwide range (i.e. Southern China and Northern Vietnam) of the threatened and geographically restricted WENH. The main objective of WENH activities will be to raise awareness amongst local communities on the conservation significance of this bird species, and through nest protection activities that attempt to involve targeted local communities in conservation initiatives. Awareness raising activities will also be used during preliminary consultations with local people when identifying the locations of birds and nesting pairs.

Participatory Species Conservation Action Planning (CAP) is a central component of the project, and a subsequent step to survey and threat analysis activities. The project will be implemented through an approach that begins with consultations with local communities at the village level. The consultative process would result in the identification of actions to support conservation of local target species populations, followed by the definition of species conservation action plans to be implemented thereafter at the district or protected area level.

The Project approach will draw from already established methodologies, such as Participatory Rural Appraisal and Participatory Action Research, which will involve local communities in the planning and implementation processes, and avoid possible negative impact or further marginalization of social groups within communities at the target Project areas. Project implementation will follow established best international practice of project delivery when dealing with rural people, as defined in World Bank Social Safeguards. Project implementers will aim to establish a strong basis for local species conservation through raised local awareness, clear identification of social and cultural issues, definition of pressures and opportunities for conservation, and involvement and support from local communities for conservation actions identified from within. The approach will be implemented at each site, which depending on the target location, villager involvement, and flagship species, may be modified and improved through the course of implementation.

Lessons drawn from implementation of the CAP process will be documented, and inputs provided to FFI so that they may add to the guidelines under development within their CEPF project. The final output at each location will be a conservation action plan, defined on the basis of a comprehensive multi-stakeholder consultation process. As such, neither the process or its

end result are anticipated to lead into adverse impact to local communities, on the contrary, the project objective and approach should lead to follow-up conservation activities that have been identified through the involvement of local villagers, who are the most likely to be involved in further conservation action.

It is recognized that local communities are critical stakeholders in successful field-based conservation. At most sites, the Project will raise awareness among local communities about tangible conservation issues focusing on the priority and target species. Representatives of local communities will be invited to become involved in the development of species CAPs for the sites, alongside protected area managers and conservation specialists.

The natural resource inventory and “multiple-use” area management plan seek to engage local stakeholders, including the Cho Don FPD, XLSHCA Management Board, local mining companies, and the seven local Buffer Zone villages, in defining a conservation management and access agreement at particular areas inside the XLSHCA. It is the intention that this will be achieved through a participatory identification of “multiple-use” areas within the reserve, where future conditional harvesting of forest resources (NTFPs) by local communities is permitted under license (harvesting from other areas is prohibited), and ultimately under a collaborative system of government/community management.

The above approach will utilize the already established and functioning Community Conservation Teams at XLSHCA. Considering that local people continue to harvest forest products regardless of the law prohibiting them to do so, a trial of this nature would be highly relevant. It is envisaged that under the proposed system, the current situation of illegal harvesting of common access resources within the reserve may lead to a more sustainable and equitable management regime. The preferred state is where permitted harvest would deliver sufficient quotas to fund the ongoing Community Conservation Teams. Moreover, it is envisaged that these activities may provide an initial framework to implement an official ‘pilot’ activity, approved by the National FPD, for collaborative management initiatives at the XLSHCA Special Use Forest (SUF).

### ***1.3. Summary of Socio-economic Context***

To a certain extent, Project target sites share similarities in socio-economic characteristics. All sites are within Vietnam’s northern poor mountainous provinces and the remote, ethnic minority communities living inside and on the periphery of protected areas are generally poor. All sites are home to populations of Vietnam’s ethnic minorities, especially Tay, Nung, Dzao, Thai, and H’Mong peoples. The overwhelming majority of people in Vietnam are of Kinh ethnicity. However, they are a minority in all project areas. Tay is the majority in the northern limestone highlands and usually hold a significant percentage of the government positions. Culturally and linguistically, Nung are closely related to the Tay and may also occupy similar positions.

Given the dominance of what are considered nationally ethnic minorities at all Project locations, no Indigenous People’s Planning Framework will be prepared; all measures to mitigate impact to local communities, described in this Process Framework, will apply directly to local ethnic minority groups.

Nearly all communities close to Project sites have a relatively significant reliance on forest based natural resources for their livelihood, as these typically include timber harvesting, hunting for bush meat, forest clearance for agriculture, and collection of non-timber forest products (NTFPs).

Below is a summary of social information available for each target site:

### 1. Ba Be National Park, Ba Be District, Bac Kan Province

Ba Be National Park is home to four ethnic minority groups (Tay, H'Mong, Dzao, and Nung), who live in 11 villages within the protected area (Nam Mau Commune). Tay people have lived in the area the longest and represent the population majority. The Nung and Dzao people arrived into the area about 100 years ago, while the Kinh and H'Mong are relatively recent arrivals (since the late 1970s). There are 613 households (over 3,500 people) living within the core zone of the national park, and an additional 23,300 people reside within the park buffer zone in seven communes. Households in the area are dependent on resources from the Ba Be Lake and lake surrounding forest for their livelihood, including significant illegal cutting of timber.

### 2. South Xuan Lac Species and Habitat Conservation Area, Cho Don District, Bac Kan Province

As for Ba Be, local communities within the greater landscape of the South Xuan Lac Species and Habitat Conservation correspond to Tay, Nung, Dzao, and H'Mong ethnic minority groups. At present there are seven villages in three communes within the reserve buffer zone, all of which are in close proximity to the protected area core zone. Key socio-economic issues include mining, hunting of wildlife, collection of NTFPs, lack of agricultural land, and most recently illegal timber extraction. There has been a recent increase in logging of large trees inside the protected area, and in the watershed protection areas in the buffer zone of the reserve. This has been associated principally with the Dzao ethnic minority group, who has insufficient land allocation for wet rice cultivation, and have few other means of deriving livelihoods.

### 3. Proposed Francois' Langur Species and Habitat Conservation Area (Sinh Long), Na Hang District, Tuyen Quang Province

At the Sinh Long, corresponding to part of the proposed Francois' Langur Species and Habitat Conservation Area, local communities include members of the Tay, Dzao and H'Mong ethnic minority groups. Construction of the Gam River Dam, which started in 2004, resulted in the proposed conservation area being split into three distinctive sites, and caused the displacement of ten villages and numerous households. The social, economic, and biological impact of this event has yet to be appraised. However, anecdotal evidence obtained from local communities suggests that household relocations have put greater pressure upon local forest resources in the area, as people have been forced to depend more heavily on these resources to re-establish their livelihoods. At present, observed major threats to biodiversity in the area include: clearance of forest, hunting, over harvesting of NTFPs, timber extraction, and isolation from nearby forest areas. Clearance of forest for swidden agriculture has already led to the loss of forest at low elevations at the site.

### 4. Na Hang Nature Reserve, Na Hang District, Tuyen Quang Province

Na Hang Nature Reserve is divided into a number of management zones, and of most significance are the two strict protection area sectors of Tat Ke (north) and Ban Bung (south). The buffer zone is comprised of nine communes, with an estimated population of 6,215 households and 35,302 people. Within the reserve itself are over 2,113 households, with more than 11,000 people living in 61 villages belonging to five communes. Tay, Dzao, and H'Mong ethnic minorities are the most represented groups, with small numbers of Nung, Muong, San Chi, Cao Lan, and Hoa also present. The local communities in and around the nature reserve are strongly dependent on its resources for their livelihoods and subsistence. Continuing

clearance of forests for upland agriculture, burning, collection of timber and NTFPs, hunting for bush meat and the wild animal trade are serious threats to biodiversity conservation.

#### ***1.4. Process of Project Development***

At two of the four project sites, for several years local communities have been engaged in conservation activities, and given their previous involvement in these areas, project partners have a good understanding of local socio-economic needs and conditions. In most cases CEPF funding will support complementary activities to ongoing endeavors at each site, with activities supporting and advancing an already established framework for long-term conservation and development interventions.

The Project has been discussed with proposed local government partners, which in every case is the FPD, from Provincial to local levels. Discussions with the Bac Kan FPD have been related to enhancement of ongoing project initiatives; whereas in Tuyen Quang discussions with the Provincial FPD have been explicitly related to development of the CEPF proposal. The latter is intended to form the foundation of an expanded conservation program into the area, and an increased presence of the PRCF within the province in the near future.

At most locations, and at all locations where project partners have been operating for sometime, there has been extensive engagement of local communities in conservation activities. Details of previous community-based planning and socio-economic surveying activities are described on a site-by-site basis below:

##### **1. Ba Be National Park**

From 1999 to 2004, the Ba Be National Park was the focus of the UNDP-GEF-funded Integrated Conservation and Development Project (PARC), which used participatory resource use planning as a starting point for guiding combined conservation and development activities. Since the completion of this project at the national park, PRCF has continued to build upon the initial momentum created by the PARC project, albeit on a much smaller scale. Recently, this has mainly involved working closely with villages around Ba Be Lake in a number of key areas, as follows:

- a) Supporting local communities to engage in collaborative management of fisheries and forestry resources;
- b) Establishing village interest and self-help groups with small-scale micro-credit initiatives and facilitating sustainable livelihood activities; and,
- c) Location of remaining populations of Francois' Langur at the national park and development of a community-based conservation action plan for the Langur population.

The CEPF intervention will focus upon WENH conservation activities in support of Le Manh Hung's<sup>2</sup> research, support the development of a long-term monitoring program for the species, and prepare a conservation management plan with input from a variety of stakeholders, for use by the national park thereafter. These activities will not restrict either access to or use of natural resources by local communities.

#### ***Main Related References***

Dong Thanh Hai (2009) *Survey of population status of Francois' Langur (Trachypithecus francoisi) at Ba Be National Park*. People Resources and Conservation Foundation and US Fish and Wildlife Service, Ha Noi.

Le Van Phuc & Dine, Michael (2009). *Review of 2002 – 2007 Village Development Plans and 2010 – 2014 Village Development Plan for Ban Cam, Bo Lu, Coc Toc and Pac Ngoi Villages*,

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<sup>2</sup> Le Manh Hung is the Bird Curator at the Institute of Biology and Ecological Sciences, Vietnam and Vietnam Birdwatching Club President  
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*Nam Mau Commune, Ba Be National Park. People Resources And Conservation Foundation And The McKnight Foundation, Ha Noi.*

## 2. South Xuan Lac Species and Habitat Conservation Area

The South Xuan Lac Species and Habitat Conservation Area was established in 2004, following an intensive participatory planning process involving all surrounding villages. The process was an important outcome for the PARC Project, demonstrating the benefit and possibilities for strong community participation in protected area establishment. Leaders from each of the seven local villages in the reserve landscape are on the management board of the protected area, which is a first for Vietnam. Since 2008, PRCF has been supporting the protected area, with continuous plans for a number of conservation and development interventions both within and outside the protected area, all of which include involvement of local communities in the planning and implementation phases. Through initial support by PARC Project, and since 2008 by the PRCF, community conservation teams have been involved in patrolling the forest since 2004.

### ***Main Related References***

PARC Project/FPD Bac Kan (2004). *Designation and collaborative management of the South Xuan Lac Species and Habitat Conservation Area, Bac Kan Province*. PARC Project VIE/95/G31 and Forest Protection Department Bac Kan, Government of Viet Nam (FPD) / UNOPS / UNDP / Scott Wilson Asia-Pacific Ltd., Ha Noi.

## 3. Na Hang Nature Reserve

Na Hang Nature Reserve is a new site for project partners. From 1999 to 2004, a variety of conservation and rural development activities were implemented at the reserve by the PARC project and the Tonkin Snub-nosed Monkey Conservation Project. However, since the completion of the PARC Project in 2004, and soon after the Tonkin Snub-nosed Monkey Conservation Project, there has only been minor financial support for conservation of this most endangered primate species in either sector of the protected area from national and international donor organisations. PARC Project inputs into Na Hang were particular to working on helping the protected area strengthen its conservation management strategy, and in working with local communities to release pressure upon the protected resources through alternative livelihoods income generating activities.

The combination of conservation and development activities led by PARC Project was pivotal into several biodiversity management initiatives, however, the Project did not particularly direct any conservation activities at the Tonkin Snub-nosed Monkey. Another project at the time concentrated on conservation of the species *per se*. The Tonkin Snub-nosed Monkey Conservation Project worked directly with the species, particularly looking at direct support to village patrol groups monitoring the species movements and helping with protection and enforcement of regulations. As this project finalised, additional work into conservation of the species at the site have reduced considerably, as additional Tonkin Snub-nosed Monkey populations were found in Ha Giang Province, just north of Na Hang Nature Reserve.

### ***Main Related References***

Tuyen Quang Forest Protection Department (2003). *Operational Plan for Na Hang Nature, Reserve, Tuyen Quang Province (Period 2003-2007)*. Tuyen Quang.

Grieser Johns, A. (2003). *A Conservation Strategy for the Ba Be / Na Hang Conservation Complex*, Government of Viet Nam (FPD) /UNOPS/UNDP/Scott Wilson Asia-Pacific Ltd., Ha Noi.

#### 4. Proposed Francois' Langur Species and Habitat Conservation Area

This is a new site for project partners. This area has not been formally gazetted as part of Vietnam's protected area network despite assistance from the PARC Project in 2004. At that time, an investment plan was prepared and submitted to the Province for approval after a comprehensive community consultation process. Surveys during the PARC Project confirmed the presence of possibly the largest population of Francois' Langur in Vietnam, a number of conifer and magnolia species of international and national conservation significance and suitable habitat located within the known range of the WENH.

Since the end of PARC Project there have been no substantive conservation activities at this location and the protected area has not been formally established. In 2009, the PRCF initiated discussions with Tuyen Quang FPD to develop new conservation initiatives and support the process for formal gazettal of the area as a new National SUF. Information gathered through this project will be used by the Province to support this process, however, this project does not plan to directly support activities aimed at gazettal of the project area as a protected area.

##### ***Main Related Reference***

Bezuijen, M.R., L.F. Potess, Quan Van Tue, Trinh Thang Long, Nguyen Hung Manh and P. Insua-Cao (2004). *Development of the Francois' Langur Species and Habitat Conservation Area, Tuyen Quang Province, Viet Nam*. PARC Project VIE/95/G31 and Forest Protection Department Tuyen Quang, Government of Viet Nam (FPD) / UNOPS / UNDP / Scott Wilson Asia-Pacific Ltd., Ha Noi.

## **2. Participatory Implementation**

The involvement of local communities in implementation of the five main field-based project activities are described below.

### ***2.1. White-eared Night Heron Conservation activities***

Project conservation activities for the WENH are anticipated to have minimal impact on local communities during implementation. Activities will commence with preliminary visits by the VBC to areas of either known WENH habitat or where suitable habitat has been previously identified to raise awareness of the species amongst communities. Moreover, these visits are also intended to achieve a complementary objective by identifying locations of highest importance and where threats are greatest to focus nest protection activities in the forthcoming nesting season. Further, knowledgeable people on WENH from local villages will be identified, interviewed, and information distributed regarding the benefits of their involvement in the nest protection scheme.

Posters designed for the specific purpose of encouraging local community participation in the nest protection scheme will be prepared and distributed at each site by the VBC. Each poster will contain the following: brief outline of the Project's objectives, information to assist local communities to identify WENH, briefly explain the nest protection scheme, outline the benefits for participation and include a hot line number to contact if they locate WENH nests. Local people who locate WENH nests will be paid a finder's fee (either financial or other payment e.g. food) and if they are interested, be invited to participate in the nest protection scheme where they will receive training and payments (either financial or other) covering a) protection of the nest until eggs hatch and b) when juvenile birds fledge. Note: the mode of payment will be determined in advance of the nest protection scheme through consultation with target villages.

#### ***Free, Prior and Informed Consultation***

Prior to the commencement of each field activity, opportunities will be created by the VBC and PRCF (where applicable) to explain the project and activities to potential local participants e.g.

presentation of single page project/activity summary leaflet in Kinh and Tay languages (or other local languages where applicable), short multi-lingual meeting sessions etc. and invite participants to seek clarification of the activity or project if they have any concerns. It is envisaged that potential participants are now able to make an informed decision whether they would like to pursue further involvement in project activities and thereafter grant their consent.

Consent by participants will be documented for each activity. Participants who offer their consent and wish to continue participation will be requested to sign a consent form that clearly outlines the activity they will be participating in and states that they clearly understand and willingly participate from an informed position. Further, this document will also include information on the communication channel/mechanism they should follow if they are dissatisfied with the project for any reason.

**Sites:** pFLSHCA, XLSHCA, Na Hang Nature Reserve (Tat Ke and Ban Bung Sectors)

### ***2.2. Primate and Tree Biodiversity Surveys and Species Threats Assessments***

Surveys for primates and trees will have no impact on local communities as a direct result of these activities. The objective of these surveys will be to identify areas of highest importance to protect the target species and any threats to those local populations. Surveys will begin with interviews in villages to identify the most likely locations of target species in the vicinity. Commune and village heads will be the first points of consultation, and will advise on whom among the local communities possesses good knowledge of local forests for detailed interviews. Local people will be employed during the surveys to act as guides and provide local information. Each guide will be selected based upon their fitness and knowledge of the forest (i.e. determined by asking the opinion of local village people). Finally, they will receive both a survey orientation (i.e. explanation of survey objectives and information needs) and training on survey methodologies prior to the commencement of field activities.

Threats assessments to identify threats to flagship primate species and Magnolia/Conifer species will involve participation of community members. Similar to surveys mentioned above, local people will be employed during forest-based threat assessments to act as locally-based guides and secondly, act as key informants during preliminary village-based interviews and facilitated community meetings.

**Sites:** PFLSHCA, Na Hang Nature Reserve.

### ***2.3. Participatory Species Conservation Action Planning***

Participatory species conservation action planning is a central component of this Project. The aim of CAP is to facilitate dialogue between the different stakeholders and find a consensus that supports conservation with minimal impact on local livelihoods and identifies appropriate measures to support local communities. It is during the CAP process that local communities are most engaged in this Project.

The process employed for developing each participatory CAP will be developed and trialed by both the PRCF and FFI through a parallel process in both this and FFI's CEPF projects. From Project and institutional level perspectives, the trialed and revised CAPs represent a major outcome for the advancement of future community-based conservation in the BHLFC.

The CAP process will be implemented at each site where flagship species i.e. Tonkin Snub-nosed Monkey, Francois' Langur and WENH have been identified and require urgent attention to address threats to these target species. The process will focus on local populations of a particular target species, or different species integrated together, e.g. where WENH might be discovered in the habitat of Tonkin Snub-nosed Monkeys or Francois' Langur (or both). The objective will be to rapidly develop an action plan for local conservation of the species in a way

that involves the main local stakeholders, especially local villages and local authorities. The process will include data collection, analysis of conservation threats and needs, awareness raising and participatory planning.

Target villages identified as those most significantly impacting flagship species will be selected for CAP development based upon a) the results of each biodiversity survey and accompanying threats assessment and b) from local government support, in particular protected area staff. However, in the case of the WENH, target villages will be selected as a result of VBC field activities and through implementation of the nest protection scheme.

Once these villages have been selected, village-level species conservation action planning will be conducted over several days. Village heads and representatives will be given training and support the process in their respective village. Participatory rural appraisal and participatory action research techniques will be applied as a basis for gathering information from local communities. For example, collection of information on natural resource use, livelihood needs and conservation threats. At the same time awareness raising will be conducted through village discussion and distribution of printed materials. This stage of the process will be concluded with some action points identified by the village based upon local knowledge that would support conservation of the target species.

Guidance described within the CEPF operational manual is comprehensive and entirely appropriate for this activity. Therefore it is quoted verbatim here: "*The process will support develop a more in-depth understanding of: (a) the cultural, social, economic, and geographic setting of the communities in the project areas; (b) the types and extent of community use of natural resources, and the existing rules and institutions for the use and management of natural resources; (c) identification of village territories and customary use rights; (d) local and indigenous knowledge of biodiversity and natural resource use; (e) the threats to and impacts on the biodiversity from various activities in the area, including those of local communities; (f) the potential livelihood impacts of new or more strictly enforced restrictions on use of resources in the area; (g) communities' suggestions and/or views on possible mitigation measures; (h) potential conflicts over the use of natural resources, and methods for solving such conflicts; and (i) strategies for local participation and consultation during implementation of an action plan, including monitoring and evaluation.*"

PRCF staff have strong experience in conducting such activities and using facilitated participatory methodologies with local communities. The process will be developed in a detailed step-by-step progression and refined during the project to improve effectiveness. Following each village consultation, an internal assessment will be carried out to identify strengths, weakness and adaptations to improve the process. For each site it can be expected that this will be carried out at three or four villages. Prior to conducting the first such process, PRCF and FFI will carry out desktop research in order to ensure that sufficient attention is given to issues related to ethnicity, gender and inclusion of other potentially marginalised sectors of the community. World Bank Safeguards will be used as guidance, to ensure compliance with CEPF Safeguards during project implementation and act as a strong basis for follow-up interventions.

Once several village consultations have been completed for one site, results will be compiled and presented during a stakeholder action planning workshop at the next appropriate government level, which is likely to be the district. This stakeholder workshop will include representatives from villages, communes, the district, protected areas with technical support from PRCF, FFI and VBC (where applicable). An output of the workshop should be agreement on the framework for an action plan for species conservation.

Working groups will be established during the workshop to draft the action plan. Once drafted it will be circulated among government representatives. Following feedback and revisions the

species conservation action plans will be presented to the initial target villages for final comments and feedback.

Final action plans should be signed by district and/or protected area authorities and presented to village and commune heads.

Action plans should identify local conservation threats to the species, conservation needs, actions, available and potential resources to implement those actions, stakeholders and their roles and responsibilities.

#### *Free, Prior and Informed Consultation*

Prior to the commencement of each activity e.g. village or district level meetings etc., the PRCF will conduct an introductory session in local languages where the project and activity will be explained. Should potential participants have any questions or concerns, they will be invited to seek clarification and will receive either immediate verbal replies or written information (if requested) from PRCF staff addressing these concerns. It is envisaged that potential participants are now able to make an informed decision whether they would like to pursue further involvement in project activities and thereafter grant their consent.

Consent by stakeholder participants will be documented for each activity. Participants who offer their consent and wish to continue participation will be requested to sign a consent form that clearly outlines the activity they will be participating in and states that they clearly understand and willingly participate from an informed position. Further, this document will also include information on the communication channels they should follow if they are dissatisfied with the project for any reason.

**Sites:** Conducted at each site where flagship species have been identified. Initially BBNP will be excluded, however, if circumstances later in the project change this may be deemed as a necessary activity.

#### ***2.4. Natural Resource Use Inventory and ‘Multiple-use’ area management plan***

The gazettal of South Xuan Lac Species and Habitat Conservation Area as a protected area in 2004 and the imposition of external regulations to conserve biodiversity have resulted in losses of tenure and rights by local people to use natural resources to which they are dependent. This has created conflict between local people and the XLSHCA Management Board. Nevertheless, local people still continue to harvest these resources, in many cases using unsustainable harvesting techniques and excessive rates of harvesting. If resources continue to be utilised at present unsustainable rates, and local communities continue to perceive the reserve as a common access resource, the effectiveness of the reserve as a biodiversity conservation resource will be questioned. To address this issue, therefore, more effective institutional and participatory measures, such as community inclusive arrangements to maximise biodiversity conservation whilst meeting the needs of forest dependent communities living in close vicinity to protected areas, need to be devised.

A central component of this activity requires active engagement and participation of local stakeholders including the Cho Don FPD, XLSHCA Management Board, local mining companies, and the seven local Buffer Zone villages, who will work together to define a collaborative natural resource conservation management and access agreement for particular areas in the reserve. The approach is strengthened by the present inclusion of local people representation on the XLSHCA Management Board. Hence, this institutional arrangement provides a unique opportunity to develop a collaborative management approach for forest resources, whereby the local community becomes jointly responsible with the support of the Cho Don FPD and XLSHCA Management Board, for the sustainable management of their local resources.

A methodological approach will be employed to ensure participation and engagement of stakeholders and in particular local communities, and will involve the following activities:

- Identification of key stakeholders largely responsible for forest product harvesting in the reserve using participatory rural appraisal and participatory action research techniques;
- Conduct detailed assessment of resource use in villages and areas adjacent to mining locations south of the Reserve;
- Based on resource assessments, inventory valuable NTFPs in the reserve, focusing on availability, and conservation status with the guidance of local people recognized by their peers as holding considerable knowledge of NTFPs within the reserve;
- Use local community knowledge to determine 'Key Species' on the basis of utilisation and conservation criteria, and calculate their carrying capacities and sustainable yields; and
- Local people will be invited to demonstrate harvesting methods employed for each 'Key Species'. A sustainability appraisal for each species will then be conducted with the support of local community harvesters (as part of determining conditional harvesting guidelines).

Once the above mentioned process has been completed, results will be compiled and presented in a stakeholder action planning workshop at the next appropriate government level, which is likely to be the district. This stakeholder workshop will include representatives from villages, communes, the district, protected areas with technical support from PRCF. An output of the workshop should be agreement on the framework for the "multiple-use" area management plan.

A working group will be established during the workshop to draft the management plan and once drafted it will be circulated among government representatives. Following feedback and revisions the management plan will be presented to the seven stakeholder buffer zone villages for final comments and feedback.

The final Draft management plan will be submitted to both the Bac Kan and National FPD for review and if favourably received and supported, PRCF will request a "pilot" of the activity at the XLSCHA.

#### *Free, Prior and Informed Consultation*

Prior to the commencement of each activity e.g. village or district level meetings, natural resource use survey etc., the PRCF will conduct an introductory session in local languages where both the Project and activity will be explained. Should potential participants have any questions or concerns, they will be invited to seek clarification and will receive either immediate verbal replies or written information (if requested) from PRCF staff addressing these concerns. It is envisaged that potential participants are now able to make an informed decision whether they would like to pursue further involvement in project activities and thereafter grant their consent.

Consent by stakeholder participants will be documented for each activity. Participants who offer their consent and wish to continue participation will be requested to sign a consent form that clearly outlines the activity they will be participating in and states that they clearly understand and willingly participate from an informed position. Further, this document will also include information on the communication channel/mechanism they should follow if they are dissatisfied with the project for any reason.

### **3. Criteria for Eligibility of Affected Persons.**

It is unlikely that this project will adversely impact local livelihoods as most of the activities are concerned with surveying and planning. The latter will ensure strong consultation with local communities. The WENH nest protection scheme, however, has potential to affect a very small

number of households who opportunistically hunt for the bird species within their localities. Although the likelihood of this causing any major inconvenience to households in terms of either subsistence or economic loss is considered to be insignificant due to the very small number of known birds in the region and secondly, no evidence suggesting that households rely upon this bird species as a major source of family income.

Species conservation action planning activities will be designed to identify early within the process, possible affected persons and even to identify restrictions that are already in place as a result of establishment of a protected area in the past. In addition, solutions will be identified where conservation actions might lead to restrictions in the future. As stated previously, the action planning process will not lead to the implementation of identified measures during the project, however, will support development of conservation interventions in due course. The process will therefore support mitigation of adverse socio-economic impacts.

#### **4. Measures to Assist Affected Persons**

Measures to assist persons affected by the WENH nest protection scheme include financial or *in-kind* benefits to those who either find and/or protect nests instead of hunting birds when they are opportunistically encountered. Once nesting pairs have been located and prior to the commencement of the nest protection scheme, village meetings will be organised to determine an appropriate mode and level of payment. Participants will have the option to either receive financial payment or *in-kind* reimbursement e.g. food, training etc. in return for their services during the nest protection scheme.

At XLSHCA, the PRCF is taking steps to define a conservation management and access agreement (in effect a type of stewardship agreement) between the Reserve Management Board and local communities at particular areas inside the reserve. This activity is intended to promote engagement of local communities in collaborative management i.e. through “benefit sharing”, incentive schemes and formalisation of roles in decision making. This will involve the development of a proposed system of “Multiple-use” areas within the protected area where future conditional, yet sustainable harvesting of forest resources (NTFPs) by local communities may occur under a collaborative system of government/community management.

It is envisaged that under an alternative management system such as the one proposed, the current situation of illegal harvesting, often using unsustainable harvesting techniques and involving collection of unlimited quantities of common access resources within the reserve, may lead to more of an equitable balance between local livelihood development and biodiversity conservation.

Moreover, this approach also promotes opportunities within the Vietnamese context, where local communities, who have mostly been locked out of protected areas and excluded from natural resource management and planning, may obtain a significant stake in sustainably managing their local resources.

At other locations, participatory species CAPs will identify measures to assist affected persons prior to conservation activities being initiated. For this reason the programme development component of the project is essential to providing a foundation where funding may be raised for conservation interventions in parallel with measures to address affected persons by any such activities.

#### **5. Conflict Resolution and Complaint Mechanism**

The participatory species CAP process and participatory nature of the “Multiple-use” area Management Plan should identify areas of potential conflict, possible solutions and, importantly, mechanisms for addressing such conflict. This will mainly occur during the district

level workshops, however, project partners will also ensure that during village consultations there is sufficient opportunity for villagers to raise concerns and identify issues of potential conflict. These concerns and issues can in turn, be relayed to the higher level planning meetings.

Regular monthly and seasonal based monitoring (e.g. WENH nest protection) by PRCF staff and VBC members, awareness raising and village/key informant interviews will be used to assist in the identification of sources of conflict and lead to time responsive follow-up liaison with protected area and forest protection supervisors to address these issues. Reports will be provided to project partners, and project staff will follow-up on any reported issues with affected persons directly in the field. Where relevant, the project will support affected persons to contact CEPF RIT.

At the XLSHCA site the Community Conservation Teams of which PRCF have been supporting since 2008, will be a key point of contact for informing potentially affected people of grievance mechanisms through their function as a communications link between local communities and protected area or forest protection authorities.

PRCF, CPC, VBC and FPD partners will work closely with Commune People's Committees to plan activities, respond to affected persons and report on results. This is often the most appropriate level to address local areas of conflict.

#### *Complaint Communication Channel/Mechanism.*

Should participants or other local people express their dissatisfaction with the project for any reason, the project will provide opportunities for them to communicate their dissatisfaction to one or all of the following: project staff, PRCF and the CEPF-RIT team. This channel/mechanism will be communicated to communities through a single-page poster that summarises the project, provides the contact details of the PRCF and CEPF-RIT staff Hanoi and is prepared in both the Kinh language and the most prominent language at the active project locality.

The PRCF will ensure that copies of this complaint communication channel/mechanism will be kept with Commune Authorities, placed at prominent locations in each participating village and be made available during the course of project activities and upon request.

## **6. Implementation Arrangements**

PRCF will take overall responsibility for managing the project and will maintain close contact with both VBC and CPC to ensure that activities are implemented as intended, and that sought outputs are delivered to meet defined objectives. Further, as part of our overall management responsibility, PRCF will ensure that appropriate mitigation measures are taken (when alerted to them) and that the approved version of this Process Framework is distributed and understood among partners. PRCF project staff will conduct on-going monitoring of project activities and implementation of this Process Framework at all sites and by each partner continuously throughout the project.

Importantly during the FFI CEPF project, PRCF will be supporting FFI to develop guidelines for the participatory species CAPs as discussed earlier in this document. During the process of CAP development, sufficient attention will be devoted to the inclusion of mitigation measures within those guidelines that address issues contained within the Process Framework and then applied.

Members of the VBC who are involved in the WENH awareness raising, nest protection and surveys will also provide technical input into the species CAPs.

PRCF and where applicable partner organisations (site dependent), will conduct joint evaluation missions for most project sites towards the end of the project. In addition, and pertaining specifically to the WENH nest protection scheme, PRCF will facilitate annual evaluation meetings with the VBC after the completion of each season's nest protection activities. The lessons learned from which will be documented, activities refined and will be incorporated in the follow year or future (new) project activities. Furthermore, during the CAP process implemented at different sites, PRCF will meet on a regular basis with FFI to evaluate the process, make necessary refinements and ensure compliance with the Process Framework.

The FPD and SUF Management Boards will be the main government counterparts to the project and will be involved in all field aspects of project implementation. Through this partnership modality, the project will directly support the FPD and SUF Management Boards develop their capacity to resolve issues of conflicts between local communities and conservation.

Commune and District People's Committees will be involved throughout the project in planning, reporting and consultations. They will support the project to identify needs of local communities and identify solutions to resolve conflicts.

## **7. Monitoring and Evaluation of the Process Framework**

Monitoring the implementation of the Process Framework will occur continuously throughout the duration of the project and include:

- Regular coordination visits at project sites with FPD, SUF Management Board and project partners by PRCF and CEPF staff;
- Regular quarterly meetings with staff from PRCF, CPC and VBC to discuss issues arising that are incompatible with the Process Framework;
- Monthly and quarterly progress reports submitted by PRCF field staff and partners to the Project Manager; and
- Reports prepared by PRCF staff outlining issues, recommended actions and responses taken by PRCF staff and partners in the event of a complaint being registered by affected persons.