

Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund Process Framework for Involuntary Restrictions and Social Assessment

Project Title: Testing Community-Managed Forests With Financing From Payment for Forest Environmental Services in Vietnam
Organization: People Resources and Conservation Foundation (PRCF)
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I. Process Framework for Involuntary Restrictions

1. Project background

The Sinh Long Watershed Protection Forest represents a critical remnant of a karst limestone forest that once covered most of northern Vietnam and southern China. The watershed area is located within the Gam River Dam catchment and forms part of approximately 250,000 ha expanse of forest located outside of Vietnam's network of protected areas. The area is within a conservation landscape commonly referred to as the "Ba Be/Na Hang Limestone Forest Complex". The region holds high global biodiversity significance, particularly of primate and bird species and a wide variety of other endemic taxa.

The target watershed area for the establishment of "community forest management—CFM" areas is located in Na Hang district, Sinh Long commune, Tuyen Quang province; one of Vietnam's poorest mountainous provinces. There are five villages of Tay, Dao, and Mong ethnic minorities with 400 households (1942 people at the time of writing) living in close proximity to the target forest area and therefore direct stakeholders to the project. Another four villages; Khuoi Phin, Ban La, Trung Phin, and Phieng Ten are located far from the target forest and therefore not direct stakeholders to the project. Notwithstanding, the project will measure and try to avoid any negative impact on these communities. See Table 1 for village names and a general description of ethnicity, population, literacy, and economic standing.

The Sinh Long forest area has been included in previous PRCF conservation initiatives entailing primate and conifer surveys, supported through several private donors and institutions, particularly the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund. All grant interventions have supported components of the PRCF "Biodiversity and Livelihoods Program" in Tuyen Quang, of which a component targets community-based and led conservation in the Sinh Long/Lam Binh landscape.

In 2012, under its "Biodiversity and Livelihoods Program", PRCF began initiatives focusing on engaging local communities in collaborative management of the watershed forest and habitat to Vietnam's last known viable population of the globally endangered François' Langur, which includes locations at Sinh Long and Lam Binh. Through PRCF work, local communities are gaining ground and better options to negotiate their position in decision-making processes related to management of natural resources and to participate in biodiversity conservation.

Present PRCF program activities at the site seek to achieve a localized modality on payment for forestry environmental services--PFES, linked to community-led conservation of high value forests home to the François' Langur. Previous work by PRCF in the landscape has established nine village management committees in the Lam Binh area, who will be supported to carry out management responsibilities and benefits brought from links between conservation and development in the watershed. We are hoping to establish similar village institutions in the Sinh Long area, in addition to five initial community forest

management—CFM schemes. In Lam Binh as well, PRCF is helping to establish a community based organization—CBO to coordinate local involvement in management of the local forests, and to help distribute funds proceeding from payment for forest environmental services—PFES (sourcing from the nearby hydroelectric dam) for conservation and development purposes. The idea is to eventually establish a similar institution in the Sinh Long area. Funds proceeding from payment for forest environmental services are proposed to help finance conservation management of the endangered langur and its sustaining habitat in the Sinh Long/Lam Binh landscape, particularly through the proposed Community-based Francois' Langur Conservation Area, to be partly funded by another CEPF grant to PRCF.

Building on past and present work, and on current momentum, the proposed project herein will benefit forest conservation and sustainable use in the habitat landscape of the last viable population of Francois' Langur in Vietnam, and community forest management--CFM conservation initiatives. The project will promote a community-based sustainable forest use and conservation model at Sinh Long, establishing a successful precedent and providing opportunities for exchange of experiences and relevant information through the Vietnam.

2. Social and threat analyses

Land use in the Sinh Long landscape is mainly for subsistence cultivation of rice, maize, and cassava, supplemented with limited livestock breeding. Agricultural activity is limited to several relatively small and discrete areas, in which valleys are used seasonally by local communities. The principle forest resources used in the Sinh Long landscape are timber (for house construction and fuelwood for cooking) and wildlife.

The project proposes to retain access and use of Sinh Long resources by local communities, although protection measures will fall on particular forest areas key to the survival of Francois' Langur and conservation and sustainable use measures will fall on particular forest areas subject to community forest management—CFM. The main source of livelihoods at the site is agriculture and limited collection of forestry, none of which will be impaired through establishment of the community forest management. The proposal does not include a community development component, given the low available budget and given that complementary community development work will be proposed for funding by other donors to PRCF for work at the site. Complementary measures in the program (funded by other donors) include village self-help groups with revolving funds, establishment of a community-based organization facilitate channeling of monies from the forest protection and development funds, agricultural modeling and intensification, and forest rehabilitation and development in the landscape.

Although the project proposes to increase the decision-making power of local communities into management of biodiversity and natural resources in the target Sinh Long landscape, particularly areas holding critical habitat to the endangered Francois' Langur, and sites targeted for community forest management—CFM will be subject to resource-use restrictions. Restrictions are thought to be of two types: (i) Restrictions that relate to voluntary illegal, un-sustainable, and destructive activities, and (ii) Restrictions that are involuntary in nature and relate to non-damaging access to resources.

Restrictions to damaging activities

Through establishment of 'community forest management—CFM, although managed by local communities themselves, the project will result in the strengthening of measures that will restrict access to watershed forest areas for wildlife hunting and trapping, timber logging, and unsustainable harvest of non-timber forest products. In effect, these activities are already prohibited by law, given that the site is a watershed protection area, and that some of the species within, such as the Francois' Langur, are protected by Vietnamese law.

Restrictions to non-damaging activities

The proposed community forest management—CFM work targets areas of karst forest that surround a proposed "Community-based Conservation Area" in the Sinh Long/Lam Binh landscape, and offer little forest resources to the neighboring villages, but nevertheless some non-damaging extractions do take place, particularly for non-timber forest products and some animal species that are not strictly protected by Vietnamese law. By establishing the proposed five community forest management—CFM sites, although to

be managed by local communities, access to some of these forest products will be restricted. The project will measure the impact of both types of restrictions upon the local community, by establishing a baseline on present 'legal' and 'illegal' benefits from the Sinh Long forest, and measuring changes on a six months' basis. Further, a grievance box will be placed at each of the nine village centers to receive any villager complaints, concerns, or issues regarding the imposed restrictions, and periodical participatory meetings will collect information on impact. Information collected from assessments, meetings, and grievance notes will be collated and presented in the annual participatory social monitoring workshop to review the situation and see about solutions, and to assess compliance to CEPF social safeguard policies. Grievance notes and process results will be reported to CEPF on a six month basis.

3. Plans for participatory implementation

Since the beginning of the "Biodiversity and Livelihoods Program" at the site, all activities have been carried out through involvement of local communities. Indeed, local communities essentially carry out project implementation, with project staff facilitating and providing technical advice and direction. For the project herein, regular meetings with local leaders will update on the status of activities, prompting their further involvement as needed. Further, a six month social impact workshop will be carried out to examine any impacts from the project, and discuss remedial action.

4. How groups eligible for assistance and vulnerable groups will be identified

A baseline assessment of the community, including a guided random survey of representative households in the nine villagers, and a socioeconomic questionnaire to village leaders and elders will help identify those households most dependent on forest resources to be restricted. On the basis of initial survey results, a more in-depth socioeconomic survey of these most vulnerable households will be conducted to establish a baseline and to measure the impact of restrictions upon these households, measuring changes on a six months' basis.

5. Planned measures to mitigate impacts and assist affected groups

Proposed "community forest management—CFM" areas will retain access by local communities to local forests at the target five village sites (Lung Khieng, Phieng Thoc, Na Tau, Nam Duong, and Phieng Gnag), except for those critical for the survival of the endangered Francois Langur, and those managed by local communities under CFM measures.

Ongoing and proposed projects funded by other donors within the PRCF Conservation and Development Program in Tuyen Quang (which includes areas of both Sinh Long and Lam Binh communes) are promoting sustainable agriculture and forest activities, and establishing village self-help groups fitted with savings and loans schemes, to benefit the entire community of nine Sinh Long villages (including Khuoi Phin, Ban La, Trung Phin, and Phieng Ten villages).

6. Mechanism to monitor safeguard issues

Monitoring of social safeguard issues will be included in regular field visits to the project site, and through monthly reporting by project field staff, including a summary of issues brought forth by the local communities through grievance boxes placed at each village center, and monthly village meetings and consultations by project staff, taking place to listen and annotate the concerns of villagers who may have limited literacy or understanding of Vietnamese Language.

Further to the above, the project will produce a series of posters explaining the project goals and objectives and providing direct contact details with the PRCF and IUCN offices in Hanoi. Posters will be produced in both Kinh and major local languages to ensure that all villagers in the Sinh Long landscape will understand. These will also be presented and explained periodically during village meetings and consultations to ensure understanding by Dao, and Mong stakeholders.

Participatory discussions on social safeguard issues will take place regularly, resulting in a six-month safeguard monitoring report submitted to CEPF. Further, on an annual basis, the project will conduct a participatory social monitoring workshop to assess project compliance with CEPF social safeguard policies. Any grievance surfacing or raised from the above communications will be communicated to CEPF directly within 15 days, together with a participatory plan for remedial action.

II Social Assessment

1. Indigenous Peoples in the project area

Most Sinh Long villages are located near the northern border of the proposed François' Langur Community-based Conservation Area, and comprise three ethnic minorities: Dao, and Mong with very few households of the Tay minority and Kinh majority, both present in Lung Khieng and Phieng Thoc villages. There are nine villages in the Sinh Long area, four of which are far from the proposed Community-based Francois Langur Conservation Area, and the sought community forest management—CFM sites. The project target villages (closer to the proposed conservation area) hold a population of 1,942 people (400 households) in five villages. Population figures, ethnic composition, and literacy are included in Table 1, below.

The majority of village households practice hill rice cultivation—mostly on a single year rotation, mixed with livestock breeding, fishing, and collection of forest resources, including medicinal plants, nuts, fruits, mushrooms, bamboo shoots, hunting. There are very few households practicing inundated rice, given the topography of the landscape. Except for Na Tau, which holds the highest percentage of poor households, at 100%, other villages stand at about 71% to 77% village poverty rates.

Except for Lung Khieng, which is inhabited by some Tay and Kinh people and holds approximately 80% literacy, and Phieng Thoc, holding 85% literacy, only about 50+% of other villages are able to read and write Kinh language (Vietnamese). In terms of poverty, all villages hold poor households, ranging from about 71% in Nam Duong village, to about 100% in Na Tau village (refer to Table 1).

Tay ethnic minority

Tay are the largest ethnic minority group in Vietnam. The Tay are the earliest known minority in Vietnam, who are thought to have arrived from inland South East Asia about 500 BC. Tay language belongs to the Tay – Thai language group. Their alphabet is based on the Latin alphabet devised in 1960, similar to the Viet alphabet. The Tay worship ancestors, the house spirit, kitchen spirit and the midwife.

The Tay are farmers who have a tradition of wet rice cultivation, and a long history of intensive cultivation and irrigation methods like digging irrigation canals. They also maintain the custom of harvesting the rice and thrashing the grains out on wooden racks, while still in the fields, then carrying the threshed rice home in baskets. In addition to cultivating wet fields, the Tay also plant rice on terraced fields along with the other crops and fruit trees. Cattle and poultry raising are well-developed, but a free range style of animal husbandry is still popular. The market is also an important economic activity.

The Tay social system used to resemble a feudal society. One man in each village owned the land, forest and rivers. He ruled over the people living on that land. Tay now live in villages of mixed ethnic groups, enter into mixed marriages and leave their traditional settlements to work in other areas. They have adopted other elements of Kinh culture, are therefore considered the most integrated into main stream Vietnamese culture.

In the Sinh Long area, there are very few Tay households, only about 8% (with Kinh) in Lung Khieng and 5% (with Kinh) in Phieng Thoc).

Dao ethnic minority

The Dao are the ninth largest ethnic group in Vietnam. They belong to the H'mong (Mong) Dao language group and are believed to have started migrating as very small groups from China in the 13th century. The Dao writing is based on Chinese characters adjusted to accommodate their own spelling. The Red Dao men play a dominant role in the family, community and the economy. They also play a major role in ceremonies such as marriages, funerals, and building new houses. The Dao people have many different family names. Each lineage has its own system of different middle names to distinguish people of different generations.

Dao households subsist on terraced rice fields and also adopt fairly advanced methods of wet rice cultivation. They have switched from their former nomadic way of life, to that of sedentary farming. The Dao mainly live from rice cultivation either on burnt-over land and in submerged fields. They also grow subsidiary crops. They still use rudimentary farm tools but apply many progressive techniques in cultivation. Sideline occupations are developed including weaving, carpentry, black smiting, paper-making and vegetable oil-pressure. Relationships among members of the same lineage are always very close and the Dao can definite people of the same lineage by their middleman's and his or her position in that lineage.

The Dao social structure is based on the family unit, with men heads of household ruling the family and acting as village leaders. As other ethnic minorities living within larger ethnic groups, the gradually adopt elements of these larger groups, which in the case of the Sinh Long area would be Tay cultural elements. In the Sinh Long Dao are a majority group, living in the most mountainous areas, accessing forests to collect medicinal plants, hunting, and harvesting of timber products as needed for home construction and reparations.

Mong ethnic minority

The ethnic group Mong is also commonly termed H'Mong, and carry a population of about one million people in Vietnam, mainly concentrated in the northern mountainous provinces of Ha Giang, Tuyen Quang, Lao Cai, Yen Bai, Lai Chau, Son La, Cao Bang, and Nghe An provinces.

Each Mong lineage lives within a group setting, with the village head assuming common lineage affairs. Mong language belongs to the Mong-Dao Group. It is unclear how this cultural aspect evolves or remains when villages hold more than one ethnicity, including a Mong minority such as in Phieng Ngan.

The Mong live mainly on slash-and-burn cultivation and therefore live in mountainous landscapes, with swidden fallows decreasing in length as the village population grows and there is little migration to other villages or cities. Mong also grow rice and corn on terraced fields, although terraces are very limited in the Sinh Long area, and only sighted on small creek valleys.

The principal food plan of the Mong people is corn, rice, and rye (although the latter scarce in Sinh Long), and the priority food crops being rice and corn, in that particular order. Apart from these crops, the Mong people also grow medicinal plants and linen plants to supply the fibers for cloth weaving. Medicinal plans are however, readily available from nearby forests, and sometimes placed under cultivation.

In the Sinh Long area, Mong together with Dao are the majority group, with some villages presenting a mix of ethnicity and holding a minority of the population, like in Phiang Ngan (11%) and a majority of the population like in Na Tau (80%).

Table 1. Village socioeconomic information

Village	Ethnic	Households	Population	Self-help Group Households	Livelihood sources	Literacy	Poor ratio
Sinh Long commune							
Lung Khieng	Dao = 70%	109	530	None	Hill rice, hill agriculture and livestock, fishing, forest resource collection	>80% Write and read in Vietnamese	71%
	Mong = 22%						
	Tay/ Kinh = 08%						
Phieng Thoc	Dao = 50%	86	427	None	Hill rice, hill agriculture and livestock, fishing, forest resource collection	>85% Write and read in Vietnamese	77%
	Mong = 45%						
	Tay/ Kinh = 05%						
Na Tau	Dao = 20%	31	161	None	Hill rice, hill agriculture and livestock, fishing, forest resource collection	>55% Write and read in Vietnamese	100%
	Mong = 80%						
Nam Duong	Dao = 100%	59	275	None	Hill rice, hill agriculture and livestock, fishing, forest resource collection	>57% Write and read in Vietnamese	71%
Phiang Ngan	Dao = 89%	115	549	None	Hill rice, hill agriculture and livestock, fishing, forest resource collection	>50% Write and read in Vietnamese	77%
	Mong = 11%						
Khuoi Phin	Dao = 80%	101	440	None	Hill rice, hill agriculture and livestock, fishing, forest resource collection	>49% Write and read in Vietnamese	100%
	Mong = 20%						
Ban La	Dao = 100%	61	282	None	Hill rice, hill agriculture and livestock, fishing, forest resource collection	>50% Write and read in Vietnamese	98%
Trung Phin	Dao = 20%	23	104	None	Hill rice, hill agriculture and livestock, fishing, forest resource collection	>45% Write and read in Vietnamese	100%
	Mong = 80%						
Phieng Ten	Mong = 100%	31	163	None	Hill rice, hill agriculture and livestock, fishing, forest resource collection	>89% Write and read in Vietnamese	32%
Totals:		400	1942	Direct stakeholders			
		616	2931	All villages			

2. Expected project impacts (both positive and negative)

Other than the potentially negative impact brought in from restriction to legal and illegal harvests, the project is expected to bring positive impact to the local communities, by legitimizing their conservation management initiative at target natural forests subject to community forest management--CFM. Through the project and its proposed results, villages in the Sinh Long landscape will be able to manage village forests to an extent of about 100 hectares, and placed under sustainable community forest management measures. These forest areas will be protected and managed under a proposed jurisdiction of local communities, therefore deterring outsiders from hunting and logging within them.

The PRCF Biodiversity and Livelihoods Program, of which this project is a component, is in process of setting up a "community based conservation area", to be managed by local communities themselves, with mentoring and technical assistance by PRCF and partner organizations, and monitored by the Forest Protection Department. Initial funding has been secured to move forward on this initiative, and general government endorsements are in place. Further, the initiative of a first community-managed conservation area in Vietnam is likely to attract additional funding support for socioeconomic development and improvement of livelihood conditions of stakeholder villages.

3. Describe how free, prior and informed consultations have been carried out with affected communities during project design

Project design was discussed with village leaders of the target five villages and the project proponent (PRCF), in liaison with the Tuyen Quang Forest Protection Department, during a planning field trip to the site in 2015. Meetings took place with local community representatives, Sinh Long commune representatives, Tuyen Quang Forest Protection Department, and PRCF staff. Meetings were carried out in Vietnamese language, as all participants understood Vietnamese. There was no written document on consent to the project, but a general no objection and endorsement of it by the participants.

4. Outline measures to avoid adverse impacts and culturally appropriate benefits

- Periodical village meetings and consultations to learn about emerging socioeconomic issues or otherwise surfacing concerns from local communities regarding project impact to their socioeconomic standing.
- Periodical assessment of changes in socioeconomic standing of vulnerable households from a set baseline (see above in Process Framework Involuntary restrictions).
- Community Grievance Box placed at each of the village centers to help inform on issues directly from the community. Formularies will be produced to assist in the process, with anonymous inputs.
- Quarterly dedicated social assessment meetings, and yearly workshops to discuss and resolve grievances through offset mechanisms such as inputs into forest livelihoods, agriculture livelihoods, or small-scale business development activities

5. Explain how these measures will be monitored

(see above in Process Framework Involuntary restrictions).

6. Detail a grievance mechanism

(see above in Process Framework Involuntary restrictions).