

Social Assessment

1st July 2022 – 30th June 2024

CEPF Grant 112722

**Grantee
NON TIMBER FOREST PRODUCTS (NTFP)**

Project Title
“Connecting Community Protected Areas Networks in the Northeastern Cambodia”

Project Location
Cambodia

Grant Summary

1. Grantee organization. NTFP
2. Grant title. Connecting CPA Networks in the North Eastern Provinces of Cambodia
3. Grant number 112722
4. Grant amount (US dollars). USD106,000
5. Proposed dates of grant. 1st of July 2022 – 30 of June 2024
6. Countries or territories where project will be undertaken.
 - N.E. Cambodia (Stung Treng, Ratanakiri provinces) : Seven Community Protected Areas of Virachey National Park and Veun Sai-Siem Pang National Park
 - S.E Cambodia (Mondulkiri province): Phnom Lam Lear
7. Date of preparation of this document. 17th of March 2022

Based on CEPF feedback on the submitted Letter of Inquiry, we confirm that the proposed project does work in areas where indigenous peoples live in and the proposed activities might change their behaviors and schemes in relation to natural resources management and utilization. As required, together with local partners and stakeholders, NTFP organization has prepared this document to demonstrate the project will comply with CEPF's Safeguard Policies on Indigenous Peoples and Involuntary Resettlement.

8. Indigenous People affected: This section describe the Indigenous People in the project area.

Indigenous groups in the North Eastern Cambodia that have been affected by forest destruction, already experience considerable disadvantage, including high levels of poverty, lack of infrastructure and access to government services, creating a situation of structural marginalization and a lack of education, healthcare, opportunities, political participation and representation.

Three indigenous ethnic groups will be involved in the project.

Kavet, Brao and Montagnard Lao are indigenous ethnic group in northeastern Cambodia and southern adjacent Laos (border unilaterally established by the French colonial government in 1904). They speak different, Kavet and Brao are mutually intelligible and share a very similar culture and animist belief. All three ethnic groups are hunter gatherers, they grow rotational dry rice/crops on slash-and-burn.

Although in recent decades most have been forced to resettle in the lowlands outside Virachey National Park, many maintain close livelihood and spiritual links with forested mountainous areas. The Brao-Kavet do not hunt for wildlife on these mountains, and dare not cut down trees. Our past project at Veun Sai Siem Pang Protected Area has included mapping of the Spirit Forests, which were used as the basis for requesting their conversion into CPAs.

Baird, Ian G. 2013. Shifting Contexts and Performances: The Brao-Kavet and Their Sacred Mountains in Northeast Cambodia highlights that Brao-Kavet identity politics are closely linked to religious practices associated with these mountains. The performative nature of Brao-Kavet sacred mountains has considerable political potential for facilitating indigenous supported biodiversity conservation, and for supporting the recognition of Brao-Kavet indigenous rights over land and other resources in **Virachey National Park**, where the mountains are located.

In terms of social organization, there is no hierarchization and each family unit practices the same work as the other. This makes it a very egalitarian society. The distribution of the activities necessary to meet needs is shared between men and women, but the line is still fluid.

Men and women have equal access to forests and spirit areas. The women, often assisted by children, collect forest products every day according to seasonality for food (mushrooms, fruits, roots, leaves, crabs, frogs, etc.), fuelwood collection and house maintenance (herbs for making roofs and mats). The men can stay several days in the forest to hunt, collect resin, Malva nuts, for fishing etc.

A specificity regards the task of young children who have the mission to bring back the buffaloes left free in the forest before ploughing. This is how several children got lost in the forest and were only found years later. Alive.

Geographically, the Kavet are located in the centre and west of the park's southern border, the Brao are located in the east. Two villages are inhabited by Montagnard Lao nearby Veun Sai town, historically inhabited by Chinese since the beginning of the 20th century (population settled by the French colonial administration).

7 CPAs network	Province/Commune	CPA name (ha)	Village name ; 20 Village	Nb hh	nb people	
1	Stung Treng province Santephep commune	O Kapin (3,514 ha)	Kapin	107	535	
			Talae	142	710	
2	Ratanakiri Veun Sai	O Kasiep (1,668 ha)	Kang Nuok	123	615	
			Itub	106	514	
			Backae	96	480	
3	Stung Treng province Santephep commune	O Chay (2,881ha)	Ojay	223	1054	
			OKiri Bass	112	513	
			Tak Team	128	574	
			La Kay	206	942	
			Ngang Soam	310	1473	
4	Ratanakiri Koklak commune	O Tung (9,862 ha)	Rok	187	776	
			Lalia	120	472	
			Trak	90	375	
			Lamey	170	728	
5	Ratanakiri Taveng commune	O Tabok (2,800 ha)	O Tabok	147	581	
6	Ratanakiri Taveng commune	O Khampha (2,383 ha)	Soahn	67	251	
			KiKuong Leu	78	266	
			Rieng Vihn	71	303	
			Pakith 𠵿	110	392	
7	Ratanakiri Taveng commune	Mondul Yorn (550 ha)	Mondul Yorn	31	102	
		TOTAL		20	924	4109

9. Summary of the proposed project:

Addressing CEPF Strategic Direction

8.1 Support networking mechanisms that enable collective civil society responses to priority and emerging threats

8.2 Provide core support for the sustainable organizational and technical capacity development of domestic civil society organizations

Conservation problem

Threats: illegal logging, poaching, mining, forest fire, farming.

Drivers: intruders , criminal networks (logging/poaching/trading wildlife and NTFPs) /poverty/ indiscriminate wildlife snares set up for food // lack of gov means and PDoE resources for protecting the parks (lack of personnel, rangers, equipment, budget etc) / lack of international conservation investment / communities lack of awareness on benefit to protect NR / lack of recognition of IP rights to manage natural resources and protect biodiv / no opportunity to improve livelihood and development business partnerships

➤ **What problem we want to solve:**

Reduce pressure on species and ecosystem at Veun Sai Siem Pang and Virachey National Parks by 2024

Reduce isolation of IP, increase recognition/lobby local authorities and link CPAs representatives to existing network

➤ **How will we solve it:** Build local conservation leadership supported and recognized by authorities

Support networking mechanisms for seven CPAs (23.578ha) to raise ramparts against outside intrusion, poachers, loggers, NTFPs thieves through capacity building and cooperation with local and national authorities to gain support and security in relation to CPA management.

We have long established working relations with Kavet communities and Lao montagnards buffering the Veun Sai Siem Pang National Park. At the other new sites, (5 CPAs South boundary of VNP) our project team will collect more social-economic information and carry out survey to “pave the road” for further conservation actions.

Twenty villages from two Provinces (Ratanakiri and Stung Treng) and four communes inhabited by **4.109 persons** (924 households) **depending on seven CPAs (23.578ha) for subsistence.**

All of the following three components of project will include consultation, participation, representation, and involvement of local indigenous communities; to structure opportunities for park co-management and for livelihoods improvement.

- 1- *Consolidate the protection of Veun Sai Siem Pang and Virachey National Parks by 2024 through co management mechanisms with DoE, CPAs network and local authorities.*
- 2- *The capacity of seven CBOs/CPAs to conserve wildlife, the community's spirit forest and to manage the biodiversity is developed.*
- 3- *The CPA network/alliance of the 2 national parks is created and strengthened to conserve wildlife, the community's spirit forest and to manage the biodiversity; and exchange with existing regional, national network.*

Local communities and ethnic minorities will be consulted and assisted through all interventions. Component 1 is aimed at increasing minority representation in co-management bodies. Component 2 is designed to transfer skills and capacities to the seven CPAs/CBO and to improve local understanding of the legislative environment in which they are forced to operate; so that

each CPAs/CBO establish conservation action plans to reduce impacts on natural resources which take into account their own concerns, Component 3 aims to assist the seven CPAs representatives to create a network strategy, to share good practices with other CPAs networks and to raise their needs, concerns to DoE, commune authorities during workshops and quarterly meetings (in particular on the simplification of legislation concerning the transport of forest products, for a transfer of competences from FA to MoE so that villagers can sell at the market, or welcome green business partners for the most lucrative forest product which is the malva nut).

Referring to CEDT lesson learned from the community's assessment (CPA legal analysis process) and NTFP long lasting experience working with IP, the challenge that they face in forest and wildlife protection and during the patrolling:

First is limitation **support during the CPA implementation process from the government.** The communities are concerned about their capacity for natural resource management. Their experience challenges in patrolling activities, as there are not enough rangers from the community to join patrolling in the CPA area. The interventions from the rangers or PDOE were often too late when illegal logging happens in the forest. This is we can help them to increase the voice and concern to sub and national platform,

Second is insufficient legal awareness among newly elected committee members and local community regarding the assignment of roles, responsibilities, and authority between the committee and community members; as well as the right to confiscate equipment, arrest perpetrators, and file complaint of offenses. Sometimes communities were subject to prosecution even though they confiscated equipment from illegal logging for protection purposes.

To contribute to community sustainable natural resource management, we have to assist communities to improve their power. Their power is about their capacity knowledge, economics, and rights.

To contribute to communities' sustainable natural management, in this step, we have to help the community to improve capacity related to leadership, facilitation skills, report writing, and especially related to the relevant legal knowledge such as they have to understand the procedure and their and government role to intervention the illegal logging and patrolling. Also, improve their internal structure to raise awareness and reflection or informal consultation to make sure that each committee and the member feel belong to their role and are confident in NRM. This is not mean that they did not actively involved in their NRM in the past Based on our experience working, we already see a hard-working and strong commitment to their natural resources. But they need the guide and technical support to them to lead and implement effectively. We have to help them to review their management plan by improving local participation to identify the issue and develop a clear action plan and integrate the plan with the government and key stakeholders.

The third is the lack of funding to do the patrolling. There will not always be NGOs to finance the equipment for patrolling or the community alone have to be a concern on that. And that is not about the quantity but about the quality of patrolling. This all about the improve community power and the capacity deployment which is the important and it is so link to each other the challenge and solution above. The community has to have ability to develop the clear plan with the government or other partners such as how much time in a year for patrolling, how many budgets will need, what kind of material will have, what is the technical should need? Who will involve with the clear role and responsibility? How much financial support with their need support from government the community themselves (Membership counterpart or community benefit sharing)? They have to understand that they have right to do that, So, we have help them

to understand and confident on how to this work on this complicate process. And also provide them additional special skills like fund mobilization, stakeholder engagement, financial management.

Therefore, with their clear plan and their knowledge, they will be able to mobilize the resources from their membership, government, and their partner to implement their plan for sustainable natural resource management. That will be take time but that is should not be miss this part of activity.

10. Potential impacts: This section assess expected project impacts (both positive and negative) on Indigenous People.

All communities adjacent to the National Parks and engaged with by the project are characterized by similar generic socio-economic characteristics. The livelihoods of these communities rely on the shifting cultivation, wild forest products with the supplementation of raising livestock such as chickens, pigs, buffalos. Major source of income is animal raising, malva nuts sales and resin from Dipterocarpus sales.

There is a great need of local villagers for land, 100% of villagers relied on fuel wood collection for daily energy supply. The habitat is also threatened by incompatible agricultural encroachment, fuel-wood collection.

The project will enhance the management of existing seven CPAs on a wholly voluntary basis. Nevertheless, negative impacts may still occur if the communities will change their governance regime for sustainable use of natural resources and some households may have to change their behaviors accordingly. However, the proposed project activities will support the communities to develop their management plan for the CPAs first and a strategy for their Network. Both negative and positive impacts will be fully discussed within the community and action will be designed to avoid any adverse social-economic impacts.

The two national parks have management bureaus, staff and operating fund to carry out patrols and monitoring. Thanks to the latest CEPF granted project, they can now rely and benefit on the cooperation of the CBOs of the Veun Sai Siem Pang CPAs and their community rangers to repel outside poachers, loggers, illegal mining, to conduct patrols, record offences and report to the park managers and commune chiefs. As a result, they are recognised as indispensable guardians, the eyes and ears of the park authorities.

The project will provide more technical support to CPAs/CBOs through participatory workshop with park staff to define and define their cooperation methods. Thus to improve the capacity of park staff and community rangers for operating an anti-poaching patrol and monitoring system. The project therefore may have adverse impacts because poaching is conducted by the some households for subsistence or trading to outside business men. CBOs will spread awareness (wildlife hunting is illegal in any case) and capacity in biodiversity conservation which might enable them to reconcile conservation and economic sustainable development in the future (access to market for selling Malva nut, resin).

The project is designed to make local villagers benefit from the effective management of CPAs by conserving their natural and cultural heritages and obtaining more support from various local government stakeholders on its sustainable development. Alternatives will be provided to avoid any potential adverse impacts. The capacity of local communities in sustainable development (access to market for selling Malva nut, resin) will also be greatly improved by the project.

11. Participatory preparation: This section describe the participation of affected communities during the project design process (i.e. prior to submission of the full proposal), and explain how Free, Prior and Informed Consent was obtained.

As noted above, NTFP NGO has a long history of working with Indigenous Peoples in Ratanakiri, Stung Treng and Preah Vihear provinces.

At the site of Veun Sai Siem Pang NP and its five buffering villages NTFP NGO has worked closely with, and has a strong presence amongst, the indigenous communities where we have supported local ethnic minorities to protect their natural resources and develop alternative livelihoods. All activities were conducted in cooperation with local community members, protected area managers, commune and district authorities.

At the beginning of this project which extend the existing two CPAs network (of the VSSP NP) to include five additional CPAs of Virachey National Park, totaling 7 CPAs under the flag of “VSSP-Virachey CPA Network”, a Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) with relevant local communities will be developed together.

Some degree of FPIC however already exists for project activities. For example, activities conducted in Veun Sai Siem Pang NP have been developed in cooperation with local communities as part of the Gibbon and wildlife Conservation Action Planning process conducted under the previous CEPF grant to NTFP - *Community Networks for Gibbon Protection at Veun Sai Siem Pang National Park*. Five Community Based Organizations were created (in each villages) through election of its president and members. CBOS roles were 1/ to ensure representation of community members (including vulnerable /persons, young and women) 2/ to organize community patrols in the park and report to the project team 3/ to represent CPAs rights and seek assistance of local authorities (to enforce the law when offences are reported by CBOs) during communal meeting conducted every three months.

CBOs at VSSP being mechanisms for reaching consent amongst local communities and support among local authorities.

The working group (CBOs/CPAs representatives-DoE staff-local authorities), through its quarterly meetings, has solved many cases, conflicts, repelled even powerful and supportive intruders, and strengthened the network of the two CPAs.

Through this project, we propose to follow exactly the same process for the other 5 CPAs.

In total, 3 working groups will be operational: at Siempang, Veunsai and Taveng town.

The aim is to bring the 3 working groups together in a first workshop in Banlung city, to define their common strategy and in a final workshop to present their recommendations and requests for support to the park and FA authorities.

The process is designed to ensure conservation actions are determined by local stakeholders, and as such there has been full participation and consent in determining the activities included in this element of the grant application.

The FPIC process will be conducted in the Kavet minority languages for the 5 additional CPAs villages where consultation meetings are held to ensure full understanding of the project objectives and activities. We will ensure representation of women in the process. Consent will be documented by the CBOs/CPAs structures. The appropriate mode for recording consent will be determined as part of the FPIC process, but is likely to either involve signing of a consent form which will be developed

in line with best practice or orally as considered appropriate by the rights holders. The names, sex, ethnicity, age and occupation of each village meeting participant will be recorded.

12. Mitigation strategies: This section outlines measures to avoid adverse impacts and provide culturally appropriate benefits.

The engagement of local communities in the proposed conservation actions will be conducted on a wholly voluntary basis with full community consultation and participation. The main project approach is to empower local communities to strengthen own-managed community protected areas to conserve their natural and cultural heritages and reconcile development and conservation needs. It may change the governance regime of local communities and enhance their consensus and commitment to biodiversity conservation and sustainable development. Nevertheless, it may bring challenges to a specific group of villagers in the communities whose livelihoods have high dependence on the unsustainable use of natural resources in the past but have limited resource and capacity to develop alternative livelihoods.

To avoid potential adverse impacts, the project will assist the CBOs to conduct a survey to understand the current use pattern of natural resources in the communities and identify the vulnerable groups that may be affected by the proposed project activities. The potential negative impacts will be assessed with an alternative scheme developed and proposed to the affected groups by working closely with the leaders and key representatives of the local communities.

13. Monitoring and evaluation: This section explains how compliance with the safeguard policy on Indigenous Peoples will be monitored, and reported to CEPF and/or the Regional Implementation Team. Monitoring and evaluation methodologies should be adapted to the local context, indicators, and capacity.

The traditional knowledge, customs and culture of Kavet/Brao communities on natural resources management, will be fully respected and considered during the planning of CPAs. The relevant actions to revival the relevant cultures will be encouraged to be considered and integrated into the CPAs Network Strategy & management plans.

The working groups will monitor the impacts and report it during their quarterly reviewing meetings and annual workshops. By the end of the project, we would like CEPF team to conduct an external evaluation to evaluate the conservation effectiveness and potential socio-economic impacts on local communities.

14. Grievance mechanism: All projects that trigger a safeguard must provide local communities and other relevant stakeholders with a means to raise a grievance with the grantee, the relevant Regional Implementation Team or the CEPF Secretariat.

This grievance mechanism must include, at a minimum, the following elements.

- Email and telephone contact information for the grantee organization.
- Email and telephone contact information for the CEPF Regional Implementation Team.
- The email of the CEPF Executive Director: cepfexecutive@conservation.org
- A statement describing how you will inform stakeholders of the objectives of the project and the existence of the grievance mechanism (e.g., posters, signboards, public notices, public announcements, use of local languages).

NTFP will ensure that community members receive contact information for all NTFP field personnel, as well as for key partner organization personnel, and the CEPF Regional Implementation Team at IUCN (public notices, public announcements in Khmer and Kavet languages displayed at villages' public houses). Community members will be encouraged to contact NTFP, or the RIT immediately if project-related conflicts or grievances arise.

Before, during, and after project implementation, we will consult with community members to discuss their suggestions, misgivings or concerns about the project. We will use an adaptive management approach to project implementation to make adjustments as needed according to conservation needs, to incorporate community members' suggestions, and to reduce the likelihood of potential conflicts or grievances arising from the project. If grievances arise, we will work with the community members involved, with participation from other organizations where appropriate, to resolve conflicts and reach mutual agreements between all parties. Any grievances raised will be brought to the attention of CEPF Grant Director and the RIT within 15 days, together with a plan for remedial action.

If the claimant is not satisfied following the response, they may submit the grievance directly to the CEPF Executive Director at cepfexecutive@conservation.org or by surface mail or via the CI Ethics Hotline (toll-free telephone line: +1-866-294-8674 / secure web portal: <https://secure.ethicspoint.com/domain/media/en/gui/10680/index.html>)

15. **Budget:** This section will summarize dedicated costs related to compliance with the safeguard policy on Indigenous Peoples. These costs should be incorporated into the budget of the CEPF grant and/or covered by co-financing.