

## Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund Social Assessment, Including Indigenous Peoples' Plan

**Community Forestry & Community Patrols  
for Gibbons protection at the Veun Sai Siem Pang Conservation Area - Cambodia.**



*Above: Nomascus annamensis at VVSPCA © Poh Kao*

*Right: Community Forestry demarcation team (Forestry Administration officer and villagers representatives April 2014 Backae village, Siempang District) © Poh Kao*



**Empowering local communities to engage in conservation and management of priority Key Biodiversity Areas and threatened primate in the Veun Sai Siem Pang Conservation Area - Cambodia.**

**Organization:** Non Timber Forest Products Ngo Cambodia

**Application Code:** 65944

**Date:** March 2016

## Statement of Need

In line with CEPF requirements, we confirm that the proposed project does work in areas where indigenous peoples live and the proposed activities might change their behaviors in relation to natural resources management and utilization. Together with local partners and stakeholders, NTFP's Programme has prepared this document to demonstrate how the project will comply with CEPF's Safeguard Policies on Indigenous Peoples and Involuntary Resettlement.

## Project Background

The project goal is to obtain official status of protection for Veun Sai Siem Pang Conservation Area (VSSPCA) through Community Forestry creation and/or ICCA; and collaboration between local communities, contributing to reduce illegal forestry and maintain gibbon population in Veun Sai Siem Pang Forest over a two year period.

The overall objective is the support to Veun Sai Siem Pang CA protection through community rights, to create Community Forestry and/or ICCA and to patrol the forest to mitigate biodiversity loss with a special focus on gibbon protection. Objectives include 1) Registration of Community Forestry recognized by FA 2) creation of Community patrols and CBO ; 3) Monitoring of forest crimes and data base with quality information are created ; 4) Creation of the Veun Sai Siem Pang Network; and 5) linking VSSPCA network with existing national network.

This project was developed based on existing project activities that have been conducted by POH KAO NGO since 2007, first with support from from Poh Kao to conducted assessments in depth, continue with the Mac Arthur Fondation/ CI grant for a 3 years project , and continued with support from Man and Nature, and Fondation Ensemble. Support from CEPF for this project will allow NTFP, the local NGO designated by Poh Kao to continue and expand on its previous activities.

Focal species for conservation include Northern buff-cheeked gibbon (*Nomascus annammensis*). Gibbon protection through community patrol will be implemented within the 55 000 ha of VSSPCA in areas designated by communities through Free Prior Information Consent methodology. The project will involve five key sites for gibbon conservation (two in Siem Pang District, Stung Treng Province and 3 Veun Sai District, Ratanakiri province) and will include community participants from five villages (Kapin, Talae, Backae, Itub, Kang Nuok).

Activities that could affect indigenous peoples include the implementation of community patrols scheme for gibbon protection, patrolling including also removal of snare and forest crime report. Conservation of key species and habitats will be attained through a participatory, community-based approach to conservation involving voluntary agreements linked to financial incentives for communities to patrol the forests. As discussed in the Process Framework for this project, participation in the patrolling activities will be through voluntary agreements and election of CBOs. Financial incentives (payments for patrolling) will be made according to the voluntary protection agreements and may be made to participating individuals. This project will not involve involuntary resettlement of people, and the amount of involuntary restriction of resources used by people will be very limited in scope, and will not limit livelihood activities (NTFP collection) in the immediate vicinities of gibbons. Although the project will work to prevent illegal and/or unsustainable natural resource use, the project will seek to preserve natural resource use that is legal and sustainable, as long as the activities do not cause undue harm or disturbance to gibbons.

To ensure that effects on indigenous people are identified, accounted for and mitigated during these activities, a number of measures will be taken. Meetings will be held in indigenous areas for which important gibbons are identified, consultations will be held to explain the need for conservation, and

broader benefits of patrolling for forest protection. We will conduct comprehensive and participatory consultations with communities based on principles of free, prior, and informed consent to ensure communities can make informed decisions. Strategies to assist affected communities will be developed where necessary and will involve community participation to ensure site specific variables and needs are considered.

**Identification of Indigenous Peoples**

Indigenous ethnic groups inhabiting the project areas include Kavet and Montagnards Lao. Additionally, the area is inhabited by ethnic Khmer, as well as Chinese. The primary villages in which we will work, and their ethnicities, are listed in Table 1 below; these villages are located on the South border of VSSPCA which is bordering Virachey national Park.

Table 1: Project focal villages

Villages	Province	Ethnic group	Total Households	Total Population	Children
Kang Nuok	Ratanakiri	Kavet	93	402	203
Itub	Ratanakiri	Lao	96	440	127
Backae	Ratanakiri	Lao	98	402	113
Talae	Stung Treng	Kavet	135	885	139
Kapin	Stung Treng	Kavet	99	637	130
<b>Total</b>			<b>521</b>	<b>2766</b>	<b>712</b>

**Potential Negative Impacts on Indigenous Peoples**

There are a variety of potential negative impacts to Indigenous Peoples through conservation interventions that will be implemented through this project.

- **Infringement on customary rights.** Through community consultations, the project will assess the level of infringement on customary rights. As described in the Process Framework, involuntary restriction on access to natural resources will be minimal, as well as resource uses that are illegal and/or unsustainable. The project will implement conservation activities through voluntary agreements with communities.
- **Loss of culture and social cohesion.** Loss of culture and social cohesion is a threat of any type of development intervention with respect to indigenous communities and culture. By including culture and traditional resource use practices as part of the planning process the project is making every attempt to record and maintain culture and social cohesion.
- **Dependency on external support.** Dependency on external support and financial incentives for patrolling the gibbon areas is a potential threat, and people may have trouble readjusting in the event that funding dries up. However, as described in the Process Framework, restrictions on customary subsistence activities regarding use of natural resources will be very limited in scope. Therefore, even in the event of loss of financial support for patrolling, livelihoods are not expected to be greatly impacted. The project will seek to ensure sustainability through awareness and education activities, and will also seek additional future funding to continue gibbon protection, as well as other expand into other potential activities such as developing alternative livelihood strategies (ecotourism). Additionally, we are collaborating with relevant NGOs and provincial government agencies to ensure long-term sustainability of project goals of supporting wildlife conservation and non-harmful livelihood

activities by local communities, while reducing illegal or destructive commercial and subsistence activities within project areas.

- **Inequitable participation.** NTFP recognizes that all members of society are involved in resource use and collection. The project seeks to include all levels of community membership (in particular women and lower income groups within a village) and will be designed to build upon local decision-making structures.

### **Positive Impacts on Indigenous Peoples**

The project will have positive impacts Indigenous communities within the project area by (i) obtaining an official status of protection for Veun Sai Siem Pang Conservation Area (VSSPCA) through Community Forestry creation and ICCA and by (ii) providing benefits through conservation incentives for gibbon area protection. The Community Forestry Status will provide a land tenure security for to the Indigenous people. The financial incentives will provide livelihood support to Indigenous Peoples, who may be disadvantaged socioeconomically, and may experience greater poverty compared to non-indigenous peoples within the project area. Additionally, the project will benefit Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples by assisting communities to protect natural resources that support their livelihoods, and to prevent illegal and unsustainable activities that threaten natural resources and local livelihoods within the project area.

In recent years, local communities have experienced a significant loss of access and availability of natural resources. Natural forest and aquatic resources that communities have traditionally and customarily relied on have become scarcer; forests are disappearing due to illegal and commercial logging. Indigenous communities in these areas are likely even more strongly impacted by these losses than non-Indigenous communities. The previous 8 years project has initiated and consolidated alternatives to improve livelihood of these Indigenous people communities that have already experienced decreases in natural resources customarily relied on for their livelihoods. This project will provide an access to an official title for Forest Protection through communities with Community Forestry and with immediate livelihood benefits, while also empowering them to have a role in conservation decision-making regarding natural resources that support their livelihoods.

### **Free, Prior, and Informed Consultations**

The primary focus of the project is to utilize participatory community-based approaches to conservation to create community forestry and CBOs to create community patrolling and networking with other national initiative. All aspects of the project will maintain a participatory focus, through consultations with the communities and relevant stakeholders, so that communities can make informed decisions and can be empowered to have active roles in the decision-making processes regarding natural resource use and conservation. During the participatory consultations, in all of our interactions with communities, and throughout the project planning, design, and implementation, NTFP will operate under the guiding principles of free, prior, and informed consent.

The NTFP project team members have extensive experience with conducting community consultations and implementing participatory methodologies, as well as in education, awareness-raising, and capacity building. Community meetings will be held in each of the five villages following interview and field surveys to present information to local communities and seek input, support and suggestions on project developments. Poh Kao has already conducted 8 years of awareness-raising activities and participatory consultations with these five communities. The community meetings are structured to be informative and participatory with discussions on gibbon status and conservation context, local opinions regarding project goals and design, combined with a short presentations and/or video. If necessary these would include discussions on possible restrictions for local

communities to explain clearly who and how our activities may negatively and positively impact local livelihoods. If necessary, community meetings will be translated into the local language.

NTPF will seek to ensure that opinions and input are sought from a diversity of groups (regarding age, gender, ethnicity, income level, etc.) during community consultations and during the participatory processes, and that the distinct priorities of each group, including the distinct priorities of Indigenous Peoples, are taken into account during project implementation.

### **Measures to Mitigate Impacts and Provide Culturally Appropriate Benefits**

Through interviews and community consultations we will seek to better understand whether project activities will cause any adverse impacts specific to Indigenous Peoples, and whether project benefits from the conservation incentives scheme are culturally appropriate to Indigenous Peoples. We will operate under an adaptive management approach, and will make any necessary adjustments to project design and implementation possible to reduce and mitigate any negative impacts to Indigenous Peoples and to ensure that benefits provided by the project are culturally appropriate to Indigenous communities within the project area.

### **Monitoring Safeguard Issues**

Monitoring safeguard issues related to this Social Assessment and Indigenous Peoples' Plan will be an ongoing process throughout the project, through interviews with project participants and non-participating resource users and through community consultations. We will ensure social safeguards through comprehensive and participatory consultation so that communities can make informed decisions. We will hold regular feedback sessions with community participants to assess the community response to the project, including encouraging community members to share any negative aspects of the project, such as regarding restrictions on access to natural resources.

Ensuring social safeguards, especially as they relate to Indigenous Peoples, are a high priority for NTPF and we will make assessments at least monthly, based on the ongoing monitoring of social safeguard issues.

### **Conflict Resolution and Grievance Mechanism**

NTPF will ensure that community members receive contact information for all NTPF field personnel, as well as for key partner organization personnel and the CEPF Regional Implementation Team at IUCN. Community members will be encouraged to contact NTPF or our partner organizations immediately if project-related conflicts or grievances arise. Likewise, we will encourage community members to contact NTPF field staff if any conflicts or grievances arise pertaining to our partner organizations. Before, during, and after project implementation, we will hold informal discussions with community members to discuss their suggestions, misgivings or concerns about the project. If necessary, we will translate discussions into the local language, to ensure that non-Khmer speaking Indigenous Peoples in the project area understand the grievance mechanism and know who to contact to issue grievances. We will use an adaptive management approach to project implementation to make adjustments as needed according to conservation needs of gibbon species, 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 within 30 days, together with a plan for remedial action.