

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

Project Title: Reinforced community-based and led biodiversity conservation and management initiatives in the Lam Binh conservation landscape, northern Vietnam

Organization: People Resources and Conservation Foundation (PRCF)

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I. Process Framework for Involuntary Restrictions

1. Project background

The project target site of Lam Binh is within the proposed Francois' Langur Community-based Conservation Area, in the Lam Binh / Sinh Long conservation landscape. The site comprises a watershed area and holds high value karst limestone forest that once covered most of northern Vietnam and southern China. It is in 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 larger conservation landscape commonly referred to as the 'Ba Be / Na Hang Limestone Forest Complex'. The region holds high global biodiversity significance, particularly of primate species and a wide variety of other endemic taxa.

Located in Lam Binh district of Tuyen Quang province; one of Vietnam's poorest mountainous provinces, the project targets areas with communities of Tay and Dao ethnic minorities with little more than 3,500 households who live in close proximity to the forest. Ten villages adjacent to the Lam Binh watershed are the focus of PRCF previous and ongoing work. See Table 1 for village names and general descriptions.

The Lam Binh landscape has been the center of PRCF conservation initiatives supported through several institutional and private donors. This has included grants from the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund, IUCN Save Our Species Fund, and The McKnight Foundation, Rainforest Trust, private donors, and PRCF core funding. All grant interventions have supported components of the PRCF Biodiversity and Livelihoods program at the site, which targets community-based and led conservation of the endangered Francois' Langur and associated species and habitat.

Initially in 2010 and upscaling in 2012, PRCF began initiatives that focused to engage local villagers in collaborative management of the watershed forest and habitat to Vietnam's last known viable population of the globally endangered François' Langur. Through ongoing PRCF work, local communities are gaining better options to negotiate their position in decision-making that relate to natural resources management, and to participate in conservation governance.

Present PRCF Vietnam Program activities at the site seek to establish a community-based conservation area, linked to community-led conservation of high value forests home to the François' Langur and other threatened species. Previous work by PRCF has, among other things, established ten Village Co-Management Committees—VMCs, who are be supported to carry out management

responsibilities and benefits brought from links between conservation and development in the landscape. To support local livelihoods, ten Village Self-help Groups have been established to help improve socioeconomic conditions in the village. In support of community-based conservation governance to the area, at present PRCF is helping to establish an Umbrella Community-based Organization—UCBO to coordinate local involvement in management of the local forests, and to help allot funds proceeding from Payment for Forest Environmental Services—PFES (sourcing from the nearby hydroelectric dam) for conservation and development purposes. Funds proceeding from PFES are proposed to gradually help finance conservation management of the target watershed high value forests in Lam Binh, particularly through the proposed Community-based Francois' Langur Conservation Area.

Building on past and present work, and on the current momentum, the project herein will benefit conservation of the last viable Vietnamese population of Francois' Langur, and proposed community conservation initiatives through the operation of already established village co-management committees, and umbrella community based organization, and the sought 'Community-based Francois' Langur Conservation Area'. The project promotes a community-based conservation model at the Lam Binh site; it establishes a successful precedent and provides opportunities for exchange of experiences and information through project partners and stakeholders, including People and Nature Reconciliation (PanNature), Vietnam National Parks and Protected Areas Association (VNPPA), and local, provincial, and national government agencies.

2. Social and threat analyses

The main land use by local communities in the Lam Binh landscape is subsistence cultivation of rice and maize, supplemented with cassava and a variety of vegetable and fruit species (e.g. sweet potato, peanut, banana, papaya, jackfruit, sugarcane, citrus fruits, mango, taro, plum). Agricultural activity in the project site targeted for conservation is limited to several relatively small and discrete areas, in which valleys are used seasonally by villagers living beyond the southern borders of the proposed conservation area. These valleys are used for seasonal cultivation of rice, maize, and cassava and periodical livestock grazing to supplement the production in nearby village lands. The primary forest resources used in the Lam Binh landscape are timber (for house construction and fuelwood for human foods and livestock feed), non-timber forest products, and wildlife.

The project proposes to help retain the access and use of Lam Bin forest resources by local people, although protection measures will fall on particular karst forest areas key to the survival of Francois' Langur and other threatened species at the site. The main source of villager livelihoods is agriculture and some plantation forestry, none of which will be impaired by the establishment of the proposed community-managed protected area. The project includes community development activities, although not extensive given the available budget and that complementary community development work is also funded by other donors to PRCF for work at the site.

Although the project proposes to increase the participation and decision-making power of local communities into management of biodiversity and natural resources in the Lab Binh landscape, several resource-use restrictions are likely to occur, particularly in areas holding critical habitat to the endangered Francois' Langur. Likely restrictions these are of two types: (i) Restrictions to damaging activities, which relate to voluntary illegal, un-sustainable, and destructive activities, and (ii) Restrictions that are involuntary and that relate to non-damaging access to resources.

Restrictions to damaging activities

Through establishment of a conservation area, although managed by local communities, 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 flagship Francois Langur, are protected by Vietnamese law.

Restrictions to non-damaging activities

The proposed protected area mainly comprises karst forest areas offering 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 protected area, 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 type of restrictions upon the local community, by establishing a baseline on present 'legal' and 'illegal' benefits from the Lam Binh forest, and measuring changes on a six-month basis. This is already taking place as per the process framework under an ongoing CEPF project at site. Results from periodical social monitoring will be collated and presented in annual participatory social monitoring workshops, reviewed together with village stakeholders to assess the situation and define solutions, and to assess compliance to CEPF social safeguard policies. Any issues of grievance or negative impact will be reported to CEPF on a six-month basis.

3. Plans for participatory implementation

Since the beginning of the program community-based conservation program at the Lam Binh site, all activities have been carried out through involvement of local village stakeholders. Basically, local communities carry out project implementation, with staff facilitating and providing technical advice and direction. For this project, 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 emerging negative impact from the project, and to discuss possible remedial action.

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

A 2016 socioeconomic assessment of the community, including a guided random survey of representative households in target villagers and a questionnaire to village leaders and elders, has helped to establish and update socioeconomic baselines at each of the target villages. Previous work at the site has also identified those households most dependent on forest resources.

Following the baseline surveys, we have established a social assessment program to determine social and economic changes in each of the target villages. In a participatory manner, we selected ten households to represent different economic livelihoods in each village: four 'most at risk', two 'poor', two 'medium economy', and two with 'better off' conditions. On a six-month basis, we survey their livelihood and socioeconomic standing, comparing survey results with results of previous surveys to determine change. All survey results are stored in a social database that includes all villages in the conservation landscape. Identification of household groups in need of assistance is therefore done through our social database, in combination with inputs and recommendations from the management board of Village Self-help Groups—established at each village and mostly run by the Village Women's Union, and the Village Co-Management Committees—established at each village and run by the Head of Village together with Head of Women's Union and other village organizations.

5. Planned measures to mitigate impacts and assist affected groups

The proposed community-based conservation area in the Lam Binh/ Sinh Long landscape will retain access by local communities to local forests, except for those critical to the endangered Francois Langur. Further, ongoing and proposed work at the site promote measures for sustainable agriculture and forest activities, and the establishment and management of Village Self-help Groups, which are fitted with savings and loans schemes, on-farm agriculture, livestock, agroforestry, and forestry demonstrations, and farmer-based extension systems to benefit the entire community.

6. Mechanism to monitor safeguard issues

Monitoring of social safeguard issues is included in regular field visits to the project site, and through monthly reporting by project field staff. This includes a summary of issues brought forth by the local communities, 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. PRCF is also supporting intra and inter-village communications that would also reflect any emerging social and economic issues, which are communicated to PRCF during regular meetings.

Further to the above, previous program activities have produced a series of posters explaining the program and project goals and objectives, and providing direct contact details with project headquarters, and PanNature, and IUCN in Vietnam. Additional awareness and communication materials are proposed within this project. Posters are produced in easy to understand language. These are also presented and explained periodically by Village Self-help Group and members of Village Co-Management Committees, particularly through members of the Youth Union (Head of Youth Union is a VMC member) during village meetings and consultations to ensure understanding by all village stakeholders.

Participatory discussions on social safeguard issues take place every six-months, resulting in a safeguard monitoring report submitted to CEPF. Further, on an annual basis, the project conducts a participatory social monitoring workshop to assess project compliance to 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 of the villages in Lam Binh are located near the southern and northern borders of the proposed Francois' Langur Community-based Conservation Area, with villagers comprising two ethnic minorities: Tay and Dao. At present, there are no Kinh majority households.

The ten target villages hold a population of 3,565 (749 households), 1,799 people (398 households) in five villages of Thuong Lam commune, and 1,766 (351 households) people in the five villages of Khuong Ha commune). The great majority of the population is Tay, with only four villages presenting Dao households, of which Na Rao with 89% and Coc Phat with 98% of the population being of the Dao minority group. The majority of village households practice rice paddy 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. Na Tong village households are also involved in homestay services and small business, given the proximity of the village to the main road and other services.

Except for Na Rao, which is inhabited by mostly Dao people and holds approximately 45% literacy, and Coc Phat, which holds little more than 60% literacy, at least 80% of other villages are able to read and write Kinh language (Vietnamese). In terms of poverty, all villages hold poor households, ranging from about 30% poor households in Coc Phat village, to about 10% in Na Rao 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 Lam Binh area, Tay are the dominant ethnic minority, and they live near paddy-rice lands, with no Tay family living on the mountain areas. They access forests for collecting medicinal plants, hunting, and harvesting of timber particularly for home construction and reconstruction purposes.

Dao ethnic minority

The Dao are the ninth largest ethnic group in Vietnam. They belong to the H'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, 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 Lam Binh area would be Tay cultural elements. In the Lam Binh area, Dao are a real minority groups, living in the most mountainous areas, accessing forests to collect medicinal plants, hunt, and harvest of timber products as needed for home construction and reparations.

Table 1. Village socioeconomic information¹

Village	Ethnic	Households (HHs)	Population	Self-help Group Households	Livelihood sources	Literacy	Poor ratio
<i>Thuong Lam commune</i>							
Coc Phat	Dao = 98% Tay = 2%	51	261	None	Paddy rice, livestock breeding, forest resources, fishing	>60% Write and read in VN	14/ 49 = 29.0%
Khau Dao	Tay = 100%	26	112	9	Paddy rice, livestock breeding, forest resources	80% Write and read in VN	5/ 26 = 19.0%
Na Lau	Tay = 100%	107	460	12	Paddy rice, livestock breeding, forest resources	> 80% Write and read in VN	24/ 107 = 22.4%
Na Thuon	Tay = 100%	87	421	13	Paddy rice, livestock breeding, forest resources, fishing	>85% Write and read in VN	8/84 = 9.5%
Na Tong	Tay = 100%	127	545	9	Paddy rice, fishing, livestock breeding, forest resources, home-stay service, small business	>95 Write and read in VN	31/ 117 = 26.5%
Totals:		398	1,799	43			
<i>Khuon Ha commune</i>							
Na Kem	Tay = 100%	86	466	10	Paddy rice; livestock breeding, forest resources, fishing	>85% Write and read in VN	20/ 82 = 24.3%
Na Muong	Tay = 90% Dao =10%	83	386	11	Paddy rice, livestock breeding, forest resources, fishing	>85% Write and read in VN	19/ 84 = 20.2%
Na Vang	Tay = 97% Dao +3%	64	302	13	Paddy rice, livestock breeding, forest resources, fishing	>85% Write and read in VN	16/ 64 = 25.0%
Na Rao	Tay = 11% Dao = 89%	42	215	None	Paddy rice, livestock breeding, forest resources, fishing	~ 45% Write and read in VN	4/ 41 = 9.7%
Lung May	Tay = 100%	76	397	None	Paddy rice, livestock breeding, forest resources, fishing		
Totals:		351	1,766	34			

¹ Information updated on 28 November 2017

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 the Lam Binh forest. Through the project and its proposed results, villages in the Lam Binh landscape will be able to manage the protected area and its resources, inclusive of buffer areas for multiple-usage. These areas will be protected and under the jurisdiction of local communities, deterring outsiders from hunting and logging within them.

The program to which this project is a component, is in process of setting up a community based organization to channel funds from payment for forest environmental services to the community and for forest protection. The initiative is a first community-managed conservation area in Vietnam; it will surely attract support to socioeconomic development of stakeholder villages.

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

The project design has been discussed on numerous occasions with village leaders and members of the community, with the latest discussions taking place on 28 November 2017, in liaison with the Lam Bing and Tuyen Quang Forest Protection Department. Although the workshop was conducted to discuss ongoing social monitoring objectives and results, the participation by members Village Co-Management Committees was harnessed to also present further work in the program.

Major aspects of the project were once again presented for comments and suggestions before preparation of this document. The workshop was conducted at Na Tong, on 28 November, with representatives from the ten stakeholder villages (mainly village leaders), Tuyen Quang Forest Protection Department, Lam Binh Forest Protection Office, Tuong Lam and Khuonh Ha Commune Peoples Committee, and PRCF staff. The workshop was carried out in Vietnamese languages, as all participants understood Vietnamese. There was no written document on consent to the project, and participants expressed a general endorsement for the project.

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.
- Six-month social assessment to determine changes in socioeconomic standing of vulnerable households from a et baseline and possible impact (see above in Process Framework Involuntary restrictions).
- Dedicated quarter social assessment meetings with Village Self-help Groups 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

PRCF will inform stakeholders of the objectives of the project and the existence of a grievance mechanism through village meetings (in Vietnamese with, where relevant, translation into Dao and or Tay) and by displaying posters that summarize the project and provide email and telephone contact details of PRCF, the CEPF Regional Implementation Team at IUCN Vietnam (tu.nguyenduc@iucn.org), the World Bank office in Hanoi (qdingh@worldbank.org), and the CEPF Executive Director (cepfexecutive@conservation.org).

We will share all grievances – and a proposed response – with the Regional Implementation Team and the CEPF Grant Director within 15 days. 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. If the claimant is not satisfied with the response from the CEPF Executive Director, they may submit the grievance to the World Bank at the local World Bank office.