

Social Assessment

BirdLife International Cambodia Programme

Introduction

One of the project's main aims is to investigate and test some of the assumptions surrounding vulture conservation in Cambodia, so that more effective and sustainable conservation interventions can be implemented. The project is being implemented by a consortium of international NGOs; WCS Cambodia, WWF Cambodia, BirdLife International Cambodia Programme (BirdLife) and Angkor Centre for Conservation of Biodiversity (ACCB). All have significant experience working with local communities at the project's sites.

Three of these project sites contain land occupied by indigenous communities. These three sites are; Phnom Prich Wildlife Sanctuary (PPWS), Mondulkiri Protected Forest (MPF) and the Mekong Flooded Forest (MFF). The latter site is in both Kratie and Stung Treng provinces whilst PPWS and MPF are in Mondulkiri province. No other project sites have indigenous communities. Project activities at all three sites will be overseen by WWF Cambodia who have been working in the MFF since 2006 and in PPWS and MPF since 2002 and have significant experience working with these indigenous communities. This Social Assessment describes the proposed project area and provides background information about human population, community livelihoods and potential impacts on indigenous communities (which are negligible)

Free, Prior, and Informed Consent is the guiding principle of this document. WWF, WCS, BirdLife and ACCB will conduct planning and outreach activities with villages at their respective sites before the implementation of project activities, in particular with the nest protection activities, which as identified in the social safeguards policy document, is the only activity likely (if at all) to have any impacts on local communities. Meetings will typically be held with the full community. Special efforts will be made by WWF to ensure the participation of Indigenous People at their sites. Proposed project activities will be verbally discussed with the communities and the consent of the communities will be obtained before any activities are implemented. Minutes of the meetings will be kept and copies of the minutes will be filed. Any actions that require the consent of the community will be clearly described in the minutes and consent will be recorded in the minutes. Nearly all the Indigenous People in the project sites speak Khmer, so the meetings will be held in Khmer. If there is a need to translate the discussions into an indigenous language we will do so.

Project Areas

Mekong Flooded Forest (MFF)

The MFF and is situated in Stung Treng and Kratie provinces. The site is part of the CEPF Priority Corridor 'Mekong River and its major tributaries' and in the CEPF Priority Site 'Mekong from Kratie to Laos PDR'. The core of this site extends from approximately 40 kilometres north of Kratie town to six kilometres north of the Kratie-Stung Treng provincial border, taking in 56 kilometres of the Mekong mainstream.

Little up-to-date population data is available for the area, and indeed, for the area between Kratie and Stung Treng towns. Within the site more population data is available for the Eastern Channels, than for the more populous and accessible Western Channel. The Eastern Channels support the lowest human population densities between Kratie and Stung Treng towns and contain the most intact wetland areas of the Central Section. The Eastern Channels are home to just six established communities with an estimated population of at least 5,553. The customary boundaries of these

villages cover a significant proportion of the Eastern Channel's land and water resources, including the areas of greatest biodiversity and conservation value.

A majority of these communities are home to Indigenous peoples, but not exclusively indigenous populations. Many of these peoples have moved into the area relatively recently, and have adopted lifestyles typical of the rural Khmer majority. Preliminary observations of human settlement in the Central Section undertaken by WWF in 2006-07 (Bezuijen et al. 2007), suggest the following characteristics of communities in the Eastern Channels:

Village	Ethnicity	Village established
Kompong Pnov	Phong, Khmer	More than 100 years
O'Kok	Phong, Khmer	More than 100 years
Pontacheer	Phnong, Khmer	More than 100 years
Koh Khngear	Koy, Khmer	50 years
Satlieu	Khmer	1970*
Koh Dambong	Khmer	Unknown

*Established as a new administrative division of a neighbouring village.

Phnom Prich Wildlife Sanctuary (PPWS) and Mondulkiri Protected Forest (MPF)

PPWS and MPF are both in Mondulkiri province and are part of the CEPF 'Eastern Plains Dry Forest' Conservation Corridor. Mondulkiri province has a strong indigenous community presence. Approximately 60% of the total population in Mondulkiri is indigenous (FFI 2006). There are 38 villages in and adjacent to MPF, and eleven ethnicities are represented; Bunong (45%), Khmer (33%) and Lao (13%). Other ethnic minorities are Cham, Kampuchea Kraom, Rode, Charay, Kroll, Toum Poun, Kreung, and Stieng (WWF 2008). Unfortunately a detailed breakdown of the communities existing within and surrounding PPWS is not available at present. A social economic assessment around these areas was conducted in 2013, however results are still unavailable at present. Overall, there are approximately 29 villages inside or within close proximity to PPWS, and given the proximity of the two protected areas (the form part of the same landscape and are adjacent to each other), the ethnicities and proportionate representation of these ethnicities within local communities is likely to be very similar.

Currently the two vulture feeding sites in the Eastern Plains Dry Forest Landscape ('Vulture Restaurants') are located in close proximity to law enforcement outposts within two protected areas PPWS and MPF. Available information on communities located within close proximity to these sites is listed below. The main livelihood within these communities is farming; varying from rice cultivation, cassava, peanuts, soy bean to raising livestock. Results from surveys suggested the communities' secondary livelihood is predominately linked to collection of non-forest timber products (honey, resin, vegetables and sleng seeds but crucially not vultures, or their eggs/chicks).

Table 2. Information on communities living near the ‘Vulture Restaurants’ sites in the EPL

WWF Site	UTM (India-thailand data)	Community	Population	Families	Ethnicity
Keropov (PPWS)	714127/1431897	Chiclab	955 (466 male, 499 female)	206	99% Bunong 1% Khmer
		Srea Thom	998 (455 male; 553 female)	196	99% Bunong 1% Khmer
Trapeang Thmea (MPF)	736926/1432100	Dei Ey	980 (494males; 486 female)	203	40% Bunong 25% Muslim 35% Khmer
		Sre Huy	1685 (799 male, 88 female)	367	81% Bunong 19% Khmer

Livelihoods

Both Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities living in or near these three project sites are dependent on natural resources. Families piece together livelihoods primarily reliant on subsistence fishing and farming. Paddy rice farming is the most significant cultivation method. Other livelihood activities include small livestock raising, hunting, timber collection, non-timber forest products collection, vegetable farming, boat construction and the sale of labour. There are no records of either indigenous or non-indigenous communities targeting or being reliant on vulture eggs/chicks/adult birds, and most wildlife hunting targets medium-large reptiles and mammals (e.g. MPF; WWF 2008).

Project Activities and Potential Impacts

This project focuses on testing some of the assumptions surrounding vulture conservation in Cambodia and producing a long-term strategy that is built around sustainable activities. In brief, the main activities in this project are;

- Testing what, if any, conservation interventions are needed to improve nesting success by trialling ‘nest guardians’ and predator exclusion devices
- Interview surveys to establish the availability and use of diclofenac and other toxic non-steroid anti-inflammatory drugs
- Interview surveys to establish the prevalence of pesticide (organophosphate) poisoning
- Collection of incidental carcass observation and analysis of food availability
- Formation of a government endorsed Working Group for Vulture Conservation
- Production of an up-to-date Action Plan for vulture conservation in Cambodia

Most activities and outcomes of this project, which focus on surveys, strategies, supplemental feeding of vultures, will have no impact on indigenous people nor interfere with their traditional activities or livelihoods. Only the nest searching and protecting will affect people, which as stated in the section on the complementary Social Safeguards Policy, will provide additional livelihood support (and is therefore a positive impact), rather than restrict access to resources. During village meetings where ‘nest guardians’ are selected by their local communities, every effort will made to

ensure that there is equal representation during these meetings and that indigenous people have an equal chance of benefiting from this scheme. As previously stated, there is no evidence to suggest that vultures or their chicks/eggs form an important source of subsistence or are traded in any significant numbers. Respondents in socio-economic surveys in MPF did not list a single bird species/taxonomic group as targets for wildlife hunting (WWF 2008). The possibility of there being any negative or adverse impacts from this project on indigenous or non-indigenous communities at any of the project sites are extremely remote. Within the consortium there is significant experience in implementing this type of conservation intervention, particularly with WCS Cambodia who have been successfully operating community-driven nest protection schemes in the Northern Plains (Clements et al. 2013) and Prek Toal (Sun Visal & Mahood 2011) for over 10 years. This is a conservation intervention that has been proven to be successful at improving the conservation status of bird species, has tangible and proven positive benefits to local communities (both indigenous and non-indigenous), and has a strong community ownership element.

Conclusion

As with the local communities discussed in the complementary Social Safeguards Policy the potential for negative impacts on indigenous people at these three project sites is extremely small. The nest protection activities that form a small part of this project will provide significant positive benefits to some members of the local communities, including indigenous people. Mechanisms for dealing with potential grievances and for monitoring negative impacts (which are extremely unlikely to occur) are the same as in the Social Safeguards Policy document.

References

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