

Social Assessment/ Indigenous Peoples Planning Framework and Process Framework on Involuntary Restrictions Safeguarding the Fisheries-Dependent Stakeholders in Indawgyi Wildlife Sanctuary/ Upper Irrawaddy Basin

**FFI Project Proposal
'A Gap Analysis for the Conservation of Freshwater Biodiversity
in the Upper Ayeyarwady Basin'**

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A. Overview of the indigenous communities and other effected groups in the project area

While the gap analysis of key biodiversity areas the project will cover the entire upper Irrawaddy basin, the piloting of fish conservation zones will focus on Indawgyi Wildlife Sanctuary. Indawgyi Lake/ Wildlife Sanctuary is surrounded by 9 villages with approximately 5000 households with less than half of the households depending on fisheries for their livelihood. The majority of fishermen consists of migrant fishermen (Bamar/ Burmese), while the indigenous Shan population depends largely on paddy farming with fishing only being a complementary livelihood activity. The principle of free, prior and informed consent is relevant for both indigenous as well as resident migrant fishermen. The project will address any potential negative impacts on livelihoods, especially on poor and vulnerable households to provide exemptions from access regulations and/or provide support for alternative livelihoods in the short-term through FFI's small grants program.

B. Project Background

The project will improve fish conservation in the upper Irrawaddy basin through rigorous surveys/gap analysis to identify key biodiversity areas for fish and the development of fish conservation zones in collaboration with local fishing communities on the basis of identified key habitats, spawning and aggregation sites. The project will facilitate local communities to pilot the management of at least 5 fish conservation zones in Indawgyi wildlife sanctuary based on free and prior informed consent. The project implementation will rely on collective decisions and support for voluntary compliance by the local fishing community members, coupled with active participations and law enforcement by the fishing group leadership along with local authorities. It is not the intention of the project to impose involuntary restrictions on resource utilization and livelihood activities that are matter of day-to-day survival for the poorer members of the community. However, FFI acknowledges that in facilitating the local communities to make collective decisions on how to manage and conserve the natural resource base and the biodiversity assets, 100% consensus is unrealistic and some disagreements/conflicts are inevitable. Therefore discussions will be held not only with their fishing groups but also with the identified "most vulnerable" community members individually to confirm their agreement and seek solutions. Rather than taking a more conventional protected area approach to conservation, FFI and its project partners will adopt a sustainable use approach, avoiding involuntary restrictions as much as possible.

Any short-term negative impacts will be mitigated through an exemption to the access regulations given to those who are deemed most vulnerable to negative impact of restricted access to the conservation areas and targeted livelihood assistance. The project will counter-balance any negative impacts on community members by providing incentives for active involvement of community members in resource conservation and in the medium-term by identifying promising new livelihood opportunities, such as collective marketing and value-added processing of fish, will also be explored. In Indawgyi FFI provides a small grant facility for local communities to develop alternative livelihoods and/or improve the value chain for fish.

In the long run, the proposed fisheries regulations will begin to show some positive impact on fisheries productivity and thus compensate for the inconvenience caused by the adjustment in fisheries-related activities.

Potential Social Impact on Local Communities

The project can have both positive and negative impact on local fishing communities. Legally Indawgyi Wildlife Sanctuary prohibits any fishing activities. However, law enforcement covering the entire lake is very weak and completely un-realistic considering livelihood dependencies. While project activities will entail restriction on fishing activities in selected, small priority conservation areas in Indawgyi Wildlife Sanctuary based on free, prior and informed consent, the project will facilitate legalization of fishing in more than 90% of the lake within the Wildlife Sanctuary. Any restriction will potentially cause localized short-term reduction in fish catch and thus negative impact on fisheries-dependent livelihoods of some local communities in the short-term, if they do not have access to alternative fishing grounds or other livelihood opportunities during the time period/season when fishing activities is restricted in these areas. However with fisheries currently unmanaged, fish stocks will continue to decline and have severe long-term impact on livelihoods. The project will generally contribute to strengthening law enforcement by local authorities and fishing groups against all illegal and destructive harvesting practices in “fisheries domain” within Indawgyi Wildlife Sanctuary as stipulated in the Fisheries Law. The fish conservation core zones will protect spawning grounds and revert the fish population decline in the long-term.

C. Participatory Implementation

The project strategy will take a multi-scale approach to stakeholder engagement. Stakeholder consultation activities will be held both at state, district and local community levels at various stages of the project implementation. The project will also hold a series of reflection meetings for the local stakeholders themselves to evaluate both fisheries management activities and livelihood assistance strategies. These meetings will provide opportunities for the project partners and local community members to share experience, complaints and grievances, document lessons, and influence the group decisions, and in turn improve the effectiveness of the project.

Community level in Indawgyi: working groups consisting of several fishing groups will be formed for the priority conservation area and subsequently numerous community-level meetings will be held to update on the project progress and discuss various options and strategies for fishing regulations as well as livelihoods compensation/incentives that are appropriate for the local situation.

The project will directly partner with the local fishing groups in the in Indawgyi wildlife sanctuary implementing its activities. Fishers represent the main resource user group and have the best chance at succeeding in the user-led resource conservation efforts, as they rely most on wetlands-based livelihoods and have a highest stake in resource conservation.

The project will facilitate their participation in project activities as well as voluntary compliance to fisheries regulations by local community members through a series of incentive schemes. Some local community members will be mobilized by the fishing groups as members of patrolling teams and communication officers on fishing regulations.

D. Criteria for eligibility of affected persons

All community members who currently access prospective fish conservation zones will be affected by the project to various degrees. The project will encourage local communities to make two specific decisions to avoid severe negative livelihood impact on the local community members. One was to select the sites that would be less damaging to local livelihoods if set up as a conservation area. Another was to identify households within their community who are deemed most vulnerable to the negative impact, and need safeguarded. The selected households would

receive an exemption if needed to the access regulations to the conservation areas and/or be prioritized for targeted livelihood assistance through FFI's small grants program.

Discussions were held with village representative to conduct wealth ranking of the village households, and poor and poorest categories were identified based on asset and social criteria that is appropriate for each village context. The households that should be exempted from some of the access rules were then selected through discussions among their peer groups but also with the identified "most vulnerable" community members individually to confirm their agreement. Those selected households included those with a widow as household head, with many children, living near the fish conservation zones and have no access to alternative fishing ground (e.g. does not own a boat) nor any other livelihood options.

E. Measures to assist the affected persons

Community themselves will make decision on the sites to be selected, and on how management regime will be designed to minimize impacts and to maximize benefit to them. On instance where certain households are disproportionately affected, they will be approached individually to discuss and find solutions acceptable to them.

Stakeholders will discuss and decide on access regime for each conservation zone and suggest and agree on the provisions of exemption in favor of those who are particularly vulnerable to negative impact from restriction on fisheries. The exemption for those vulnerable individuals and households include allowing minimum access to the conservation zone for subsistence, preferential access to other fishing grounds, or provision of small grant support to enhancing other components of the existing livelihood portfolio, such as livestock production.

F. Conflict resolution and complaint mechanism

The project intends to use the stakeholder consultation process to resolve any conflicts that may arise from the project implementation as much as possible, however, if the matter is beyond the capability of direct project partners, an intervention of respected local leaders such as elders and religious leaders will be sought. These key local authorities will be engaged from the start of the project and their overall support to the project will be sought through regular updates. Participating communities will be provided with the contact details of the FFI Project Team as well as the CEPF-Regional Implementation Team at MERN, so that anyone who wishes to can raise a grievance directly with them.

FFI will assign one office staff in the FFI Yangon office to respond to any grievances. FFI will publicise phone numbers and email addresses under which anybody who wants to express a grievance can contact FFI Myanmar and the CEPF-Regional Implementation Team at Myanmar Environmental Rehabilitation-conservation Network (MERN). Any grievances will be promptly addressed and responded to and in case dissatisfaction remains, our local rights based NGO partners SSCA and DRA will be asked to mediate. Any grievances will be reported to CEPF within one month, together with a summary of the remedial action taken or planned by FFI.

G. Implementation Arrangements

FFI is responsible for the overall implementation of the project and ensure that the Process Framework is followed. FFI will closely collaborate with relevant government authorities, including the Wildlife Sanctuary Management and Department of Fisheries at township and district levels.