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SOCIAL ASSESSMENT

Project: “Enhancing Co-management towards Sustainable Aquatic Resources in Tuyen Quang Province”

Date of report: 28 January 2015

Conducting period: August 2014 to January 2015

1. Scope of the social assessment

During preparation of the proposal we have discussed with the communities in Son Phu commune and Na Hang town about the project activities, their pros and cons and how the activities will affect people livelihoods. The aim of this social assessment was to address potential negative social and/or economic impacts that might be caused by the project activities and solutions to mitigate them. It is also to ensure that project activities are culturally appropriate, and will enhance benefits to the target groups.

One group of fishers in Son Phu commune and one group in Ha Hang Town were selected for the assessment. The basic contents included:

- Informing affected indigenous communities about project objectives and activities
- Discussing and assessing potential adverse impacts of project’s activities and methods to avoid or mitigate them;
- Discussing and assessing project’s potential benefits and how to enhance them;
- Identifying and discussing (potential) conflicts, if any, with other communities and how these conflicts might be avoided;
- Facilitating and ascertaining the affected communities’ broad support to the project;
- Developing a strategy for local participation and consultation during project implementation, including monitoring and evaluation.

2. Assessment team

The assessment team comprises:

- Dao Thi Viet Nga – Director of WARECOD
- Nguyễn Thị Ngọc Lan – Deputy Director of WARECOD;
- Nguyễn Vi Linh – Chief Accountant;

- Do Xuan Toan – Coordinator of the project;
- Nguyen Ngoc Khac – Project officer
- Nhữ Ngọc Dưỡng – Vice Chief of Na Hang Division of Agriculture and Rural Development;
- Phung Xuan Son– representative of the fisher group in Son Phu commune.
- Hoang The Cau – representative of the fisher group in Son Phu commune
- Ms. Nguyen Thi Vinh - representative of the group in Na Hang town.
- Ms. Le Thi Sen – Representative of the Group in Na Hang town

3. Actual Involvement of government agencies

- Son Phu commune People’s Committee
- Na Hang Town People’s Committee
- Na Hang Division of Agriculture and Rural Development
- Tuyen Quang Department of Agriculture and Rural Development
- Tuyen Quang Department of Fisheries (Chi Cục Thủy sản tỉnh Tuyên Quang)

4. Implementation process

This assessment had been conducted from August 2014 to January 2015, alongside with our research on effectiveness of co-management model in Na Hang. During this period, key activities implemented comprised:

- Assessing the impacts of our previous projects;
- Consulting with communities about the possibility of continuing to work on finalizing the co-management regulations at various communities.
- Understanding the need and level of attention of local people for co-management groups
- Informing indigenous communities about proposed project’s objectives and activities
- Discussing with fishers about feasibility and sustainability of implementing co-management model, setting up and running monitoring groups in these communities, and get their consent to participate.

For Son Phu commune, we held a couple of meetings with representatives of the fishers and the commune’s authorities. Even though we sent invitations to everyone, the time schedule did not work for all of them, so there were only 18 people came, and only two woman. We presented our project in Vietnamese (formal language) as all of them could speak Vietnamese. Everyone orally gave their consent to participate in the project activities. We did not ask them to sign written agreements as from our experience, if they wanted to do it, they would do it, not because they signed an agreement or not.

5. Outcomes of the project from August 2014 to January 2015

On output level:

- 1) Two meetings with representatives of fisher groups and authorities were held in each location (Son Phu commune and Na Hang town)
- 2) Two sharing workshops held with participation from representatives of communities and authorities held in Na Hang district
- 3) In-depth interview questions for members of fishing group in Na Hang town.

On impact level:

1. We invited people to work in a group in which they discussed, presented their ideas and provided feedbacks on our proposed activities. It helped make people feel ownership of the project.
2. Ethnic minority group in Son Phu was very excited about the project ideas because they have already started to work together toward that direction, but lack of mean to push for a strong kick-start. Therefore, they strongly support the project activities and willing to be a core group in Son Phu. Na Hang town consists of mostly Kinh people (majority, not minority people) and a number of them were beneficiaries in our last project. They are also keen to support the project.
3. Na Hang District People's Committee showed their enthusiastic in receiving the project because most of the proposed activities are in line with their aquaculture development action of Na Hang district and Tuyen Quang province.
4. Conserving aquatic resources has been a focus of Na Hang district as well as Tuyen Quang province in the last a couple of years. The project will help authorities to realize their effort. DARD was, therefore, also excited about the project and promised to allocate some budget to support the monitoring groups in later stages.

5. DISCUSSION ON THE PROPOSED PROJECT'S ACTIVITIES

a. Summary information about Son Phu commune:

There are 8 ethnic groups in Son Phu commune, in which Dao people account for 71%, Tay 24% and 5% for the remaining (including Kinh, H'Mong, Nung, Thai, Cao Lan, and San Chi).

Despite the diversity of ethnic groups, most of people in the commune can understand and speak Vietnamese formal language (Kinh language). There are 619 households with 3061 people living in Son Phu commune and females account for 52.43% of the total population. Livelihood of Son Phu's people mainly depends on agriculture and aquatic sources exploitation in Tuyen Quang hydropower reservoir. There are 10% to 12% of the total households in the commune earn their living by exploiting aquatic resources. For these households, the husbands mainly take care of fishing while the wives are mainly responsible for agricultural work.

b. Discuss and assess potential adverse impacts and ways to avoid or mitigate them

We have discussed how our activities would affect fishing communities and relevant stakeholders and recognized the following issues:

- Affecting on local fishermen's behaviors:

From our survey in August 2014, we understand that our last project has helped to reduce 60% of the electric fishing tools in Na Hang town and changed the fishermen behaviors in positive way. We recognized the importance of communication and social pressure at the village level, as well as strict management at the commune and district levels. Na Hang district People's Committee has developed an inter-sector groups including the representatives of DONRE, DARD, Division of Police Office, Division of Justice, etc. These groups often patrol around the district both on the reservoir and the land at least once per week to control illegal ways to exploit the reservoir and the forest. These are the "legal sticks" of the local authorities. They have contributed to reducing illegal actions relating to aquatic and forest resources management and conservation as well as to monitoring the tools of fishing households. However, with a large area to patrol, this group has been not very successful in monitoring the situation. They need close cooperation from communities groups as well. Thus, alongside with the authorities' patrol, establishment of various small co-management groups and wider communication activities will help change people's attitudes, which will eventually lead to change in their behaviors.

- Affecting on relationship among fishing communities

There might be an impact on relationship among fishing communities if some households might want to keep using electric fishing gear. For these groups, they care more about the quantity of catching in the short-term rather than long-term sustainability of the resources in the area, not because they are poor people. Our surveys and interviews show that ethnic minority people tend to comply with community regulations once they agree up on it. Kinh people are more difficult to deal with. However, according to people who support environmental friendly fishing tools, combination between authorities' control and strong community pressure and monitoring can help mitigate problems.

- Affecting on their livelihood and income

Most people in Son Phu an Ha Nang town, especially ethnic minorities people do not entirely rely on fishing for their livelihoods. People do other works for their income including farming, paid labour, small business, collecting non-timber forest products, among others. Thus, stop using destructive fishing tools will not significantly affect their income. Our surveys and discussions showed that many people understood that a reduction both in fish production and species could be a threat to their livelihood and income in the future. This is the reason why these groups started talking about setting up monitoring groups themselves and they were looking for support from the authorities. According to them, if they were allocated an area for

managing, they would be able to raise their income from higher fish production in the long run. They expect the project will help improve their capacities to run the group (planning, monitoring, developing action plan and strategies for financial mechanism in the long run) and via communication activities to get neighboring communities to follow. It is expected that by promoting sustainable ways of aquatic resource management in the area, it will help increase their income in the long run.

c. Discuss and assess potential project benefits

The project will contribute to change in behavior of local fishing communities and authority in the positive way toward aquatic resource conservation; it will help to reduce number of destructive fishing tools and to promote the co-management model as well as the participatory approach on aquatic resources management in the project site. In the long-term, local fishing communities will continue to diversify their livelihoods and their income will be improved because of an increase in fish production in the designated areas. We also hope the project will contribute to recover the aquatic species habitats and it will lead to recover threatened species in coming time.

Fisher community in the project sites will raise capacity and awareness on aquatic protection and conservation through communication and skill trainings supported by the project. After that, they will utilize these skills to communicate for other communities in the reservoir, and help to disseminate project's outputs to wider audience and places. The two co-management groups therefore will be pilot models to replicate to other communities in Tuyen Quang and Vietnam in the future.

d. Identify and discuss (potential) conflicts with other communities and how these might be avoided

Potential risks during the projects:

- The reservoir area spreads over 3 provinces (Ha Giang, Tuyen Quang, and Bac Kan), so it is very difficult to manage people from other areas (such as from other provinces) using destructive fishing tools at the project site.

- There are various ethnic minorities living in the area surrounding the reservoir. The cultural differences among them can affect the project implementation process.

- Time conflicts among group members.

Our strategies to deal with these potential risks include:

- Closely coordinate with fishermen and local authorities. We will facilitate monitoring groups to work with the authorities, especially the district patrol group to develop relevant mechanisms so they can communicate effectively and timely in case they see outsiders using destructive tools in the monitoring areas or even in neighbouring areas. It will help them timely inform the district patrol group to assist if necessary.

- It is very important to understand cultures of ethnic minorities. But with seven years of working in this area, we have developed a good understanding of various groups' culture and traditions there. For this project we will start with small group who care and are eager to promote sustainable use of resources. The core groups are part of the communities and can develop action plan that comply with their culture. For ethnic minority groups, they have very high sense of communities and are often conform to communities' norms and regulations. So we hope once people get consensus on their regulations, they will follow them. We will work very closely with communities' heads and the core groups as well as authorities to avoid any conflicts, but if conflicts arisen these people will be the ones who help solving problems without violating cultural norms.

- In the monthly meetings, we will develop working plan for the following month with the groups members. We also contact the groups to revise/adjust time and plan before go fieldtrips if necessary.

e. Discuss on sustainability of the project

An active involvement of local authorities and communities plays an important role in success of the project. Our project is based on initiatives of active communities members and we have received support from local authorities for aquatic resources conservation and protection. The authorities expressed that community-based aquatic conservation was also one of their focuses in the coming years. They promised to provide feedbacks and comments for the regulations developed by communities groups. They also plan to allocate some staff and budget to promote this model in the future. Combination of community willingness and authorities support will help maintain and run group activities more effectively and sustainably.

In our discussions with people in Son Phu and Na Hang town, people suggested that after the project ends, they would contribute some money from their income to maintain the groups. In addition, once they are allocated an area for management, they will be able to collect fee from aquatic products traders in the area they monitor, they could maintain their activities of group using a part of that fee as well.

f. Develop a strategy for indigenous participation and consultation during project implementation, including monitoring and evaluation

We recognized the regular participation of different stakeholders such as local authorities, professional agency (i.e. Na Hang Division of Agriculture and Rural Development, Tuyen Quang Department of Fishery. Etc.), mass organizations (Fatherland Front, Youth Union, Farmers Association, among others), and especially the participation of local communities ensure effectiveness of the project activities. We will keep local communities well informed about our activities beforehand to attract their participation. The communities will be the one who develop and finalize the regulations. The monitoring groups will prepare monthly action

plans for their own group. WARECOD staff will only help facilitate at the beginning of the project and monitor as well as support in the following months.

When local communities have any feedbacks or/and wonder or/and complaint, they can contact directly with WARECOD senior and CEPF – RIT/IUCN office in Hanoi through the address and phone number we will provide to them.

ANNEXES

Pictures from meetings with local stakeholders (8-12/2014)



Meeting with Na Hang district authorities and stakeholders to discuss about co-management



In-depth interview with fishermen in Na Hang town



In-depth interview with fishermen in Son Phu commune



Meeting with SonPhu commune People's Committee and representatives of fishing groups