

CEPF FINAL PROJECT COMPLETION REPORT

Organization Legal Name:	Lao Biodiversity Association (LBA)
Project Title:	Assessing the status of northern white-cheeked crested gibbon in Phou Den Din National Protected Area and surrounds, Lao PDR
Date of Report:	31 May 2015
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CEPF Region: Indo-Burma Hotspot

Strategic Direction: 1. Safeguard priority globally threatened species by mitigating major threats

Grant Amount: 19,878 USD

Project Dates: 1st June 2014 to 31st May 2015

Implementation Partners for this Project (please explain the level of involvement for each partner):

Fauna & Flora International (FFI) provided an international consultant who trained project staff and led gibbon surveys.

Provincial and District Offices of Natural Resource and Environment (PONRE and DONRE) staff and military as implementation partners joined all project workshops, events and received trainings. They helped facilitate community meetings, interviews and discussed resolution of problems related to gibbon conservation and gibbon surveys at Phoudendin National Protected Area (PPD NPA) with communities.

Conservation Impacts

Please explain/describe how your project has contributed to the implementation of the CEPF ecosystem profile.

This project focused on a CEPF priority species, Critically Endangered *Nomascus leucogenys*, and relates to Strategic Direction 1 of the Indo-Burma Ecosystem Profile: Safeguard priority globally threatened species by mitigating major threats. The gibbon survey sites are located in a Key Biodiversity Area - Phoudendin National Protected Area (PPD NPA) in Phongsaly province. Community members actively participated in every step of the conservation design and planning process, and currently oversee the management of these protected areas with government support.

Please summarize the overall results/impact of your project.

This project has helped improve understanding of the status, threats and required conservation actions for *N. leucogenys* in PPD NPA, in Lao PDR, through village interviews and a field survey. The provincial authorities in PDD NPA still deal with the threats in a reactive way. The project supported development of the capacity of local community and governmental resources to protect *N. leucogenys*. Furthermore it improved the implementation of existing strategies identified within the PDD NPA management plan. . The survey has contributed to addressing the need for improved knowledge about the biodiversity and wildlife in PDD NPA required to improve the conservation and sustainable management of the biological resources in the area.

Planned Long-term Impacts - 3+ years (as stated in the approved proposal):

Improved understanding of the status, threats and priority conservation actions for *Nomascus leucogenys* in key sites in Laos.

Actual Progress Toward Long-term Impacts (Project goal) at Completion:

1. Actions:

- Project preparation meetings held involving planning of project activities, determining the project team, and training and preparation of staff.
- Training held for the participants of the gibbon survey by Dr. Camille Coudrat at PONRE office in Phongsaly province.
- Interviews conducted with local community members and military staff in PDD NPA.
- Field survey implemented in PDD NPA.
- Workshop held on the results of the gibbon survey involving the survey stakeholder government, military staff and villagers from local communities.
- Action plan (road map) produced.

2. Achievements from the action:

- LBA staff, PONRE, DONRE, military staff and local villagers have developed a comprehensive knowledge and understanding about the underlying reasons of the gibbon survey, and its results.
- Trainings led by Dr. Camille Coudrat have led to the development of a greater awareness of biodiversity conservation among all stakeholders.
- Framework for a future management plan determined with participation of stakeholders.
- Actions for gibbon conservation have been defined.
- Responsibilities for the proposed actions have been clarified.

Planned Short-term Impacts - 1 to 3 years (as stated in the approved proposal):

Objective 1: The capacity of LBA staff to carry out assessments of gibbon status and threats is increased.

Objective 2: Knowledge on the status of gibbons in PDD NPA and surrounding areas is increased.

Objective 3: Priorities for *Nomascus leucogenys* conservation interventions identified, and results and recommendations of the project widely disseminated.

Actual Progress Toward Short-term Impacts at Completion:

Objective 1:

- a) LBA designed the present assessment of gibbon status in collaboration with the provincial and district stakeholder PONRE, DONRE and Military
- b) LBA staff increased their knowledge about gibbon survey methods through trainings by Dr. Camille Coudrat.

Objective 2:

- a) LBA conducted a gibbon survey in PDD NPA in February 2015. Based on their preliminary interview work, the Lao Biodiversity Association (LBA) collected data on gibbon presence in the southern part of the NPA, east of Ban Lao Fushai and the military station

Objective 3:

- a) Report on the preliminary gibbon survey in PDD NPA, Phongsaly Province, Lao P.D.R. was prepared and disseminated.
- b) The report has identified intervention areas and given recommendations:
 - The results of this survey recorded a relatively good number of gibbons, and suggests that PDD NPA may still support a significant population of *N. leucogenys*. Future surveys for gibbons in the area are recommended and should be conducted by skilled surveyors, using appropriate methods.
 - Because of a lack of efficient protection strategies additional trainings in management strategies and trainings on wildlife to officials and villagers are recommended.

- Further additional wildlife surveys are recommended, which may reveal some additional populations of key species and give PDD NPA more importance for biodiversity conservation

Please provide the following information where relevant:

Hectares Protected: 5000ha is the estimated survey area, the entire NPA PDD area is 182.000ha
Species Conserved: *Nomascus leucogenys*
Corridors Created: None

Describe the success or challenges of the project toward achieving its short-term and long-term impact objectives.

Successes

1. A multi-stakeholder group of LBA, DONRE, PONRE, army staffs and Laofuchay villager attended the trainings.
2. The local community awareness about gibbons increased after the interviews.
3. The trainings increased the knowledge of all participants on gibbon surveys.
4. The Phongsaly government authorities are planning to integrate the result of the survey into the provincial conservation strategy development.
5. The results of this survey recorded a relatively good number of gibbons and suggests that PDD NPA may still support a significant population of *N. leucogenys*
6. Comparing the present with the previous report the gibbon population improved.

Challenges

1. The target area may not have been the best choice for fieldwork as, when the team arrived at the military station, villagers and military mentioned to us that gibbon population was small there. In addition, very little forest is left in this area (historical grassland habitat), as shown on the topographic map (Figure 2). Furthermore, it was mentioned to us by locals that this season (January-February) is not the best to hear gibbons and March-April may be better.
2. Because of cool temperature during the survey, the team could not hear the gibbon song every day.
3. Poaching of gibbons by the local communities is occurring. Law enforcement by the local government must be improved, alongside other interventions aimed at behavior-change of local communities.
4. Some NPA staff decided to cook the animal to eat it. This behavior from officials responsible for the protection of the area shows their great lack of knowledge concerning the Lao Wildlife Law.

Were there any unexpected impacts (positive or negative)?

1. During the survey LBA team survey found a group of two Vietnamese poachers. They were arrested by two soldiers (not from the survey team) on our last day when travelling back to the military station. Poaching was not reported previously, nor were violent conflicts between the Lao army and Vietnamese poachers. The security situation in the target area appears to have deteriorated rapidly.
2. During the transect survey, LBA team saw villagers fishing along the Nam Paho using explosives. They came to collect the dead fish. These villagers show aggressive reactions against surveyors and conservationists. They see their livelihoods endangered by strangers.
3. During the interviews the villagers were verbally “not hunting the gibbon because gibbon is the nice song and make them have a good and rich natural”, but strong cultural and ritual habits lead into ongoing poaching especially of gibbons.

Project Components

Project Components: Please report on results by project component. Reporting should reference specific products/deliverables from the approved project design and other relevant information.

Component 1 Planned:

Office and field-based training for LBA staff in gibbon survey methods and threat assessment protocols are conducted.

Component 1 Actual at Completion

1. Dr. Camille Coudrat conducted a survey training course in coordination with PONRE and DONRE at Phongsaly province.
2. The training was organized by LBA. PONRE, DONRE, army staff and Laofuchay villagers attended this training course.

Component 2 Planned:

The knowledge on the status of Gibbons in Phou Den Din NPA and surrounding areas is increased.

Component 2 Actual at Completion

1. Interview surveys with selected individuals from one village at the target sites, focusing on determining threats, trends, and spatial distribution of the gibbon population have been conducted.
2. "Knowledge, Attitude and Practice" surveys with local communities, on primates in general, to determine local understanding of primate diversity, attitudes, and assess potential conflicts have been implemented by interviews and questionnaires.
3. Field surveys to ground-truth interview survey results and to determine the distribution, population status, and threats to the resident gibbon population have been implemented.

Component 3 Planned:

Priorities for *Nomascus leucogenys* conservation interventions are identified, and results and recommendations of the project widely disseminated.

Component 3 Actual at Completion

1. The survey results have been compiled into a synthesis report that includes a clear set of realistic recommended conservation interventions for development of Phase II work at the site, and identifies priorities for *N. leucogenys* conservation in both Laos and Vietnam
2. Two workshops / inception meetings have been held with relevant government departments (NPA Management Authorities) to share information and plan future collaborative conservation activities.
3. Results and recommendations have been disseminated to the wider gibbon conservation community through reports websites.

Figure 1: Phou Dendin National Protected Area and location of camps and listening posts visited at two sites.



Were any components unrealized? If so, how has this affected the overall impact of the project?

Component 3:

The dissemination of results and recommendations to the wider gibbon conservation community is still not finalized. A scientific paper has not yet been submitted to peer-reviewed journals.

Please describe and submit (electronically if possible) any tools, products, or methodologies that resulted from this project or contributed to the results.

- a) Preliminary Gibbon survey in Phou Dendin National Protected Area, Pongsaly Province, Lao P.D.R. by Camille Coudrat
- b) Web-Story “Surveying Northern White-Cheeked Gibbon in Phoudendin National Protected Area” at <http://www.laobiodiversity.wordpress.com/>
- c) Movies and interviews with local communities recorded during the survey

Lessons Learned

Describe any lessons learned during the design and implementation of the project, as well as any related to organizational development and capacity building. Consider lessons that would inform projects designed or implemented by your organization or others, as well as lessons that might be considered by the global conservation community.

Project Design Process: (aspects of the project design that contributed to its success/shortcomings)

The multi-stakeholder design process with governmental officials led into a better understanding of the project goals and facilitated implementation of project activities in the conflict areas. After completion of the project the development of new conservation strategies will also be facilitated under this cooperation. The participatory training led to increased trust between the stakeholders which is likely to improve the future implementation of conservation activities.

Project Implementation: (aspects of the project execution that contributed to its success/shortcomings)

- a) The project success resulted partly through cooperation with government staff (PONRE, DONRE and Military) who assisted the survey team.
- b) To assess the population status in PDD NPA, it is recommended that future surveys should last for at least one month and focus in the central parts of the area, to the north and south of the Nam Khan and to the east of the Nam Va, with a departure from Ban Muang Va. This region may be more suitable to retain larger number of gibbons depending on the hunting levels they are facing there.
- c) The security situation needs serious consideration and close cooperation with the military.
- d) The villagers have to be involved more carefully into the survey processes.
- e) The selection of “champions” in the survey process must be considered more carefully to ensure that motivated staff and partners are available in the future.
- f) Travel has to be organized in advance, with any vehicles shipped to the target area, because rental fees are unexpected high.

Other lessons learned relevant to the conservation community:

The threats to gibbons in the area have increased in the past few years. The recently constructed road that goes through the NPA from the military station to the Nam Houn increases access to the area by poachers. The international road construction also passes through the NPA close to gibbon habitats near the Vietnamese border. One hydropower dam is planned near the gibbons habitat area and the development of private cattle raising enterprises in higher mountain areas are currently under survey. All of these activities are officially planned in the PDD NPA and threaten wildlife and biodiversity. Political will to enforce the NPA is needed and will emerge only with the rise of a win-win-situation between all stakeholders and, in particular, through the participation of governmental stakeholders in conservation activities.

Additional Funding

Provide details of any additional funding that supported this project and any funding secured for the project, organization, or the region, as a result of the CEPF investment in this project.

This project no cofounding from other donors.

Donor	Type of Funding*	Amount	Notes
LBA		\$1,200	All staff salaries for the project were also contributed in-kind.

***Additional funding should be reported using the following categories:**

- A** Project co-financing (Other donors or your organization contribute to the direct costs of this project)

- B** *Grantee and Partner leveraging (Other donors contribute to your organization or a partner organization as a direct result of successes with this CEPF funded project.)*
- C** *Regional/Portfolio leveraging (Other donors make large investments in a region because of CEPF investment or successes related to this project.)*

Sustainability/Replicability

Summarize the success or challenge in achieving planned sustainability or replicability of project components or results.

- a) For the sustainability of conservation activities in the project region the law enforcement efforts of the provincial government agencies should be strengthened and supported.
- b) LBA staff improved knowledge on gibbon survey to provide the implementation of future surveys in the target area.

Summarize any unplanned sustainability or replicability achieved.

None

Safeguard Policy Assessment

Provide a summary of the implementation of any required action toward the environmental and social safeguard policies within the project.

N/A

Additional Comments/Recommendations

This survey recorded a relatively good number of gibbons and suggests that PDD NPA may still support a significant population of *N. leucogenys*. To assess the population status in PDD NPA, further surveys are recommended. The next survey should last for at least one month and focus in the central parts of the area, to the north and south of the Nam Khan and to the east of the Nam Va, with a departure from Ban Muang Va. This region may be more suitable to retain larger number of gibbons depending on the hunting levels they are facing there. Once population and conservation status of *N. leucogenys* is better known and if the site is considered a priority for *N. leucogenys* conservation, a site-based action plan should be further developed with the local authorities with expert advice. Future surveys in the area should be supervised and/or conducted by skilled surveyors to use appropriate methods.

The threats in the area have increased in the past few years. There is a lack of an efficient protection strategy and, in addition to Hmong Vietnamese poachers, the military, in charge of the protection, is involved in illegal activities. There is a great need for PoNRE, DoNRE and the military staff and villagers to receive training on the Wildlife & Aquatic Laws of the Government of Lao PDR and management strategy of PDD NPA.

Due to the limited number of wildlife surveys that have been conduct in PDD NPA, further surveys that cover the NPA are recommended, which may reveal some additional populations of key species and increase the recognized importance of PDD NPA for biodiversity conservation. This would increase appeal of funding conservation activities in PDD NPA to potential donors.

National policies, laws and regulations provide a supportive framework for the protection of forests and biodiversity. However, inconsistencies exist, especially with regard to the regulation of land tenure and concessions, incomplete land use planning and land demarcation. Today there is no existing approved digital land cover map of PDD NPA and authorities (MaF, MoNRE) are not able to clarify its responsibilities to approve actual maps. The project results should

be used as fundamental research information to facilitate further political discussions and improved planning on national and provincial level.

Information Sharing and CEPF Policy

CEPF is committed to transparent operations and to helping civil society groups share experiences, lessons learned, and results. Final project completion reports are made available on our Web site, www.cepf.net, and publicized in our newsletter and other communications.

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Performance Tracking Report Addendum

CEPF Global Targets

(Enter Grant Term)

Provide a numerical amount and brief description of the results achieved by your grant.
Please respond to only those questions that are relevant to your project.

Project Results	Is this question relevant?	If yes, provide your numerical response for results achieved during the annual period.	Provide your numerical response for project from inception of CEPF support to date.	Describe the principal results achieved during the grant term (Attach annexes if necessary)
1. Did your project strengthen management of a protected area guided by a sustainable management plan? Please indicate number of hectares improved.	yes	5,000 ha		Phoudendin National Protected Area
2. How many hectares of new and/or expanded protected areas did your project help establish through a legal declaration or community agreement?	No	0	0	Please also include name of the protected area. If more than one, please include the number of hectares strengthened for each one.
3. Did your project strengthen biodiversity conservation and/or natural resources management inside a key biodiversity area identified in the CEPF ecosystem profile? If so, please indicate how many hectares.	No	0	0	
4. Did your project effectively introduce or strengthen biodiversity conservation in management practices outside protected areas? If so, please indicate how many hectares.	No	0	0	
5. If your project promotes the sustainable use of natural resources, how many local communities accrued tangible socioeconomic benefits? Please complete Table 1 below.	No	0	0	

If you answered yes to question 5, please complete the following table

Annex Pictures of project implementation.



Meeting and interviewing villagers



Gibbon survey team



(Nicole Duplaix of the Otter Specialist Group)



(Black giant squirrel (*Ratufa bicolor*) hunted by Vietnamese porchers)