

## **Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund - Process Framework**

Project Title: Promoting the conservation of Eld's deer in Chatthin Wildlife Sanctuary through core zone management and community participation

Organization: Friends of Wildlife

### **A. Project background**

Eld's deer (*Rucervus eldii thamin*) is listed as globally endangered by the IUCN Red List. Chatthin Wildlife Sanctuary (CWS), located in the northern part of the central dry zone of Myanmar, is recognized by the IUCN Deer Specialist Group as the most important global site for conservation of this species. CWS is also listed as an Important Bird Area, a Key Biodiversity Area, and is within an important conservation corridor in Myanmar.

In terms of patrolling, surveying for deer, protection policy, development of staff capacity, law enforcement, and community relations and participation, CWS has performed relatively poorly in recent years. In correlation with these issues, we have noticed 4 disturbing trends: 1) the deer population has declined in density from 7.12 deer per sq. km in 2009 to 3.8 deer per sq. km in 2013, 2) new encroachment by villagers has occurred in the park, 3) rates of illegal logging have increased, and 4) the motivation of CWS field staff has declined. The most severe deforestation inside CWS has occurred within 1 km of the sanctuary boundary, close to 2 villages - Singaung and Sathchaung (our project sites, located within CWS). Of the resources used by local people, the collection of fuel-wood represents the most serious threat to the forest and deer. As forests decline in the buffer zone and beyond, CWS has become a forest island surrounded by agriculture, a water reservoir, and a number of human settlements. This situation raises serious concern for the future of CWS and the population of Eld's deer it currently contains.

Based on the resource use practices of local people, CWS has been divided by the park administration into three zones: core zone, development/visitor zone, and community use zone. The core zone is the best habitat for Eld's deer, and is a very important area for conservation of this species. However, it is difficult to ensure that local people respect the zoning system. Even within the core zone, conflict occurs between CWS staff and local people every year. This project will support the management of the sanctuary's core zone, and implement conservation activities in two local communities.

### **B. Social and threat analysis**

Of 28 villages, with about 32,000 people, located in and around CWS, three are located within the development zone of CWS. These villages contain 271 families of Burmese ethnicity (1,625 people). Local people rely on agriculture, fishing, NTFP collection and timber extraction in and outside of CWS and its buffer zone. The project will mainly focus on two villages within CWS who depends on natural resources of CWS. This work will likely result in only very limited threats to local people. The following summarizes these threats and outlines mitigation measures which will be carried out as part of project implementation.

1. FOW staff working closely with local people behave inappropriately.  
One of the strengths of FOW is in its good relationships with multiple actors at this project site. This is a result of the fact that FOW staff have been based in the area for many years. FOW staff who will implement the action were formerly CWS staff (former warden, retired range officer and ranger). As a result they have a full understanding of the current situation, problems and key issues, enjoy excellent relations with local people, and are trusted by local community groups. They already know the local people especially from two targeted villages very well, and are not likely to behave inappropriately. FOW staff working with communities will also be required to sign a code of conduct.
2. Reduced access to natural resources.  
Improved law enforcement in the core zone will result in local people having reduced access to natural resources. However, local people are permitted to use NTFP from the development zone, and extraction of resources from the core zone is illegal. In addition, this project includes a community forestry element, aimed at improving the

sustainability of resource use by these communities, and therefore reduced threats to the deer and the CWS core zone.

3. Inequitable participation

FOW recognizes that all members of local community are involved in resource use and collection. Participation in design will include all levels of community membership (in particular women and lower income groups within a village) and will be designed to build upon local decision-making structures.

4. Dependency on external support.

Participation and capacity building will be key to every step of project planning and implementation ensuring that decisions are made by the communities themselves and are based on strong principles of sustainability and environmental management. External support will be in the form of capacity building and will be based on needs identified by the communities themselves.

### **C. Plans for participatory implementation**

FOW has been working in and around Chatthin Wildlife Sanctuary since 2007. Resource use assessments and participatory land use mapping has been carried out in eleven villages surrounding CWS. These processes ensured that land tenure issues (including the use of natural resources by different communities) were taken into account during the establishment of the Community Forest Areas in 2010.

The main approach of this project is one of collaboration between CWS staff and local people in the management of CWS's core zone, and in establishing Community Forests.

Key approaches and methods are:

1. Working with local civil society organizations (Village councils, Village Conservation and Development Committees) to increase their capacity to implement projects, to improve management of natural resources, and to increase environmental awareness in the community;
2. Improving communication and coordination between stakeholders (local communities, local civil society, CWS staff and management, and township authorities);
3. Promoting systematic protected area management through a focus on the core zone, therefore reducing pressure on forest resources and the deer;
4. Implementing a program of sustainable forestry, to cater to the resource needs of local people without exploiting those of CWS; and
5. Awareness-raising among local people on issues of sustainable natural resource management and environmental protection.

All this will be achieved through building on already-established relationships between FOW and local partners, and making extensive use of lessons learned through several years of similar work in the area by FOW staff.

This project has four expected results.

1. Protection of Eld's deer population
2. Increase in technical, operational, and management capacity of CWS staff and local communities.
3. Increase awareness of environmental conservation among local people
4. Adoption of a sustainable forestry program to reduce dependency on park resources

Major activities will be:

1. Patrolling and sighting records

2. Core zone management
3. Deer census Surveys
4. Initial stakeholder meetings and community engagement
5. Establishing Village Conservation and Development Committees (VDCs)
6. Household evaluation surveys
7. Trainings on civil society development, field data collection and CF
8. Environmental education and awareness
9. Establishment of Community Forests (CF)

**D. How will groups eligible for assistance/vulnerable groups be identified**

No vulnerable groups are considered eligible for mitigation/compensation measures as no involuntary restrictions will be placed on activities which are not clearly illegal, unsustainable and destructive.

**E. Measures to mitigate impacts and assist affected groups**

No affected persons are considered eligible for mitigation/compensation measures as no involuntary restrictions will be placed on activities which are not clearly illegal, unsustainable and destructive. Thus, no further consultations are necessary under agreed with CEPF, and no Plan of Action is necessary.

**F. Monitoring of safeguard issues**

Monitoring to avoid adverse impacts will be taken continuously throughout the project period. Project staff will regularly visit the communities in order to monitor the project. We will also contact the committees and local authority regularly. Villagers can complain about the problems directly to their committees. Workshop or network meeting is a tool to monitor and evaluate the project. Information about safeguard implementation will be included in the periodic progress reports to the RIT.

**G. Grievance mechanism**

There are various mechanisms by which the villagers or other participants may complain about the project. The two village headmen, two VDCCs, and CWS staff are the executing mechanisms for the conflict resolution and complaint. Community's members can complain about the problems directly to the committees.

We will also provide a channel for them to communicate with project staff and the CEPF RIT in Yangon (Myanmar Environment Rehabilitation-conservation Network). In the beginning of the project, we will inform the targeted community about their rights to complain and not to participate in the project if they are not satisfied. We will inform them that they can contact the project staff or MERN directly, or via a headman, committee, or local authority. We will give them phone number, and mailing address. In the meeting or workshop, we will make sure that every participant has a chance to express their opinion. And we will make sure that they can express freely.