

Center for Water Resources Conservation and Development (WARECOD)
Social Assessment: “Impacts of Khau Ca Species and Habitat Conservation Area
Establishment on the Livelihoods of Local People”.

Background:

Phia Deng village, Minh Son commune, Bac Me district, Ha Giang province is located in the buffer zone of Khau Ca Species and Habitat Conservation Area (SHCA). Agricultural production is the main livelihood of the local people, particularly rice farming (one crop per year), maize, cassava, and livestock breeding (buffalo, poultry). Production is mainly for household subsistence.

In this village, there is neither a school nor a culture/common house, and the road system consists solely of narrow dirt roads. This makes it very difficult to access the village in poor weather.

Indigenous Peoples in the Project Area:

The people living in Phia Deng village are of Dao ethnicity. There were six households before 1979, and currently there are 15 households with a total of 70 people (37 men and 33 women). All houses in the village are located close to each other.

Expected Project Impacts on the Community:

The project will use Thaibaan research methods, which promote active participation and engagement of the villagers. They will be the main researchers, and will use their knowledge to document changes in local livelihoods before and after the establishment the Khau Ca Species and Habitat Conservation Area. Potential impacts on local people include:

- Information about the research method will be transferred through skill-building games. People will learn different skills when working with the project staff. Such skills include team-work, questioning, listening, presenting, and communication, and may be useful for their daily life.
- We will encourage the local researchers to actively participate in capacity-building and research activities. Once they become confident to voice their opinions, they will be able to effectively participate in the project, and hopefully other activities outside the project and in the future.
- Local people will document their traditional ways of living, and discuss what should be changed and what can be maintained. They may come to a consensus that they will have to stop some of the activities that are harmful to the environment (such as hunting), which may lead to a reduction in their income.
- Their awareness and knowledge about biodiversity conservation will be enhanced through the research.
- The time of local researchers will be affected if they are involved in research implementation, as they will have to spend some time working on the project.

Free, Prior and Informed Consent:

In selecting the location and design of the project, we consulted with villagers, local authorities and forest rangers, to ensure that our project will not negatively affect people's livelihoods nor cause any adverse impacts on the community. The whole community is aware of the project's planned activities.

Measures to Avoid Adverse Impacts and Provide Culturally Appropriate Benefits:

Our strategies to deal with potential adverse impacts on local people include:

- In the monthly meetings, we will develop a working plan for the following month with the group members. We will also contact the groups to revise/adjust times and plans before visiting them, if necessary. We will avoid their busy cropping time. In addition, we will compensate the time they spend to work with us.
- As Phia Deng is a very small village, we expect to be able to include representatives of all families in the village, in our Thaibaan research team. This should prevent there being any resentment between families over who receives compensation following their involvement in the project.

- If their income will be affected because they come to an agreement to stop some of their activities that have a negative impact on the environment, we will work with them in exploring other opportunities for more sustainable livelihoods.
- Information regarding local livelihood practices (potentially including illegal activities) will be considered confidential. It will not be shared without the express permission of the family. In cases where people are undertaking illegal activities, this will not be shared with local authorities. Instead, we will work with them, discuss the pros and cons of this behavior, and encourage them to reconsider their behavior.
- To conduct our research, the first thing that we will do is to learn about the history of the village and local culture and customs, in order to make sure villagers feel comfortable when working with our team. Even though we have been working in the region for a long time, this particular village is a new site for us. As a result, we need to learn more about their working schedules, their customs including local festivals and beliefs, and their ways of living. That's why learning more about the villagers' lives will be our first priority. We will adjust our plan/schedule based on the actual situation.
- All WARECOD field staff are required to sign a Code of Conduct that describes how they should behave, particularly when working with ethnic minority communities.

How These Measures Will be Monitored:

We will make a plan with the local researchers in advance, in order to identify what they will do during each month. Our project team will live with them when in the field, to make best use of time, learn more from them, and help them feel more comfortable participating in this project. Project staff will prepare monthly reports on progress and issues arising, and propose relevant solutions if needed.

Meeting notes of monthly group meetings will be available to everyone involved, so that people can refer to them when necessary.

Representatives of WARECOD's Board of Directors will visit the site on a quarterly basis, to ensure that project activities are on track, and any issues (including adverse impacts on local people) are addressed accordingly.

Grievance Mechanism:

We recognize that the regular participation of different stakeholders such as local authorities, professional agencies (i.e. Bac Me Division of Forestry, Division of Agriculture and Rural Development), mass organizations (including the Fatherland Front, Youth Union, and Farmers Association), and especially local communities is essential to ensure effectiveness of the project activities. We will keep local communities well informed about our activities beforehand, to attract their participation. The local research group will decide which topics should be focused on. WARECOD staff will only help facilitate the process and finalize the report after we receive consensus from the villagers.

So that local community members can ask questions or provide feedback to WARECOD, or make a complaint about the work of WARECOD, we will provide them with the contact details (including mobile phone numbers) of WARECOD's senior staff in Hanoi, and the IUCN CEPF National Coordinator in Hanoi.