

Cambodian Organization For Women Support (COWS)
Ecosystem and Biodiversity Conservation Management
Process Framework

Project Background

Kampong Thom Province is located in the Tonle Sap region of Cambodia, where most poor families rely on fisheries resources for their livelihoods. According to the Kampong Thom Fisheries Cantonment, there are five Community Fisheries (CFIs) in Kampong Thom Province, which were established by the Fisheries Administration with support from the Tonle Sap Environmental Management Project (TSEMP) 2005-2008. After the TSEMP project ended, CFI Committees and members have faced significant challenges in continuing to manage fisheries resources without support (financial and technical) from fisheries staff. In 2012, the Royal Government of Cambodia implemented a reform of the fisheries sector, which put Fishing Lot Number 7 (Baray District) and Fishing Lot Number 1 (Kampong Svay District) under CFI management. This increased the responsibilities of CFI Committee members, without an increase in their resources or support.

In order to obtain more in-depth information, COWS conducted a participatory assessment in target villages. This covered topics of governance, agriculture, food security, health, education, and resources management. The survey found that the main challenges faced by CFI members were:

- land conversion (large areas of flooded forest have been cleared for farmland, and construction of irrigation systems for dry season rice), causing loss of wildlife;
- illegal fishing;
- weak management by government officers;
- food insecurity due to lack of agricultural techniques, and no irrigation system;
- the impacts of climate change;
- difficulties in accessing healthcare facilities, and poor hygiene and sanitation.

We will work with CFIs in eight villages located in Baray Commune, Baray District, Kampong Thom Province to strengthen their capacity to protect, manage and sustainably use fisheries resources, in order to improve ecosystem services, community livelihoods, and food security. The project's direct beneficiaries will be 1,888 households, totaling 9,862 people. In addition, 1,322 households will be indirect beneficiaries of the project.

Social and threat analysis

The eight villages located in the project target area rely on agriculture, and fishing in the buffer zone. They are dependent on natural resources. We anticipate that this work will result in only very limited threats to local people. The following summarizes potential threats, and outlines mitigation measures which will be carried out as part of project implementation.

- *COWS staff working closely with local people could behave inappropriately.*
One of the strengths of COWS is its good relationships with multiple actors at this project site. This is a result of the fact that COWS staff have been working in the area for ten years. The COWS staff who will implement this project already work in close coordination with local beneficiaries and stakeholders. As a result, they already 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 the target villages very well, and are not likely to behave inappropriately. COWS staff working with communities will also be required to sign a code of conduct that describes appropriate and inappropriate behavior.

- *Improved law enforcement and structure management in the target village will result in local people having reduced access to natural resources.*

This project has a focus on community fisheries, aimed at improving the sustainability of natural resources management, and protection of wildlife. COWS recognize that all members of the local community are involved in natural resources management. All elements of the community (in particular women, and lower income groups within a village) will be involved in project design and implementation, in order to ensure that potential negative impacts are mitigated successfully. In addition, project activities will be designed in a manner that builds upon established local decision-making structures.

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 livelihoods, 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.

Plans for participatory implementation

The roles and responsibilities of key actors are clear, and are assigned based on assessment of their institutional capacity and strengths. COWS will take the lead organising lobbying of commune councils and coordinating policy and field-level support with FiA, to ensure that the activity implementation, outreach, networking and communications proceed effectively and efficiently.

COWS will focus on the CFi capacity building-components of the project and draw on its local experience to facilitate training activities to build the technical and administrative capacity of the CFi. The CFi will receive support from COWS to implement activities, including participating in the initial situation analysis and baseline survey, building consensus on fish conservation establishment and management plans, receiving capacity-building training, establishing, managing and monitoring FCI, networking with other CFi, and engaging with the commune councils.

The FiA is mandated to provide oversight to the fisheries and aquaculture sectors. This remit includes administration of Community Fisheries. This project will actively engage the commune and district-level FiA in relevant activities. These include FCI design and demarcation, baseline and end of project fish assessments, CFi management and monitoring, law enforcement, and public outreach on national fisheries management rules and regulations. According to the 1996 Fisheries Law, CFi can stop illegal activities and report offenders to the FiA but have no right to bring offenders to court. This needs to be done by the FiA's judicial police.

COWS will also work with other local authorities (Provincial Environmental of Department, Fisheries Administration Cantonment, commune councils, community fisheries committees and 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.

How groups eligible for assistance and vulnerable groups will be identified

The project will work closely with CFi committee members, local authority and related technical departments and other CSO who are working in the same target areas to implement all project activities within the project timeframe. Particularly vulnerable groups within the community will be identified through the use of village data, and data from the provincial department of planning. Their needs will be identified through consultation with community leaders, and relevant local authorities. This process will be facilitated by the fact that COWS has much experience working with these stakeholders, and on these issues.

Planned measures to mitigate impacts and assist affected groups

Poor fishermen, women and other vulnerable groups will be encouraged to participate in implementation and join monitoring of all project activities. Although the establishment of fish conservation areas will reduce the access that some of these groups have to fishing grounds, at certain times of year, the resulting increase in natural fish stock will mean that the overall impact on their livelihoods will be positive.

In addition, although preventing people from using illegal fishing techniques may have a short-term impact on some individuals with regard to fish catches, the medium and long-term result will be a significant increase in fish catches for all community members. This project will cooperate with the Fisheries Cantonments and other local authorities, to provide technical support to CFI and to integrate CFI management plans into Commune Development and Commune Investment Programmes (CDP/CIP), to ensure that Fisheries Cantonments and Commune Council members will be provided their support during the project implementation as well as after the project completion. The CFI Management Plan will include different zones (core zone, buffer zone, and community development zone). It will be disseminated widely to all CFI members and fishermen from outside to inform them about how each zone can be used. It will also include a list of all contributions from CFI members (however small or large). Lesson learned and good practices will be shared among communities and policy makers.

Monitoring safeguard issues

COWS will be responsible for monitoring the project outputs (e.g., successfully established fisheries conservation area, meetings held with commune councils) and outcomes (e.g., changes in behavior). The project provides a monitoring plan for tracking the progress of project implementation is based on overall objectives, outputs and impacts. COWS has its own M&E system for timely and accurate reporting. In addition to that, we will:

- Regularly review the project work plan against actual result to-date
- Up-date project issues and risks, and inform donors and partners if there are any serious issues which could affect project implementation.
- Implement internal Participatory M&E, and share the findings among project staff and stakeholders, if needed

Monitoring of safeguards issues (as described here) will be included as an important part of overall project monitoring. COWS recognizes the importance of independent evaluation to measure project outcomes/outputs and assess the contribution of the interventions toward achieving the desired project goal and objectives. Lessons learned and documented best practices will also be included in the Final project evaluation.

Grievance mechanism

COWS will be responsible for overall project management, including close collaboration with the Fisheries cantonment, commune council members, CFI committee members, and other stakeholders. The major decisions will be taken in consultation between the COWS management team, the COWS technical Department, and local authorities. In most cases, representatives of vulnerable groups will also be consulted.

COWS will organize a dissemination meeting at the start of the project in order to inform the community about the project, improve their understanding about the planned work, and receive feedback from them. At this meeting we will also explain to them that if they have any issues about the project that they want to discuss with COWS, they should contact Mr. Sang Sokny, COWS project staff, using the following contact details:

Address: #26, Domrey Chornkla Street, Timuoy Village, Sangkat Kampong Thom, Stung Sen City, Kampong Thom Province;

Email: sokny@cowscambodia.org;

Tel: (+855)98 65 65 20.

If they have any problems with COWS, and would prefer to speak to the CEPF RIT, they should contact Mr. Lou Vanny in Phnom Penh. We will provide them with Vanny's mobile phone number and email address. During implementation of the project, we will make sure that all communities have access to this information by distributing it at regular meetings, and producing and distributing leaflets and information sheets.