

Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund Process Framework for Involuntary Restrictions and Social Assessment

Project Title: Strengthening of community-based and led François' Langur species and habitat conservation initiatives in northern Vietnam.

Organization: People Resources and Conservation Foundation (PRCF)

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I. Process Framework for Involuntary Restrictions

1. Project background

The Lam Binh Watershed Protection Forest represents a critical remnant of a karst limestone forest that once covered most of northern Vietnam and southern China. The watershed area is located within the Gam River Dam catchment and forms part of approximately 250,000 ha expanse of forest located outside of Vietnam's network of protected areas. The area is within a conservation landscape commonly referred to as the 'Ba Be / Na Hang Limestone Forest Complex'. The region holds high global biodiversity significance, particularly of primate species and a wide variety of other endemic taxa.

The watershed is located in Lam Binh district, Tuyen Quang province; one of Vietnam's poorest mountainous provinces. There are 26 communities of Tay and Dao ethnic minorities with about 1,500 households living in close proximity to the forest. Nine of these villages, adjacent to the watershed, are the focus of PRCF previous and ongoing work. See Table 1 for village names and a general description of ethnicity, population, literacy, and economic standing.

The Lam Binh forest area has also been the center of PRCF conservation initiatives, and supported through several institutional and private donors. This has included grants from the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund, IUCN Save Our Species Fund, and The McKnight Foundation. All grant interventions have supported components of the PRCF Biodiversity and Livelihoods program at Lam Binh, which targets community-based and led conservation of the endangered François' Langur.

In 2012, PRCF began initiatives focusing on engaging local communities in collaborative management of the watershed forest and habitat to Vietnam's last known viable population of the globally endangered François' Langur. Through PRCF work, local communities are gaining better options to negotiate their position in decision-making processes related to natural resources management and to participate in biodiversity conservation management.

Present PRCF program activities at the site seek to achieve a localized modality on payment for forestry environmental services--PFES, linked to community-led conservation of high value forests home to the François' Langur. Previous work by PRCF has established nine village management committees who will be supported to carry out management responsibilities and benefits brought from links between conservation and development in the watershed.

Presently, PRCF is helping to establish a community based organization—CBO to coordinate local involvement in management of the local forests, and to help distribute funds proceeding from payment for forest environmental services—PFES (sourcing from the nearby hydroelectric dam) for conservation and development purposes. Funds proceeding from payment for forest environmental services are proposed to help finance conservation management of the endangered langur and its sustaining habitat in Lam Binh, particularly through the proposed Community-based Francois' Langur Conservation Area.

Building on past and present work, and on current momentum, the proposed project herein will benefit conservation of the last viable Vietnamese population of François' Langur, and proposed community conservation initiatives through the operation of already established 'village management committees', and 'community based organization', and the sought 'Community-based François' Langur Conservation Area'. The project will promote a community-based conservation model at Lam Binh, establishing a successful precedent and providing opportunities for exchange of experiences and relevant information through the Vietnam National Parks and Protected Areas Association.

2. Social and threat analyses

The main land use in the Lam Binh landscape is subsistence cultivation of rice and maize, supplemented with cassava and a variety of vegetable and fruit species (e.g. sweet potato, peanut, banana, papaya, jackfruit, sugarcane, citrus fruits, mango, taro, plum). Agricultural activity in the site is limited to several relatively small and discrete areas, in which valleys are used seasonally by local communities that live outside the southern borders of the proposed conservation area for rice, maize, and cassava production and livestock grazing, to supplement production in nearby village lands. The principle forest resources used in the Lam Binh landscape are timber (for house construction and fuelwood for cooking human foods and livestock feed) and wildlife.

The project herein proposes to retain the access and use of Lam Bin resources by local communities, although protection measures will fall on particular karst forest areas key to the survival of François' Langur at the site. The main source of livelihoods at the site is agriculture and limited plantation forestry, none of which will be impaired through establishment of the community-managed protected area. The proposal does not include a community development component, given the low available budget and given that complementary community development work is presently funded by other donors to PRCF for work at the site. Complementary measures in the program (funded by other donors) include village self-help groups with revolving funds, establishment of a community-based organization facilitate channeling of monies from the forest protection and development funds, agricultural modeling and intensification, and forestry development in areas outside the proposed conservation area.

Although the project proposes to increase the hearsay and decision-making power of local communities into management of biodiversity and natural resources in the Lab Binh landscape, particularly areas holding critical habitat to the endangered François' Langur, several resource-use restrictions will occur. These are of two types: (i) Restrictions that relate to voluntary illegal, un-sustainable, and destructive activities, and (ii) Restrictions that are involuntary in nature and relate to non-damaging access to resources.

Restrictions to damaging activities

Through establishment of a conservation area, although managed by local communities, the project will result in the strengthening of measures that will restrict access to watershed forest

areas for wildlife hunting and trapping, timber logging, and unsustainable harvest of non-timber forest products. In effect, these activities are already prohibited by law, given that the site is a watershed protection area, and that some of the species within, such as the flagship Francois Langur, are protected by Vietnamese law.

Restrictions to non-damaging activities

The proposed protected area mainly comprises karst forest areas offering little forest resources to the neighboring villages, but nevertheless some non-damaging extractions do take place, particularly for non-timber forest products and some animal species that are not strictly protected by Vietnamese law. By establishing the protected area, although to be managed by local communities, access to some of these forest products will be restricted.

The project will measure the impact of both type of restrictions upon the local community, by establishing a baseline on present 'legal' and 'illegal' benefits from the Lam Binh forest, and measuring changes on a six months' basis. Further, a grievance box will be placed at each of the nine village centers to receive any villager complaints, concerns, or issues regarding the imposed restrictions. These will be collated and presented in the annual participatory social monitoring workshop to review the situation and see about solutions, and to assess compliance to CEPF social safeguard policies. Grievance notes and process results will be reported to CEPF on a six month basis.

3. Plans for participatory implementation

Since the beginning of the program community-based conservation program at the Lam Binh site, all activities have been carried out through involvement of local communities. Indeed, local communities pretty much carry out implementation, with project staff facilitating and providing technical advice and direction.

For the project herein, regular meetings with local leaders will update on the status of activities, prompting their further involvement as needed. Further, a six month social impact workshop will be carried out to examine any impacts from the project, and discuss remedial action.

4. How groups eligible for assistance and vulnerable groups will be identified

A baseline assessment of the community, including a guided random survey of representative households in the nine villagers, and a socioeconomic questionnaire to village leaders and elders will help identify those households most dependent on forest resources to be restricted.

On the basis of initial survey results, a more in-depth socioeconomic survey of these most vulnerable households will be conducted to establish a baseline and to measure the impact of restrictions upon these households, measuring changes on a six months' basis.

5. Planned measures to mitigate impacts and assist affected groups

The proposed community-based conservation area will retain access by local communities to local forests, except for those critical to the endangered Francois Langur. Further, ongoing projects (funded by other donors) within the program are promoting sustainable agriculture and forest activities, and establishing village self-help groups fitted with savings and loans schemes, to benefit the entire community.

6. Mechanism to monitor safeguard issues

Monitoring of social safeguard issues will be included in regular field visits to the project site, and through monthly reporting by project field staff, including a summary of issues brought forth by the local communities through grievance boxes placed at each village center, and monthly village meetings and consultations by project staff, taking place to listen and annotate the concerns of villagers who may have limited literacy or understanding of Vietnamese Language.

Further to the above, the project will produce a series of posters explaining the project goals and objectives and providing direct contact details with project headquarters, and PanNature, and CEPF as needed. Posters will be produced in both Kinh and major local languages to ensure all villagers in the Lam Binh landscape will understand. These will also be presented and explained periodically during village meetings and consultations to ensure understanding by Dao stakeholders.

Participatory discussions on social safeguard issues will take place regularly, resulting in a six-month safeguard monitoring report submitted to CEPF. Further, on an annual basis, the project will conduct a participatory social monitoring workshop to assess project compliance to SEPF social safeguard policies.

Any grievance surfacing or raised from the above communications will be communicated to CEPF directly within 15 days, together with a participatory plan for remedial action.

II Social Assessment

1. Indigenous Peoples in the project area

Most villages are located near the southern and northern borders of the proposed François' Langur Community-based Conservation Area, and comprise two ethnic minorities: Tay and Dao, with no present households of the Kinh majority.

The nine target villages in the Lam Binh area hold a population of 2,986 (644 households), 1781 people (373 households) in five villages of Thuong Lam commune, and 1205 (271 households) people in the four villages of Khuong Ha commune). The great majority of the population is Tay, with only two villages presenting Dao households; Na Rao with 100% of the population being Dao, and Coc Phat with only 2% Dao households and the rest Tay.

The majority of village households practice rice paddy cultivation—mostly on a single year rotation, mixed with livestock breeding, fishing, and collection of forest resources, including medicinal plants, nuts, fruits, mushrooms, bamboo shoots, hunting. Na Tong village households are also involved in home0stay services and small business, given the proximity of the village to the main road and other services.

Except for Na Rao, which is inhabited by 100% Dao people and holds approximately 45% literacy, and Coc Phat, holding little more than 60% literacy, at least 80% of other villages hold are able to read and write Kinh language (Vietnamese). In terms of poverty, all villages hold poor households, ranging from about 30% poor households in CocPhat village, to about 10% in Na Rao village (refer to Table 1).

Tay ethnic minority

Tay are the largest ethnic minority group in Vietnam. The Tay are the earliest known minority in Vietnam, who are thought to have arrived from inland South East Asia about 500 BC. Tay language belongs to the Tay – Thai language group. Their alphabet is based on the Latin alphabet devised in 1960, similar to the Viet alphabet. The Tay worship ancestors, the house spirit, kitchen spirit and the midwife.

The Tay are farmers who have a tradition of wet rice cultivation, and a long long history of intensive cultivation and irrigation methods like digging irrigation canals. They also maintain the custom of harvesting the rice and thrashing the grains out on wooden racks, while still in the fields, then carrying the threshed rice home in baskets. In addition to cultivating wet fields, the Tay also plant rice on terraced fields along with the other crops and fruit trees. Cattle and poultry raising are well-developed, but a free range style of animal husbandry is still popular. The market is also an important economic activity.

The Tay social system used to resemble a feudal society. One man in each village owned the land, forest and rivers. He ruled over the people living on that land. Tay now live in villages of mixed ethnic groups, enter into mixed marriages and leave their traditional settlements to work in other areas. They have adopted other elements of Kinh culture, are therefore considered the most integrated into main stream Vietnamese culture.

In the Lam Binh area, Tay are the dominant ethnic minority, and they live near paddy-rice lands, with no Tay family living on the mountain areas. They access forests for collecting medicinal plants, hunting, and harvesting of timber particularly for home construction and reconstruction purposes.

Dao ethnic minority

The Dao are the ninth largest ethnic group in Vietnam. They belong to the H'mong Dao language group and are believed to have started migrating as very small groups from China in the 13th century. The Dao writing is based on Chinese characters adjusted to accommodate their own spelling. The Red Dao men play a dominant role in the family, community and the economy. They also play a major role in ceremonies such as marriages, funerals, and building new houses. The Dao people have many different family names. Each lineage has its own system of different middle names to distinguish people of different generations.

Dao households subsist on terraced rice fields and also adopt fairly advanced methods of wet rice cultivation. They have switched from their former nomadic way of life, to that of sedentary farming. The Dao mainly live from rice cultivation either on burnt-over land and in submerged fields. They also grow subsidiary crops. They still use rudimentary farm tools but apply many progressive techniques in cultivation. Sideline occupations are developed including weaving, carpentry, black smiting, paper-making and vegetable oil-pressure. Relationships among members of the same lineage are always very close and the Dao can definite people of the same lineage by their middleman's and his or her position in that lineage.

The Dao social structure is based on the family unit, with men heads of household ruling the family and acting as village leaders. As other ethnic minorities living within larger ethnic groups, the gradually adopt elements of these larger groups, which in the case of the Lam Binh area would be Tay cultural elements. In the Lam Binh area, Dao are a real minority groups, living in the most mountainous areas, accessing forests to collect medicinal plants, hunt, and harvest of timber products as needed for home construction and reparations.

Table 1. Village socioeconomic information

Village	Ethnic	Households (HHs)	Population	Self-help Group Households	Livelihood sources	Literacy	Poor ratio
<i>Thuong Lam commune</i>							
Coc Phat	Dao = 98% Tay = 2%	39	230	16	Paddy rice, livestock breeding, forest resources, fishing	>60% Write and read in VN	14/ 49 = 29.0%
Khau Dao	Tay = 100%	26	117	8	Paddy rice, livestock breeding, forest resources	80% Write and read in VN	5/ 26 = 19.0%
Na Lau	Tay = 100%	107	460	Not yet	Paddy rice, livestock breeding, forest resources	> 80% Write and read in VN	24/ 107 = 22.4%
Na Thuon	Tay = 100%	84	418	Not yet	Paddy rice, livestock breeding, forest resources, fishing	>85% Write and read in VN	8/84 = 9.5%
Na Tong	Tay = 100%	117	556	12	Paddy rice, fishing, livestock breeding, forest resources, home-stay service, small business, fishing	>95 Write and read in VN	31/ 117 = 26.5%
Totals:		373	1781				
<i>Khuon Ha commune</i>							
Na Kem	Tay = 100%	82	358	14	Paddy rice; livestock breeding, forest resources, fishing	>85% Write and read in VN	20/ 82 = 24.3%
Na Muong	Tay = 100%	84	364	13	Paddy rice, livestock breeding, forest resources, fishing	>85% Write and read in VN	19/ 84 = 20.2%
Na Vang	Tay = 100%	64	284	15	Paddy rice, livestock breeding, forest resources, fishing	>85% Write and read in VN	16/ 64 = 25.0%
Na Rao	Dao = 100%	41	199	8	Paddy rice, livestock breeding, forest resources, fishing	~ 45% Write and read in VN	4/ 41 = 9.7%
Totals:		271	1205				

2. Expected project impacts (both positive and negative)

Other than the potentially negative impact brought in from restriction to legal and illegal harvests, the project is expected to bring positive impact to the local communities, by legitimizing their conservation management initiative at the Lam Binh forest. Through the project and its proposed results, villages in the Lam Binh landscape will be able to manage the protected area and its resources, inclusive of its proposed buffer areas for multiple-use. These areas will therefore be protected under the proposed jurisdiction of local communities and therefore deter outsiders from hunting and logging within them.

The program to which this project is a component, is in process of setting up a community based organization to channel funds from payment for forest environmental services to the community and for forest protection. Further, the sole initiative of a first community-managed conservation area in Vietnam will surely attract additional support in terms of socioeconomic development for the stakeholder villages.

3. Describe how free, prior and informed consultations have been carried out with affected communities during project design

Although project design had already been discussed on numerous occasions with village leaders and members of the community, the project proponent (PRCF), in liaison with the Tuyen Quang Forest Protection Department conducted a planning workshop with local community representatives in which all aspects of the project were once again presented for any comments or suggestions before submission to the donor. This workshop was conducted at Tuong Lam on 11 and 12 January 2016, with representatives from the nine stakeholder villages (mainly village leaders), Tuyen Quang Forest Protection Department, Lam Binh Forest Protection Office, Tuong Lam and Khuonh Ha commune peoples committees, and PRCF staff. The workshop was carried out in Vietnamese languages, as all participants understood Vietnamese. There was no written document on consent to the project, but a general no objection and endorsement by the participants.

4. Outline measures to avoid adverse impacts and culturally appropriate benefits

- Periodical village meetings and consultations to learn about emerging socioeconomic issues or otherwise surfacing concerns from local communities regarding project impact to their socioeconomic standing.
- Periodical assessment of changes in socioeconomic standing of vulnerable households from a set baseline (see above in Process Framework Involuntary restrictions).
- Community Grievance Box placed at each of the village centers to help inform on issues directly from the community. Formularies will be produced to assist in the process, with anonymous inputs.
- Quarterly dedicated social assessment meetings, and yearly workshops to discuss and resolve grievances through offset mechanisms such as inputs into forest livelihoods, agriculture livelihoods, or small-scale business development activities

5. Explain how these measures will be monitored

(see above in Process Framework Involuntary restrictions).

6. Detail a grievance mechanism

(see above in Process Framework Involuntary restrictions).