

# **Social Assessment and Indigenous People's Plan for the Proposed CEPF Project *Conservation of tiger and prey populations by improved monitoring of tiger and prey population to assess the success of management interventions in the Nam Et-Phou Louey National Protected Area, Lao PDR developed by the Wildlife Conservation Society***

## **1. Background**

### **1.1 Project Description**

The Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) has a long-term presence and commitment to conservation in the Nam Et-Phou Louey (NEPL) landscape, with a focus on tigers. At present, our focused interventions stop at the Vietnamese border. The successful conservation of this source site and its tigers requires a more holistic approach that mobilizes resources from within Vietnam towards the protection of the landscape and its tigers and prey. In this proposal, we are asking for CEPF support for camera trapping in 2011-2012 that is aimed at estimating tiger and prey abundance on NEPL and also to launch the 'first-step' activities with provincial and national Vietnamese agencies. With CEPF support, we aspire to achieve the following objectives:

Objective 1. Develop a long-term tiger-monitoring program for NEPL and update the estimate of tiger density in the NEPL core zone to measure changes in the tiger population over time. Although we have collected data on tiger presence and documented reproduction since estimating density in 2004, the tiger population has not been systematically assessed since management interventions started in 2006. So, we propose to estimate tiger density using the same approach as in 2004 (capture-recapture population estimation based on camera trap data). Scats will also be collected for a capture-recapture estimate based on DNA from scats, but preliminary field surveys suggest that we are unlikely to obtain sufficient samples of scats.

Objective 2. Use the density estimate to assess the effectiveness of management interventions at increasing tiger numbers in NEPL.

Objective 3. Improve management interventions to effectively reduce emerging threats to tigers. Results of camera trapping will be used as baseline for informed decision making and adapting management actions by PA managers. In addition, other human threats encountered during setting camera traps in the field or photographed by camera traps will provide important information for PA managers to respond immediately to problems.

Objective 4. Strengthen the capacity of government and national WCS staff in tiger and prey survey and monitoring techniques. Staff involved in the camera trap surveys will be trained on camera trap survey techniques, and learn new skills and experience from fieldwork such that staff are able to replicate this approach in subsequent years.

Objective 5. Build a consensus on the feasibility and strategic approach for strengthening habitat protection and wildlife crime law enforcement in adjacent areas in Vietnam to alleviate threats to the current population from illegal hunting and also initiate the longer term process of habitat and prey restoration in Sop Cop district, Vietnam as the population on NEPL grows.

### **1.2 Purpose of the Social Assessment and Ethnic People's Plan (i.e. Indigenous People's Plan)**

The assessment and plan were prepared to ensure that the development process fully respects the dignity, human rights, economies and cultures of Ethnic Peoples following the World Bank's policy on indigenous peoples (OP 4.10).<sup>1</sup> The policy requires the project executors to engage in a process of free, prior and informed consultation, resulting in broad community support to the project by the affected Ethnic Peoples. Ethnic Peoples should receive benefits that are culturally appropriate and gender and intergenerationally inclusive; potentially adverse effects on the communities should be avoided. This aim is consistent with GoL national policies that promote a multi-ethnic society, and seek to ensure the full participation of ethnic groups in the country's development.

Because of the varied and changing contexts in which ethnic peoples are found, no single definition can capture their diversity. In particular geographical areas, ethnic peoples can be identified by the presence in varying degrees of the following characteristics:

- self-identification as members of a distinct indigenous cultural group and recognition of this identity by others;

---

<sup>1</sup> The Government of Lao PDR (GoL) does not refer to the people living in Lao as indigenous peoples but rather as ethnic peoples, ethnic groups or ethnic minorities.

- collective attachment to geographically distinct habitats or ancestral territories in the project area and to the natural resources in these habitats and territories;
- customary cultural, economic, social, or political institutions that are separate from those of the dominant society and culture; and
- an indigenous language, often different from the official language of the country or region” (OP 4.10, paragraph 4).

Using these characteristics it has been determined that the World Bank's policy OP 4.10 will apply to ethnic groups belonging to the Mon-Khmer and Hmong-Mien ethno-linguistic groups present in the NE-PL project area. Particular attention is paid to the original inhabitants of the protected area, who are likely to be most vulnerable to the development process and ethnic minorities in the eight target villages that will be selected for village development and conservation planning and management under the project.

### **1.3 Legal and Institutional Framework Applicable to Ethnic Peoples in Lao PDR**

According to the 1991 Constitution, Lao PDR is defined as a multi-ethnic state, with “equality among all ethnic groups.” Article 8 of the Constitution reads:

“The State pursues the policy of promoting unity and equality among all ethnic groups. All ethnic groups have the rights to protect, preserve and promote the fine customs and cultures of their own tribes and of the nation. All acts of creating division and discrimination among ethnic groups are forbidden. The State implements every measure to gradually develop and upgrade the economic and social level of all ethnic groups.”

The 1992 ethnic minority policy, Resolution of the Party Central Organization Concerning Ethnic Minority Affairs in the New Era, focuses on gradually improving the lives of ethnic minorities, while promoting their ethnic identity and cultural heritage. It is the cornerstone of current national ethnic minority policy. The general policy of the Party concerning ethnic minorities can be summarized as follows:

- Build national sentiment (national identity).
- Realize equality between ethnic minorities.
- Increase the level of solidarity among ethnic minorities as members of the greater Lao family.
- Resolve problems of inflexible and vengeful thinking, as well as economic and cultural inequality.
- Improve the living conditions of the ethnic minorities step by step.
- Expand, to the greatest extent possible, the good and beautiful heritage and ethnic identity of each group as well as their capacity to participate in the affairs of the nation.

The Ethnic Minorities Committee under the National Assembly is charged with the responsibility to draft and evaluate proposed legislation concerning ethnic minorities, lobby for its implementation as well as implementation of socioeconomic development plans. Ethnic minority research is the responsibility of the Institute for Cultural Research under the Ministry of Information and Culture. The lead institution for ethnic affairs is the mass (political) organization, the Lao National Front for Construction (LNFC), which has an Ethnic Affairs Department.

## **2. Social Assessment and Consultations**

### **2.1 Distribution and Definition of Khmu, Hmong and Mien People**

The NE-PL National Protected Area (NPA) has a long history of human settlement, including during the first and second Indochinese wars. Evidence of settlements still remains today in the patches of secondary forest, stands of bamboo and anthropogenic grasslands that were traditionally burned for hunting and cattle grazing. There are 34 villages inside the NPA controlled use zone and 93 villages near the NPA boundary, with a mean population of 313 people per village (Schlemmer 2002). The population is made up of four major ethnic groups including the Hmong, Khmu, Mien and Lao.

The Hmong are one of the primary groups inhabiting the higher elevations of NE-PL NPA in the past. Of the three ethnic groups the Hmong historically have been more engaged in hunting. They grow rice and corn using the swidden agriculture system, raise livestock and have limited paddy fields in the valleys. The Hmong speak a language in the Sino-Tibetan group of the Hmong-Mien family.

The Khmu people traditionally lived on the mountain slopes and to some extent along the rivers of NE-PL NPA. The Khmu have traditionally been swidden farmers, who practice hunting and gathering in the lands near their

communities. Fishing is a common practice for the Khmu people. These people speak a language in the Austro-Asiatic language group of the Mon-Khmer family.

The very smallest ethnic group represented in NE-PL NPA area is the Mien people, or “Yao people. These colorful people utilize land in a similar way to other groups specializing in shifting cultivation. In years with low production the villages often rely on hunting and gathering for their subsistence. These people speak a language from the Sino-Tibetan language group and are distantly related to the Hmong language.

The Lao ethnic group establish communities along rivers flowing from the NE-PL NPA and base agriculture production on paddy rice primarily with swidden second. The Lao have dominated Laos numerically, politically and economically for centuries; however in the districts surrounding NE-PL NPA this domination is not apparent. These people speak a languages categorized in the Tai-Kadai family. While the Lao are a significant portion of the population living in the controlled use zone of the NPA and around the periphery, they will not be considered in this plan.

All three of these ethnic groups have a close association with the forest for their subsistence. However since the Indo-Chinese conflict, the Lao government has encouraged sedentary villages, preferably along roads with easy access. Many villagers were relocated during the war and years following the war.

## **2.2 Hmong, Khmu and Mien People and Natural Resource Use**

Most families are engaged in subsistence activities with little integration in the market economy. Rice is the staple food and is primarily produced through rotations of shifting cultivation on steep mountainous slopes. Meat and vegetables are raised or harvested from the forest. Although Laos has over 40% forest cover and less than 24 people per km<sup>2</sup> (ICEM, 2003), hunting and fishing techniques are diverse and extensive, including traps, snares, bows and guns that are used to capture a wide range of animals (Duckworth et al., 1999). In a 2005 village survey in NE-PL, squirrels, deer, fish, pigs, pheasants and partridges were reported the most commonly eaten on a monthly basis (A. Johnson; unpubl.data). Another study estimated that each household in the NPA annually consumed 141kg of wild meat of which 20% was deer and pigs (ICEM, 2003). Given an average of 35 households per village in the 127 villages in or near the NPA, this is a minimum estimated off take of 96,000kg of ungulates annually.

Schlemmer (2002) recorded livestock as the main source of income for most villages with cattle being sold outside the district or province since the 1980’s. Additional income (~\$US100 per household) was reported from sale of NTFPs such as cardamom, sugar palm, rattan, mulberry, bamboo. This does not take into account unrecorded income from illegal activities including opium cultivation and wildlife trade. Villages have reported weekly commerce in wildlife products with Vietnamese traders (Davidson, 1998) with gaur gall bladders and sambar deer antlers among products commonly sold (Vongkhamheng, 2002). Since 2005, NPA enforcement teams have recorded illegal trade of tiger, bear species, East Asian porcupine, pangolin, impressed tortoise, big-headed turtle and orchid species (NE-PL NPA, unpublished data).

Customary rights and responsibilities, as related to biodiversity conservation and natural resources management, are described in the national regulative framework. Article 17 in the Constitution of Lao PDR (1991) states that “all organizations and citizens must protect the environment and natural resources: land, underground, forest, fauna, water sources and atmosphere”. Because of the cross-sectoral nature of environment and natural resources use and management, various ministries and agencies are involved. Article 30 of the Forestry Law 1996 addresses customary use of the forest and forest land. It defines customary use as practices that have gone on for a ‘long period’ and that are recognized by society or law. Collection of non-prohibited wood, forest product, hunting and fishing for household consumption and custom are allowed. But customary use should not damage the forest or affect the right of others. It goes on to say that forest resource use must be done in accordance with village regulations.

Articles 48 to 56 of the Forestry Law describe tenure rights. They describe the right of possession, use, usufruct, transfer and inheritance. It also states that State agencies have the right to manage, use, protect and conserve forest according to regulations. Article 63 describes the duties of the Village Authority in the management of forestland. They are to implement the orders of the DAFO offices, allocate land to individuals, inform and educate villagers, monitor environmental changes, develop specific village regulations for the management and protection watershed and wildlife, promote agriculture that limits tree felling and promotes natural equilibrium, give permission to fell trees, monitor and prevent hunting for sale of forest animals, and prevent other harmful activities affecting forest resources and watersheds.

MAF Regulation 0524 (2001) outlines management responsibilities of National Protected Areas for various government agencies. It describes how NPAs should be zoned, and the user rights available to villagers in each zone, and updates the list of protected species in Lao PDR. MAF Order 0076 (2002) restates the conditionality of harvesting wildlife and emphasizes the restrictions on trade of wildlife to third countries as a prerequisite to CITES.

### **2.3 Relationships between NE-PL NPA Ethnic Groups and Formal Land-use Patterns**

All ethnic groups in and around NE-PL practice swidden agriculture to some extent. Many families also raise buffalo and cattle for cash income. The swidden fields and livestock grazing areas are primarily located in the controlled use zone of the villages as defined by the government policies in place. In 1995 the government of Lao developed a nationwide system of land and forest allocation. This program was created with the intent to help communities in managing their lands. The process allocated forest and agricultural lands to the communities for domestic use. Communities saw benefits to their forest and paddy lands as it helped to define the village boundaries and giving some land tenure to the communities. However the swidden areas became problematic in many areas. Some communities were accustomed to a 7-9 year rotation while the allocation process reduced it to 5-7 years. Many communities found this to be unacceptable and returned to their former ways.

## **3. Project Preparation and Implementation to Ensure Adequate Consultation and Safeguards**

WCS has developed a detailed Ethnic People's Plan, which will be implemented under the World Bank/GEF project for parallel activities to the CEPF funded portion of NEPL NPA management activities. The implementation of this plan will ensure that the CEPF project complies with the CEPF Safeguard Policy on Indigenous Peoples. If the World Bank/GEF project begins later than the CEPF project, the NEPL NPA management team will insure that all portions of the more detailed plan that relate to the CEPF funded activities are specifically built into the CEPF project, to ensure that it is in compliance with the Indigenous People's Policy. The necessary resources for implementing these activities are built into the design of the CEPF project, and WCS will monitor their implementation and report to CEPF on a semi-annual basis.

### **3.1 Social Assessment and Consultation Process During Project Preparation**

From 1998 to 2003 the IUCN supported project in NE-PL NPA worked very closely with communities to better understand their livelihoods through a series of RRA exercises (Schlemmer 2002). More recently, the NE-PL NPA management team has been liaising with the communities in and around the NE-PL NPA since 2003 through various forms of consultations. Village visits were conducted to introduce the NE-PL NPA to the communities and exchange ideas on how best the NPA could be managed in 2004 -- 2006. During these visits communities reflected on the past, current and projected use of natural resources for their daily livelihoods. Participatory demarcation of the totally protected zone was conducted in three districts Hua Muang, Viengthong and Viengkham from 2005 to 2009. In-depth studies into one community's use of the natural resources were conducted in Huay Dtun Village in 2008-09 (Johnson et. al. 2010).

The NE-PL NPA management team has been interfacing through different forums over the last 8 years, building relationships with the communities and local government that support. These relationships vary in strength and form as not all communities and district governments have had the same level of attention from NPA staff. Without a doubt communities living in the controlled use zone and near the NPA boundary recognize that effective management of the NPA, both in the totally protected zone and the controlled use zone, will have a direct benefit to the resource base that is used by the communities themselves.

Some key findings and conclusions from these consultations as follows:

- The district governments encourage sedentary lifestyles near the main roads and rivers. The national policy encourages communities to merge and prosper close to the most developed areas as possible.
- Most communities around the NE-PL NPA are "rice sufficient" throughout the year. Only when weather patterns or economic drivers interrupt their traditional planting do the communities suffer rice shortages. Rice is often sold to meet cash needs.
- All communities living around the NE-PL NPA rely heavily on the NTFPs for their daily subsistence.
- Large livestock (buffalo/cattle) are used as a "family savings account" rather than a source of protein for the family to consume. Livestock contributes to the cash economy. The local government does not approve of livestock being raised in the totally protected zone.

- Communities recognize their dependence on the natural resources around them but often cannot manage the resources themselves. Outsiders come into their village areas and utilize resources without permission. This is particularly true for aquatic resources or fixed resources such as bamboo shoots, honey combs, and wild fruits. Communities have begun to establish fish conservation zones to prevent illegal fishing.
- Illegal wildlife trade is reducing the abundance of wildlife available for communities to consume. In many cases the hunter receives very little cash while the middlemen reap the cash benefits at the community's long term expense.
- Management of natural resources is still not seen as "rural development" even though the Hmong and Khmu communities recognize without these resources they would be much worse off than they are today.
- Assisting all communities better manage their resources within the village use areas, provided to them by the government, will reduce their vulnerability to the fluctuating climatic and economic situations.
- Eventually a form of land tenure must be given to all communities living in the controlled use zone and around the NPA to give confidence to explore new livelihood options.
- In the Xon Nuea area there is immediate need for family planning. The population of many villages is 50% under 12 years of age. This growth rate is putting increased pressure on the lands in the near future.

Following OP.4.10, project preparation included a number of activities, primarily field visits, to assess the local context. This included baseline studies to determine current wildlife and NTFP use, cultural and monetary value or natural resources. In addition, at national and provincial workshops and other meetings conducted during project preparation, organizations such as the Lao Women's Union participated in discussions of how to promote broad-based participation in, and sharing of benefits from, the project. During the pre-appraisal mission for the joint World Bank GEF project, the World Bank Task Team and WCS staff visited 3 villages of the different 3 ethnic groups to conduct a rapid assessment and consult with the villagers on the project. In January and February 2011 the WCS and World Bank staff have conducted further consultations at Huaphan with field visits to villages near the breeding tiger population in Nam Et core zone. Their views have been incorporated into the GEF project documents. The consultations conducted during project preparation generally confirm that ethnic groups in the NE-PL NPA broadly support the project activities proposed in the GEF and CEPF. Further consultation will be undertaken during the GEF funded portion of the project implementation based on the principle of free, prior and informed consultation, as part of the preparation of the Village Development Plans (VDP) and the Village Cooperation Agreements (VCA), in order that requirements under OP 4.10 with regards to social assessments, consultations with local communities, participatory decision-making processes, capacity building and mitigation of possible adverse impacts, would be fully met.

### **3.2 Implementation Measures to Ensure that Benefits are Culturally Appropriate**

The objectives of the Ethnic Peoples Plan are:

- a) to provide full consultation with, and informed participation of, ethnic minorities
- b) to avoid, minimize or mitigate potentially adverse effects of new restrictions to, and increased enforcement of, access to natural resources.

The principles laid out to meet these objectives include:

- i) broad-based and consultative definition of protected area boundaries, new restrictions, and increased enforcement in Nam Et Phou Louey NPA will be based on biophysical as well as socio-economic assessments. The latter will include an assessment of potentially adverse impacts of such decisions on affected people;
- ii) these definitions will be based on the informed participation of all affected people, in the form of consultations and agreements reached between the affected people and the respective local and project authorities. Agreements will be formalized in a Village Cooperation Agreement;
- iii) restrictions to access to resources that will adversely affect the livelihood of affected people will be mitigated by the project in order to ensure that affected people will be able to at least maintain, if not improve, their livelihoods. This is especially true for wildlife that is sold to meet cash needs (see Process Framework);
- iv) wildlife conservation interventions will respect ethnic peoples belief systems; and

- v) ethnic minorities will be supported and strengthened to ensure their informed participation.
- vi) results from monitoring protocols will be conveyed back to the communities nearest to the tiger and prey populations. These results will further assist communities prioritize activities in the VDP and the VCP.

This Plan provides an overall outline of the policy, strategy, and process to be followed. It does not spell out the activities with each individual ethnic group in detail. Such details will be worked out during project implementation, through the participatory processes for protected area management, buffer-zone management, and village development planning based upon the villagers' needs and priorities. Thus, the individual land use plans serve as the "action plans" whereby the results of the participatory planning with the concerned ethnic minorities will be realized.

Overall responsibility for the implementation of the Ethnic Peoples Plan lies with the executing NGO, Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), which will work closely with the relevant local government agencies and communities. Government mass-based organizations such as the District Lao Front National Construction (LFNC) and Lao Women Union (LWU) will be involved in the project implementation. LFNC will assist with ethnic minority consultation and mobilization as specified in the separate Ethnic People Plan while the LWU will help facilitate and promote village women's participation in the project. WCS will ensure the relevant expertise to be able to implement the Plan, including activities that strengthen the participation of ethnic minorities (e.g. training and capacity building), as well as to be able to oversee its implementation.

### **3.3 Free, Prior and Informed Consultations during Implementation**

Consultations with local communities will be an important part of the preparation and implementation of VDP and VCA, which will include the process for determining the various land use boundaries within the NPA, any possible resource use restrictions introduced by the project activities (due to increased awareness, and improved enforcement of existing restrictions), and other project activities that may affect, whether positively or negatively, local ethnic communities. Decisions affecting local ethnic communities will be made with the participation of the affected communities, with the aim of achieving consensus. Conclusions regarding resource use restrictions affecting local communities will be documented in the VDP, and the VCA with the NPA (see the Process Framework).

In order for meaningful consultation and participation to take place, several mechanisms will be put in place. These include:

- information dissemination will be, as needed, in the local languages and/or will be based on visual, oral and other appropriate means of communication in communities with limited literacy and/or Lao language skills;
- acknowledged ethnic minority leaders and organizations will be consulted;
- as far as needed ethnic minority communities and their leaders will receive additional support and training to enable them to participate fully in decision making processes; and,
- culturally appropriate consultation methods and a time frame will be established which allows adequate gender and generational representation, to express their views and preferences.
- Based on the Totally Protected Zone (core zone) classification as a non-use area for all people. The District Agriculture and Forestry Office will inform communities around the areas that NEPL NPA staff will be monitoring tigers and their prey in the TPZ under the CEPF grant.

Participatory planning approaches will also be utilized, most notably in the activities of the buffer-zone management and protected area managed zones. The villagers will work with project and district staff to make village development plans. These plans will take into consideration the local cultural values of each village and each ethnic group. Thus, areas that are important to local people, such as sacred forest areas, burial grounds, or spirit trees, will be designated on the plans, and will be managed according to customary practices (e.g. as protected areas). Villagers will develop local rules to govern how such areas will be managed. Other project activities that may affect local ethnic communities, such as tourism activities, will also be developed in consultation with them.

### **3.5 Social Assessment during Implementation**

A series of social assessment exercises will be conducted during the first phase of the GEF project implementation. These assessments will build on studies undertaken to date by the NE-PL NPA. The assessments will aim to: (a) identify ethnic minorities who would need additional measures and support as provided in this Plan; (b) characterize different user groups in relation to the NPA; c) map access rights; (d)

identify current and customary land and resource use of local communities and assess their sustainability if deemed necessary; (e) determine the contribution wildlife and NTFP's make to rural protein and cash needs; (f) describe changes and establish trends in the broad socio-economic and socio-political composition of the villages bordering the NPA; and (g) assess possible impacts of project activities, mainly from resource use restrictions, on the local communities.

Various techniques will be employed in the following sequence; a) consult with development agencies and projects working in the area to collect and review existing socio-economic data, b) conduct socioeconomic surveys in the villages not covered by existing projects using PRA techniques and using staff from the Lao Women's Union and WCS, c) train district forest officers to complete landscape assessments to create social landscapes using PRA techniques, d) do land cover classifications using old and current satellite images, e) initiate wildlife and NTFP use studies, f) present findings to villagers . These assessments will feed into most other activities of the project, in particular to the education and awareness and buffer-zone management sub-components as well as the development of the Village Development Plans and of any mitigation measures needed.

Alternative food security activities under component 1 and ecotourism promotion activities under component 2 will ensure that livelihood support will be provided for the ethnic villages in a cultural and ethnic sensitive manner. The livelihood program will be designed based on the outcomes from the SAs through participatory planning process and through other parallel Bank's financed projects such as LUFSP and PRF.

#### **4 Human Resources**

Whenever feasible, ethnic minority members and people with experience in working with ethnic minorities will be hired by the project, e.g. porters in the forest, to work as guides for monitoring team efforts, and/or to work as equitable members of the team on the CEPF funded activities.

As this project begins, all field staff will receive social sensitivity training and a methods course in communication, to address issues of working with different ethnic groups, and addressing gender and poverty issues. The project will ensure that, in areas with ethnic minority communities, the local and district staff working on these components will have ethnic minority staff and/or ethnic minority representatives to help in the communication and implementation.

Activities to engage the communities around NE-PL NPA, such as the consultations, and to build capacity among them and among relevant government staff will be funded by the pending GEF MSP. Any specific interventions to improve resource use or to introduce any alternative resource use for these communities would be covered separately if necessary.

#### **5 Grievance Mechanism**

It is possible that problems, complaints, and/or conflicts may arise with respect to the project as a whole, and village development activities in particular. Certain issues, relating to compliance with national and provincial laws, are to be addressed through legal and regulatory provisions.

In the case of disputes at a village level, normally it will be the responsibility of Village Administration officials to solve the issue, but if satisfactory resolution is not obtained, then the parties can appeal to district and/or provincial authorities for assistance. If a problem occurs between villages, such as a dispute over village boundaries, then normally the district authorities would mediate a resolution. In the case where a problem arises between the villagers and government, such as between one or more villages and the NPA management unit, then the parties should have the right to mediation by a neutral third party, such as the provincial court.

However, recognizing that many conflicts arise due to difference in understanding and perceptions, a proactive approach will be adopted to avoid conflicts before they escalate. This approach will promote a common understanding through a four-pronged method, including: (a) wide-spread disclosure of project background information; (b) clarification of the criteria of eligibility and types of assistance under the Ethnic Peoples Plan; (c) clarification of the duties and responsibilities of all stakeholders in the process;(d) community education and awareness regarding the value of biodiversity conservation, their customary rights, threats to the NPA, and options for mitigating these threats; and (e) education of GoL and project staff regarding the customary rights and practices of ethnic minorities.

Regarding the project's implementation procedures and ethnic minority issues, as discussed in this Plan, complaints will be handled as follows:

- (i) As a first stage, affected or concerned persons will present, verbally but preferably in writing, their complaints to district project staff or advisors, who will have to provide a documented response to the claimants within fifteen days. Records on each complaint and subsequent measures taken must be sent to the Pakxan Project Office (WCS office) and the Hua Phan or Luang Prabang Province PAFO as an attachment to regular/monthly reports.
- (ii) If the claimants are not satisfied with the decision, the case may be submitted to the WCS- Lao Project Office in Vientiane, as well as to local authorities (e.g. the Provincial Assembly) within 30 days of receiving the initial response from provincial staff. Specified authorities must record receipt of complaints and reply to the claimants within thirty days. Claimants will be exempt from any administrative or legal charges associated with pursuing complaints.

Ethnic minorities or ethnic minority communities may also seek the advice of the Ethnic Affairs Department of the Lao National Front for Construction in Vientiane. Project staff should, if requested, assist claimants in doing so.

Any concerns raised to WCS or its local partners will be communicated to the CEPF-RIT within 4 weeks, remedial action will be agreed and implemented within 8 weeks, and follow up monitoring by the CEPF-RIT will be carried out.

## **6 Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation**

The Project will have a monitoring and evaluation system. It will include village self-monitoring of their own village development projects. Villagers will also be involved in monitoring of the buffer-zone management activities. In addition, these participatory monitoring efforts will be linked to the overall project's monitoring and evaluation program.

Other monitoring arrangements will include collecting baseline data, performing household surveys, and receiving community feedback to assess general trends in income and livelihoods to gauge possible impacts of the project on local communities.

An evaluation of the implementation of the Ethnic Peoples Plan will be included in the reporting procedures for the CEPF review missions. Any revisions to the GEF – CEPF EPP plan, suggested by the independent review or other monitoring and evaluation exercises, will be agreed to with the World Bank for the GEF and The CEPF office in DC.