

# Process Framework – Sustainable Fisheries Conservation Management Through Collaborative Approach

## 1.0 Project Background

The project is entitled ‘Sustainable Fisheries Conservation Management through Collaborative Approach’. It aims to address one of the strategic directions of CEPF, which is “Empowering the local communities to engage in conservation and management of priority key biodiversity areas”. The project also aims to contribute to the Government Program under the Agricultural Sector Strategic Development Plan of ‘Sustainable Fisheries Resources Management’. The project has three main objectives: (1) to promote collaboration and co-management among relevant stakeholders; (2) to strengthen the management of the Conservation Area and fishery resources of the two CFI selected; and (3) enhance and strengthen institutional development of the CFI.

The target area is Boeung Chhmar, one of the three main core areas of the Tonle Sap Biosphere Reserve and a globally-recognized wetland under the Ramsar Convention. The area is located in Peam Bang Commune with five villages. The commune has 500 – 700 permanent families and hundreds of semi-permanent families, including the ethnic Vietnamese in the floating villages. Based on IUCN assessment in 2013, fishing is the main livelihood activity of around 99% of the communities, with 5 – 10 kg per day representing a ‘good catch’. Approximately 65% of the population is considered poor based on the government’s poverty rankings. Some families are also involved in fish processing, such as prahoc and smoked fish, yet the remoteness of the area prohibits such communities from selling their catch or products for a higher price. Lack of food during the lean season (July – September) and health and sanitation are also mentioned as issues in the village. Conflicts among stakeholders have occurred, when the fishing areas are declared as open access to all (source: IUCN 2013, and communication with FACT - an update of the socio-economic, cultural, environment, biological and ecological information will be conducted during the initial implementation of the project).

This project has been prepared based on the current fishery sector reforms, and draws on the lessons learned from previous implementation of projects in the area, such as the EU-NSA project, which has been implementing the community-based protection of the Fish Conservation Area (FCA) since 2013. Secondary data collection was also conducted mainly through review of reports and studies from different donors and implementing institutions, including IUCN, FACT, Forum Syd, Conservation International and WorldFish. Although such documentation and the experience of the proponents working in the area provides a broad understanding, this in no way replaces the planned consultation process to be conducted prior

to the roll-out of the project. Census, validation and in-depth consultation with the communities and other stakeholders will be an integral part of the project implementation and process framework.

Based on the relevant documents and interviews with IUCN and FACT, one of the issues in the management of most fishery conservation areas in Tonle Sap, including Boeung Chhmar, is the lack of synergy of actions among the different stakeholders in the area. This will be validated during the initial meeting with the different stakeholders in the area.

To achieve the three objectives, the project proposes three main activities: (1) promote collaboration and co-management among stakeholders; (2) strengthen the management of the conservation area and fishery resources of the two CFI selected; and (3) strengthen CFI Institutional Development and Capacity. The project expects to achieve the following results: (1) informed stakeholders effectively managing the fishery area, including the Conservation Areas, in the two selected villages of Beoung Chhmar; (2) stakeholders more united in the development and implementation of an operational management plan, with clear benefit-sharing among them; (3) increased productivity and biodiversity of the fisheries resources in the target area, particularly in the Conservation Areas; (4) enhanced capacity of CFI, with clear source of income and good network to implement their activities, including patrolling and conservation activities; and (5) improved livelihood of CFI members actively supporting the organization's activities, including patrolling and stewardship of natural resources. These activities and expected results will be shared and validated with the stakeholders during the initial phase of the implementation of the project.

## **2.0 Participatory Implementation**

Since 2000, the Ministry of Environment, the Fisheries Administration and the Community Fisheries have been implementing conservation activities in the area. Since 2013, the IUCN and FACT under the EU-NSA project has been implementing the community-based protection of the Fish Conservation Area (FCA) in one of the villages in Beoung Chhmar. The current proposed project will leverage and enhance this FCA development, with the detailed participatory planning process to include the restrictions and management arrangements agreed upon prior to implementation of that project, and measures to gather and verify information addressing any impact on the local communities .

LI and the two target CFI will lead the implementation of the project, with the community as the main agent of project implementation. Resolution of conflicts will be approached in a participatory manner, especially involving marginalized groups (women; non-members of the CFI who used the area as traditional fishing ground; seasonal fishers, and ethnic Vietnamese in the floating villages, etc.). Specifically, LI and the two CFI committees (the 'team') will lead the facilitation and implementation of activities with relevant stakeholders. The team will work closely with the Commune Council, Village Chief, FiA , MoE and Rangers in the area, whose main task is to provide legal support to the project implementation. The team will meet with

each of the other relevant stakeholder groups, and marginalized groups will be asked to put forth a representative, to be part of a temporary cooperative committee for decision making regarding the implementation of project activities.

Understanding of the cultural, social, economic and geographic setting of the communities will be reviewed during the project implementation. There are three main communities in the area to be taken into account: the Cambodian permanent resident, the Ethnic Vietnamese, and the seasonal Cambodian fishers. The Cambodian residents built their homes on land while the Vietnamese are living in the floating villages. The Vietnamese, however, are well-off since they own more effective fishing equipment and are more productive fishers than their Cambodian neighbors, and also act as traders of catch in the area. Some Cambodians are cultivating along the river banks but they do not have farms to produce their own rice.

The existing CFMP will be updated to achieve a better understanding of the current issues and conflicts that may have evolved. The territories and administrative jurisdictions among the different players (Protected Area of MoE, Conservation Area of FiA, and CFi) will be evaluated for any overlap, and to determine the need to update the zoning.

The CPA, FCA and the community fisheries have demarcated the boundaries of their respective areas as well as the customary use rights. The FiA assisted the CFi in the development of the CFi Fishery Area Management Map, and this was approved and signed by respective institutions, including the Governor's Office and the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries.

The 15-year implementation of the CPA and community fisheries conservation and protection, through support from both government and non-government organizations, has been used as an instrument for increasing awareness and knowledge among the local communities of biodiversity and sustainable use of their natural resources. It is important to gauge the knowledge of the local communities of the changes and impact of the Conservation Area, and this will be facilitated during the project implementation.

Following the fishery reforms, there is a proliferation of illegal activities in the fishing areas, which poses a threat to the conservation areas. The conversion of flooded forest areas to agriculture poses a serious threat to the fishery resources. Pollution from the communities particularly those in the floating areas posted threats to the fisheries resources. Farming practices such as the use of fertilizer and pesticide in the river banks also endangered the fishery resources in the area. A participatory research on the different activities of the communities around the conservation areas is seen to be implemented by the target CFi during the project implementation period.

Implementation tasks will include the determination, among the community and state actors, the sustainable harvesting of the fish resources: the fishing season; who can fish; allowable fishing equipment; volumes collected in accordance with the Fishery Law; 'user's

fees' and duties (e.g. patrolling, contribution); the need to expand the Conservation Areas, among others. In addition, the Action Plan identified in Section 8.0 will be presented to the community members. A separate workshop may also be conducted with the identified vulnerable groups to present the Action Plan or the Process Framework.

Given that fishing is the main source of livelihood of the communities, if the Conservation Areas of MoE, FiA and CFi were expanded, including the implementation of the CFi rules and regulations, this might have a great impact to the livelihood of the communities. Further participatory study on socio-economic, biological and ecological impact to the population and area should be conducted during the project implementation.

Improving the governance of the site will expectedly address these issues. The project will facilitate meetings and workshops to gather perceptions and suggestions on how to mitigate the impact of restrictions to their livelihood and environment.

Conflicts have been noted during the implementation of protection and conservation initiatives, with the ethnic Vietnamese and seasonal fishers who migrate to the area. The proposed solution is to involve them in the management of the fishery areas and share the benefits that can be reaped in the management of the area. A facilitation of meetings/workshops will be conducted to discuss benefit-sharing among stakeholders during project implementation.

The project will facilitate training with community institutions such as CFi, Rangers, and Sahakoum committees that have been operating in the area. Practical on-the-job training will supplement their knowledge with actual application of monitoring and evaluation of the changes in their area.

Such identified tenure issues will be validated with the CFi members, to assess whether these are still relevant under the current context.

### **3.0 Criteria for eligibility of affected persons**

The project will facilitate meetings with each of the relevant stakeholders to gather their sentiments, perceived issues and mitigation, and proposed criteria for eligibility for assistance to mitigate impacts or improve livelihoods. At the end of each meeting, the group will choose their leader or representative for a subsequent multi-stakeholder workshop. The project will create a temporary committee, with all relevant stakeholder groups represented, to determine criteria for identification of vulnerable groups and eligibility for assistance, and develop a plan to support the application of these criteria. Representatives will in turn present the developed plan to their constituents/members, for further refinement of criteria through the same process of participatory consultation with the relevant stakeholders. Thus during the course of project implementation, the criteria may be adjusted to identify other vulnerable groups as new contexts emerge. A Venn diagram and Force Field analysis will be used in analyzing the

different vulnerable groups and their specific roles towards the success of project implementation.

#### **4.0 Measures to Assist the Affected Persons**

The project will develop a profile of the area by conducting a census of the community members, determining whether they are Khmer, ethnic Vietnamese, residents or seasonal fishers. The census will also identify the fishing equipment and practices currently used. This profile will inform decisions regarding eligibility for assistance and potential impact of the project on various groups.

At the outset of the project, LI will communicate directly and work closely with each group of affected stakeholders as identified from the previous project, i.e. IUCN, FACT and ForumSyd. The project will facilitate an independent meeting with each group in order to establish measures appropriate to their context, for ex., the Vietnamese of floating villages will have a different intervention measures to cope with the impact of restrictions on fishing activity in the Conservation Area. The identified measures in each group will be presented to the temporary committee represented by all relevant stakeholders, including the local government, Ministry of Environment and Fisheries Administration, and the action plan will be developed from the agreed measures for each affected groups/persons. The objective will be to improve or restore their fishing activities while maintaining the sustainability of the Conservation Area. Other special measures will be included based on the context and needs of each group. Based on World bank and CEPF Operational Manual, possible measures that can be facilitated with the affected communities are as follows: special measures for the recognition and support of customary rights to fisheries resources; transparent, equitable, and fair ways of more sustainable sharing of the resources; access to alternative resources or functional substitutes; alternative livelihood activities; health and education benefits; obtaining employment, for example as park rangers or eco-tourist guides; and technical assistance to improve land and natural resource use. These suggested measures will be shared and facilitated with each beneficiary group for possible consideration based on their context.

The project will ensure that persons found to be negatively affected by the restriction on access to natural resources will be supported by and benefit from the CFI activities. The activities in Components 2 and 3, which will facilitate the support of affected persons will include the following:

*2.2. Support implementation of the developed action plan of the stakeholders.* LI will ensure that during the development of the action plan, issues of displacement and restriction on access for the direct users of the fishing area will be discussed. The CFI will assist in developing their own rules and regulations that will address the people potentially marginalized by the project. One of the proposed actions is the inclusion of the affected persons in share distribution from incomes from entrance fees, ecotourism activities, etc. The multi-stakeholder may come up with a joint guideline on how the affected stakeholders will benefit from participation in conservation activities. This may include allowing them to fish in the designated buffer zone of the

conservation areas within the CFI rules and regulations (e.g. allowable gear both size and length).

3.1. *Facilitate the development of cooperative system within the CFI.* During the PRA, census and multi-stakeholders consultation, LI and CFI will identify those persons affected by access restrictions on fishing areas when these are transformed to Conservation Areas. Those identified will be encouraged to become members of the CFI. In the process, they may enjoy the benefits from the cooperative activities such as basic needs, health benefits, loans, education support, and other possible benefits from the cooperative.

3.3. *Support strengthening of the saving committee of the CFI.* One of the proposed activities is strengthening of the savings group by providing seed capital. A number of NGOs such as FACT and ForumSyd has been providing financial assistance to the CFIs, and the loan could be extended to the affected persons to improve their livelihoods.

3.4. *Support and enhance the networking capacity of the CFI.* Another safeguard is linking the CFI with government and NGOs supporting the development of CFIs. LI will ensure that these affected communities are covered by the development partners implementing the provision of both technical and financial assistance in response to conservation activities.

LI will mainstream this support to marginalized groups or affected communities. One of the objective of the PRA and census activities is to identify the different stakeholders, including those who will be affected by the restriction from the access to natural resources. Through activity 2.2 the multi-stakeholder committee will ensure that these affected persons are strongly considered, especially with respect to benefit-sharing and consideration of access to buffer zone areas.

With limited budget, LI will not directly provide livelihood activities to these affected people, but will focus on enhancing the capacity of the CFI to itself provide assistance and support to the livelihood development of its members, and including the affected and marginalized groups. The sustainability of both conservation and economic development of member-communities is assured once the institutional and financial capacity of CFI has increased.

## **5.0 Conflict Resolution and Complaint Mechanism**

The temporary committee of the different stakeholders will include in their plan mechanisms for addressing complaints and resolving conflict. The committee will determine which issues can be resolved at the lower level, i.e., could be at the community level first (with the facilitation of CFI), and those which need to be raised at the multi-stakeholder committee level. The roles and responsibilities concerning stakeholder conflict resolution and grievances will be discussed during the implementation of the project. LI, as grantee, will serve as the initial coordinator and facilitator of the different stakeholders and the temporary committee.

## **6.0 Implementation Arrangements**

The project will involve several actors. Their roles are as follows:

- Learning Institute (LI) – initial coordinator of meetings, workshops and training during the implementation of the project. LI will provide guidance to the committee in the development and implementation of a collaborative management plan.
- Community Fisheries (CFi) – will be the lead institution in implementing the collaborative co-management of the Conservation Area within the community. The CFi management plan will be the guiding document for activities aimed at the development of the fishery resources in the area, which will be finalized during the multi-stakeholder meeting.
- Ethnic Vietnamese – will be involved in the implementation of the different activities identified in the co-management of the CFi. Although they are not part of the membership of the CFi, they will be included in the benefit-sharing of the CFi in its implementation of protection and other conservation activities in the area.
- Seasonal Fishers – will form a group and select a representative who will attend the committee meetings, voicing their own concerns regarding the restrictions, and potentially negotiating the fees to be imposed by the CFi and stakeholder committee.
- Commune Council and Village Chief - will be active members of the collaborative stakeholder committee, to support the legality of committee decisions.
- Fisheries Administration (FiA) – will be part of the collaborative committee who will support the implementation of the agreed management plan of the collaborative stakeholders committee, and will support the committee in legal aspects of protection and conservation in the target areas.
- NGOs and other non-state actors in the area - will support the committee in the development of a collaborative operational management plan that will guide the direct stakeholders in the implementation of activities identified during the planning. They will also support other stakeholder needs i.e. livelihood support, networking and other development activities identified in the management plan.

The project will facilitate activities and monitor the beneficiary groups to ensure that the members are involved and receiving the benefits of the support provided.

## **7.0 Monitoring and Evaluation**

Indicators for the possible impact of the project, particularly on the identified vulnerable groups, will be developed. The indicators will be established with the multi-stakeholder workshop, and regular monitoring will be conducted in collaboration with community members, and the results will be presented to stakeholder groups during meetings.

## **8.0 Plan of Action**

Together with the implementation of the project, an action plan will be formulated that specially addresses the status of the impact on affected communities of the agreed restrictions. The action plan will describe the situations of the area as reflected in this Process Framework. It will include description of the restrictions agreed to; groups/persons affected; measures to mitigate impacts from these restrictions, and monitoring and evaluation arrangements.

Depending on the outcome of the consultation, the Action Plan may include the following:

1. Project background and how the plan was prepared, including consultations with local communities and other stakeholders;
2. The socio-economic circumstances of local communities;
3. The nature and scope of restrictions, their timing, as well as administrative and legal procedures to protect affected communities' interests if agreements are superseded or rendered ineffective;
4. The anticipated social and economic impacts of the restrictions;
5. The communities or persons eligible for assistance;
6. Specific measures to assist these people, along with clear timetables of action, and financing sources;
7. Protected area boundaries and use zones;
8. Implementation arrangements, roles and responsibilities of various stakeholders, including government and non-government entities providing services or assistance to affected communities
9. Arrangements for monitoring and enforcement of restrictions and natural resource management agreements; Clear output and outcome indicators developed in participation with affected communities.
10. Special measures concerning women and vulnerable groups;
11. Capacity building of the grantee or other implementing agencies
12. Capacity building activities for the affected communities to enhance their participation in project activities
13. Grievance mechanism and conflict resolution taking into account local dispute resolution practices and norms; and
14. Participatory monitoring and evaluation exercises adapted to the local context, indicators and capacity. Monitoring will include the extent and significance of adverse impacts as well as the outcome of mitigation measures.

## **9.0 Disclosure**

This Process Framework will be presented to the target communities to inform them of the project and invite their input into the project design and the framework. Upon presentation, the Process Framework will be adjusted as necessary, and submitted to the CEPF together with the Action Plan.

## **10.0 Grievance Mechanism**



During the consultation and presentation of the Action Plan, the target communities will be informed of the workings of the grievance mechanism. LI will provide contact details of the Project Team and the CEPF-Regional Implementation Team at IUCN in Phnom Penh. This will be done through the initial orientation of the different stakeholders in the area. To foster wider information of the contact details, the project will prepare brochures and posters, explaining the project goals, objectives and contact details of CEPF and LI. Moreover, the brochures and posters will state that any grievances raised during the project implementation will be communicated to the CEPF Office within 15 days, together with a plan for remedial action. This will be integrated to form part of the information and dissemination activities to be conducted within the project.