

Reducing Exploitation of Trade-Threatened Mammals in their Cambodian Strongholds

A Proposal by Conservation International

CEPF Process Framework

Project background

Cambodia contains many globally threatened mammal species, most of which are threatened by habitat loss and/or over-hunting for local consumption. Pangolins, otters and bears are among the highest valued mammals in trade. This trade is rampant and is rapidly driving these species towards global extinction. Cambodia provides a globally important opportunity for the conservation of these species. Our project will focus on the Tonle Sap Lake (the flooded forests of Pursat and Kampong Thom Provinces), the Coastal region (primarily in Koh Kong Province) and the Cardamom Mountains (in Koh Kong, Pursat and Kampong Speu provinces).

Even though many of these species' strongholds lie within existing protected areas and most of the species are technically protected by Cambodian law, the animals themselves are often not well protected due to tax law enforcement, lack of knowledge, and poor understanding of the law. This project will empower the government to act on their legislation, and will develop voluntary community support for integration into the project. This project will ensure that all focal species are legally protected in Cambodia. We and partners will apply a wide range of effective conservation activities at the stronghold sites listed above, effectively targeting the main threats and providing conditions that will enable these protected species to have the best chance of long-term survival while ensuring local communities maintain full access rights to natural resources of the area.

The project was prepared in consultation with the stakeholders within the stronghold sites. These include the Cambodian Forestry Administration (through the Wildlife Protection Office), the Fisheries Administration (through the offices of the Conservation Department and the Fisheries Domain), and the Ministry of Environment. CI-Cambodia has worked with senior staff and rangers from these administrations since 2002 and they were fully involved in development of this proposal.

The crucial stakeholder group in this project is the local communities in and around the stronghold sites. We have already developed strong working relationships with communities in all of the highest priority sites. We have provided environmental education through their schools, and have developed conservation incentives with local communities who voluntarily develop alternative livelihoods to harmful or illegal practices. We have developed the activities within this project in consultation with the local communes in each of the sites, wherein we conducted meetings and held discussions to assess the threats to the focal species and their drivers, the opportunities for mitigation, and the costs associated with these mitigations. In all occasions, we made clear that the project did not restrict access to natural resources and that it would provide mitigation of costs incurred through voluntary support for conservation of the focal species. These concerns have been addressed throughout the proposal, and received full approval both from the communities and from the government, as they aligned with the national laws on protected species and forest user rights.

The proposal consists of nine components. They are listed below along with potential impacts for conservation and local communities, and ways we will mitigate these impacts.

Component 1: Empower government to place all otter species on the national Red List as protected by Cambodian law. (Note that the otter species that have been omitted from the list have been omitted in error, as they trigger protected status according to the Law on Forestry due to their global Red List status, so this component will correct a legal error.)

Potential impacts: Increased conservation of endangered otters; Reduced income to some local communities by preventing hunting of otters for customary use.

Mitigation: This issue is not valid for the Cardamoms and coastal zone as these areas are classified as Protected Areas by law, and all hunting of any wildlife is strictly prohibited within Protected Areas according to Article 49 of the Law on Forestry. However, it is an issue for the Tonle Sap site, which is not legally protected. However, our studies show that local customary use of otters is negligible – they typically do not hunt otters for food or medicine – instead they hunt to sell the otters to traders. This trade is illegal even for species that are not listed on the national Red List according to Article 50 of the Law on Forestry – hunting is only allowed for customary use. We will assess customary use and if we find that there are opportunity costs for loss of this use, we will include compensation within voluntary community agreements.

Component 2: Ensure that otter conservation interventions at the Tonle Sap - a lake which undergoes massive expansion during the monsoon floods - are effective at conserving otters across their range and throughout the year. This focuses on research on otter distribution and ecology.

Potential impacts: Increased understanding of distribution of otters to inform site management; no impact on local communities

Mitigation: None necessary

Component 3: Ensure that communities and government staff understand and support our efforts to protect otters and fishing cats and the habitats upon which they rely at Tonle Sap Lake.

Potential impacts: Improved stakeholder participation in conservation; Reduced income to some local communities by preventing hunting of otters for customary use.

Mitigation: If we find that there are opportunity costs for loss of this customary use, we will include compensation within voluntary community agreements.

Component 4: Initiate conservation programs at sites with recent hairy-nosed otter discoveries.

Potential impacts: Improved conservation; Reduced income to some local communities by preventing hunting of otters for customary use.

Mitigation: This component focuses on a protected species and in protected areas within the coastal zone, so no mitigation is necessary as the hunting activities are illegal. Also, customary use of this species in this area has been shown to be negligible – the hunting is for illegal trade.

Component 5: Support the development of an Asian Taskforce for region-wide otter conservation.

Potential impacts: Improved communication in regional conservation efforts.

Mitigation: None necessary

Component 6: Improved knowledge of ecology and behaviour of wild and confiscated pangolins to support improved survivorship of confiscated individuals. We will publish the results of the pangolin

radio-tracking study and circulate the publication regionally to governments, PA managers, conservation NGOs, researchers and other interested parties..

Potential impacts: Improved understanding of the ecology of wild pangolins; improved survivorship of released pangolins.

Mitigation: None necessary

Component 7: Mitigate threats to pangolins in the Central Cardamoms, and ensure increased survival of confiscated individuals.

Potential impacts: Improved conservation of pangolins within a protected area where all hunting for the species is illegal; Reduced income to some local villagers by preventing illegal hunting of pangolins from a protected area.

Mitigation: None necessary because all hunting of this species, either within or outside of Protected Areas, is illegal under Article 48 of the Law on Forestry which lists the pangolin as Rare, and as such it is illegal to hunt them. Also, it is illegal to hunt any species in the Central Cardamoms Protected Forest according to Article 49 of the Law on Forestry, as it is a Protected Area and the hunting of any wildlife within a PA is illegal. Also, our studies show that local customary use of pangolins in the Central Cardamoms is negligible – local communities typically do not specifically hunt pangolins, as they occur in low density and are hard to capture. People typically hunt pangolins only to sell to traders, not for local customary use. Even if people were legally allowed to hunt pangolins, which they are not allowed to do anywhere in Cambodia, this trade is illegal according to Article 50 of the Law on Forestry which only allows hunting for customary use and not for trade.

Component 8: Ensure the survival of confiscated pangolins by improving the only existing pangolin rehabilitation center in Cambodia (the ACCB), ensuring that injured pangolins get treated at this place, and support the training of relevant staff to care for captive pangolins.

Potential impacts: Improved survivorship of released pangolins.

Mitigation: None necessary

Component 9: Ensure stable or increasing populations of Asiatic black bears and Malayan sun bears in the Central Cardamom Mountains by linking detailed and comprehensive bear monitoring data to law enforcement patrol plans and habitat protection activities in a timely and effective manner.

Potential impacts: Improved survivorship of protected bear species within a protected area; reduced income by local communities who illegally hunt bears.

Mitigation: None necessary as all hunting of this species, either within or outside of protected areas, is illegal under Article 48 of the Law on Forestry which lists the Malayan sun bear as Rare and the Asiatic black bear as Endangered, and as such it is illegal to hunt them. Also, it is illegal to hunt any species in the Central Cardamoms Protected Forest according to Article 49 of the Law on Forestry, as it is a Protected Area and the hunting of any wildlife within a PA is illegal. Also, our studies show that local customary use of bears in this area is virtually non-existent – the local communities typically do not specifically hunt bears as they occur in remote areas well within the Protected Area, are hard to capture, and are not part of customary forest use. People typically hunt bears to sell to

traders, not for local customary use. Even if people were legally allowed to hunt bears, which they are not allowed to do anywhere in Cambodia, this trade is illegal according to Article 50 of the Law on Forestry which only allows hunting for customary use and not for trade.

Participatory implementation

Throughout the project, from pre-implementation to completion, we communicate and partner with local communities, in the Cardamoms and coastal zone using the Commune Councils and Community Natural Resource Management Committee, and in the Tonle Sap using the Commune Councils and Community Fishery Management Committees as forums for discussions and open participatory discussion.

As we develop actions that reduce threats to focal species, we work again closely with local communities to identify strategies to stop the threats and to assess the opportunity cost of not engaging in those activities. Those costs are then offset through voluntary community agreements, wherein the communities themselves decide what sort of compensatory offset they receive. Previous examples include buffalo banks for communities to regenerate their old lowland rice paddies in return for not conducting slash-and-burn rice cultivation in biodiversity-rich hill forests. Other compensations can include direct employment in patrolling, agricultural support through improved equipment and methods, or support to complete a Participatory Land Use Planning assessment to facilitate secure land tenure. These agreements are reviewed annually and revised to adapt to the changing situation. All decisions are taken based on the best available science and are appropriate for the socioeconomic context, which often varies from village to village.

Attached is a feasibility study for one of the communities in the Tonle Sap Lake site, which gives a clearer idea of the approach that is taken.

Compensation for loss of customary use through conservation agreement

In each conservation agreement, we determine the impacts of project activities on local communities through a feasibility assessment that is produced based on a series of stakeholder workshops and meetings. These typically consist of preliminary fact-finding meetings with most or all members of the community that build upon previous biodiversity surveys and threat assessments, followed by follow-up meetings with the commune committees and community representatives to discuss their level of buy-in, after which time we engage the entire community through open meetings to discuss the conservation targets, opportunity costs, and to develop the benefit package. During these series of meetings we also re-assess the conservation targets, the political and legal considerations, the capacity of the team, and the costs. The parties to each agreement then design a benefit package that reflects the needs of resource owners and addresses the costs imposed by the conservation commitment. These packages are designed by the entire community during large open-access participatory meetings that are free for everyone to attend. A series of options and their costs are discussed, and the community votes to decide which benefits they should receive for that given year. We also provide funds for community representatives to visit other communities that engage in similar agreements, to learn more about the sort of benefits packages they design. A selection of different benefits are typically provided each year, such as education benefits, direct employment, agricultural support, and participatory land use planning exercises to facilitate land ownership.

Benefit packages are typically designed both to reach the entire communities and to provide opportunities for individuals who face greater opportunity costs from conservation or who are

especially motivated. The diverse benefits that may feature in agreements include: wages for conservation jobs, investments in social development (education, health, renewable energy, etc), and legal support for acquiring land management rights.

Criteria for eligibility and measures to assist affected persons

All persons living within the communes in the focal conservation areas are eligible to participate in the project.

The Commune Committees and CNRMCs/CFMC's will decide how to cope with the impacts of this project. They will have the framework of offset costs to work with, ensuring that their livelihoods, economic situation and food security are maintained or improved compared to levels pre-project implementation.

We will also work with the communities in the Tonle Sap to clearly define and demarcate their community fisheries so that they can better recognise and manage their communal resources (see feasibility study). We will provide improved access to alternative resources such as renewable energies or fuel efficient stoves, which will reduce reliance on fuelwood. We will encourage alternative livelihood activities that support the conservation management of the area, such as small-scale community-based ecotourism or production of 'otter-friendly' handicrafts. We also provide education benefits by providing financial support to employ more teachers and by providing equipment and resources for the schools. We provide direct employment as boat drivers, guides, community rangers and as local members of the research and monitoring teams.

Conflict resolution, complaint mechanisms and implementation arrangements

Conflicts and grievances involving affected persons will be resolved by taking the matter to the Commune Council or the CNRMC's/CFMC's, who will discuss the issues and either deal with them internally, or mediate with the Project.

The project will be implemented by Conservation International in partnership with the partners listed in the proposal. The Cambodian Forestry Administration and Fisheries Administration are the government counterpart agencies in the project.