

Process Framework for Involuntary Restrictions

26 March 2020

CEPF Grant 110327

Sansom Mlup Prey Organization

Wildlife-friendly community irrigation ponds for climate resilience, habitat and collective management in Cambodia

Kulen Promtep Wildlife Sanctuary, Preah Vihear Province, Cambodia

Grant Summary

1. Sansom Mlup Prey Organization
2. Wildlife-friendly community irrigation ponds for climate resilience, habitat and collective management in Cambodia
3. CEPF - 110327
4. USD \$180,000
5. 06/01/2020 – 05/31/2022
6. Cambodia
7. This project will pilot linkages between climate resilience for farmers and wildlife by creating and collectively managing "wildlife-friendly community irrigation ponds" in community zones of the Kulen Promtep Wildlife Sanctuary (KPWS). Two villages in the wildlife sanctuary have been selected for their importance to biodiversity and the existing community experience involving the co-benefits of wildlife-friendly, organic agriculture and high-value ecotourism linked to critically endangered species visible from the village.

With support, input and consultation from stakeholders and partners, the project will excavate two wildlife-friendly community irrigation ponds. The pond locations will be accessible to farmers with adjacent farmland, and each of these “clusters” will be responsible for collectively managing the water resource according to an agreed conservation plan. The conservation agreements will outline the cooperative management principles for the water resource, guide the use of ponds outside of the rainy season, and will ensure the clusters’ wildlife-friendly water resource management and adherence to Ibis Rice conservation principles.

The project aims to increase water availability for Ibis Rice farmers, increasing yields and income from rice while contributing to the sustainability and climate resilience of farmers. Moreover, the ponds will increase availability of aquatic foraging habitat for endangered water birds, increasing nest success and leading to larger populations while enhancing wildlife viewing opportunities for ecotourists, maintaining or increasing ecotourism revenue for these communities. Finally, the project hopes to develop a culture of collective responsibility and provide a model for wildlife-friendly collective management of water resources in community zones of protected areas. If successful, this model can be promoted and brought to scale through the work of management authorities at relevant state ministries and departments.

8. 09 March 2020

The Process Framework will describe the project and how restrictions of access to natural resources and measures to assist affected communities. Affected communities should have the opportunity to participate in the drafting of the Process Framework. Typically, the Applicant will prepare a draft Framework that will then be shared and discussed with local communities and other relevant stakeholders. Based on the consultations, a final Framework will be prepared. CEPF may provide guidance on development of the Framework and will review and approve the final Framework prior to approving the final project proposal application. The Process Framework should include the following elements:

A. Project background

The Northern Plains of Cambodia support a suite of highly threatened species, including five Critically Endangered bird species, among which the Giant Ibis (*Thaumatibis gigantea*), Cambodia's National Bird, is the most threatened. The three Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) that make up the Northern Plains Corridor are protected under the Chhep Wildlife Sanctuary (formerly Preah Vihear Protected Forest), Kulen Promtep Wildlife Sanctuary and Prey Preah Rokha Wildlife Sanctuary. These protected areas are inhabited by approximately 25,000 local people who live in nearly 50 villages that pre-date the establishment of the protected areas. These people practice rain-fed rice cultivation and rely heavily on forest resources. Although this creates a potential conflict between protected area management authorities and local communities, it also creates an opportunity to engage them in conservation and sustainable agricultural practices in a way that can both protect the forest ecosystem and promote climate change resilience.

Since the enactment of Protected Area Law (2008), the Ministry of Environment in collaboration with the Wildlife Conservation Society have been implementing participatory protected area zoning activities to develop four management zones within the protected areas (Core, Conservation Area, Sustainable Use, and Community) together with local communities. The process and zonation plans have now been approved by the Preah Vihear provincial authorities, and has been submitted for ratification by the Ministry of Environment, and subsequent approval by the Council of Ministers.

Within the Community Zone of a protected area, a land use plan is developed for each village. This plan determines areas that can be cultivated for rice, areas of forest which must be protected due to the services that it provides, and areas of forest that may be cleared in the future for pre-defined community uses. This zonation management approach for Cambodian protected areas, and specifically the creation of community zones, is currently the only way that a community can obtain user-rights within a protected area, and also serves as an effective barrier to large-scale land acquisition by external actors. Within community zones, it is therefore essential that environmentally sensitive agricultural practices are strengthened and innovative climate resilient approaches are developed to maximize productivity and reduce associated impacts on the surrounding ecosystem. These community zones contain some extremely important habitat, and there are some proven co-benefits between organic and wildlife-friendly agriculture practices and foraging opportunities for critically endangered birds.

Ibis Rice was conceived by the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) in 2009 to produce wildlife-friendly agricultural products from remote communities located in protected areas in order to improve livelihoods whilst incentivizing conservation practices. To deliver this program, WCS supported the formation of Sansom Mlup Prey Organization (SMP), a local Cambodian NGO that works with farmers and create access to markets through the Ibis Rice scheme. In 2017, the Ibis Rice Conservation Company, Ltd., (IRCC) was incorporated to fulfil the potential of the concept. IRCC now exports rice to buyers in Europe, North America, Singapore, and Hong Kong and pays farmers a 40% premium for following compliance to the wildlife-friendly and organic standards. SMP continues to work with Ibis Rice farmers to deliver on this mission and support wildlife-friendly and climate change resilient agricultural livelihoods in these communities.

There is a need to build on the strength of Ibis Rice's market leverage and capacity to become a comprehensive business partner for valuable and wildlife-friendly agricultural production in the community zones. Building on this success requires ensuring agricultural diversification for products beyond rice, and addressing climate change resilience for both farmers and wildlife.

Kulen Promtep Wildlife Sanctuary (KPWS) in Preah Vihear province is 240,190ha, of which 94,471 will be designated as community zone. In the project target villages (Tmatboey and Prey Veng) there is a total of 8,200ha of community zone of which only 2,400ha is currently used as agricultural land. Of this agricultural land 1,400ha is being cultivated under the Ibis Rice scheme. Within both the agricultural land and the non-agricultural land there are incredibly important habitats for critically endangered species.

As rainfall becomes more unpredictable due to climate change, farmers are looking for solutions. These solutions could potentially include intensification of rice through agrochemicals and a switch to more resilient upland cash crops such as cassava and cashew which would likely instigate rapid deforestation of the community zones. A lack of access to water in the dry-season presents similar problems to both farmers and wildlife. Without sufficient access to supplementary irrigation during short term droughts during the growing (rainy) season, farmers lack opportunities to sustainably diversify their production. During the dry season lack of water makes agriculture unrealistic, and during this time people may be inclined to exploit forest resources for income generation. Moreover, less available water sources throughout the year means threatened wildlife is forced to aggregate to the remaining available water resources, increasing the possibility of human-wildlife conflict.

Ecotourism has become an important enterprise for some communities within wildlife sanctuaries, however the success of these ecotourism sites is driven by the reliability of sightings of key-species. Should the forest be lost in the community zones, tourists would have to travel deeper into the forest with less certainty of sightings and the link between wildlife and economic opportunities to the village could be lost.

The primary function of the "wildlife-friendly community irrigation ponds" pilot project is to offer supplementary irrigation during temporary droughts in the wet season during crucial stages of rice production and as such improving the climate resilience and leverage of the Ibis Rice scheme. These ponds will offer supplementary water sources for diversified organic agriculture immediately before or after rice production that may include legumes, vegetables, and seed crops which deliver benefits to soil for rice production. The ponds under wildlife-friendly management will provide refuge and habitat for wildlife which will in turn provide a co-benefit for birdwatching and ecotourism.

Without this project there would be a lack of working examples of collective management of the newly designated community zones and potentially an increased level of deforestation within them. The hugely successful Ibis Rice project is under threat if it does not offer a viable climate change resilience strategy to farmers. Without this project there is a risk that the lack of collective management of community zones as well as the climate vulnerability of farming leads to the rapid loss of forest and habitat in community zones and intensification of agriculture and increase in the use of agrochemicals. This would also make community-based ecotourism impossible going forward.

B. Participatory implementation

The initial activities of the implementation of this pilot project will involve participatory meetings and consultations with the communities where the project has proposed to excavate irrigation ponds. These consultations will be used to gather input about the implementation of the project and to determine the criteria for selecting the sites where the ponds will be located. These consultations will also help to provide input for the development of a conservation plan that will guide the management and determine the guidelines for the use of the irrigation ponds.

The pond locations will be accessible to farmers with adjacent farmland, and each of these “clusters” will be responsible for collectively managing the water resource according to an agreed conservation plan. Together with the community stakeholders, the project will identify these clusters of farmers that show high potential for cooperative use of a water resource, willingness to excavate ponds on their farmland, complete understanding and agreement with the rationale behind the project, and a high commitment to organic and wildlife-friendly agricultural production.

The project will work closely with the target communities and relevant stakeholders including local authorities to introduce them to the project activities and collect community input. Such consultations will contribute to the development of conservation agreements. The conservation agreements will outline the cooperative management principles for the water resource, guide the use of ponds outside of the rainy season, and will ensure the clusters’ wildlife-friendly water resource management and adherence to Ibis Rice conservation principles. Conservation agreements for each wildlife-friendly community irrigation ponds will be signed and endorsed by cluster members and approved by the Community Protected Areas Committee (CPA).

C. Criteria for eligibility of affected persons

The persons primarily affected by implementation of the wildlife-friendly community irrigation ponds will be the “cluster” members with adjacent farmland who will agree to having the ponds located in their fields.

However, there are others who may be negatively affected by the project implementation. This may include community people who are accustomed to using the cluster areas for grazing cattle, but are restricted from doing so after pond excavation and installation of perimeter fences.

Other negative impacts may also include feelings of resentment or jealousy, or perceptions of favoritism over the location and/or access to resources from irrigation ponds.

The criteria of affected persons would include:

- An individual or group who has expressed complaint through the project grievance mechanism.
- Any individual or group who has made a complaint through a community stakeholder group, project staff or local authority.

D. Measures to assist the affected persons

After receiving notification of any complaint, query, or concern from an affected individual, the project will hold a meeting or call with the affected persons to discuss and understand their complaint and determine a personalized measure to help alleviate the issue and any negative effects. For example, if someone is concerned about restrictions on cattle grazing, the project might ask for a delay in grazing until cover crops are well established, and then help facilitate some carefully supervised and minimal grazing on certain areas. In short, any measure to assist affected persons who have made a complaint through the aforementioned channels would be done in close consultation and agreement with the affected persons in order to find the best solution to the issue.

E. Conflict resolution and complaint mechanism.

- Sansom Mlup Prey Organization (SMP) – Keo Socheat, Executive Director, socheat@smpcambodia.org, Tel: 086 55 00 27 / 011 98 45 44
- CEPF Regional Implementation Team:
 - Organization:** International Union for Conservation of Nature, Asia Regional Office
 - Phone:** +66 2 662 4029
 - Email:** CEPF-Indoburma@iucn.org
 - Mailing Address:** 63 Sukhumvit Soi 39, Wattana, Bangkok 10110, Thailand
- CEPF Executive Director: cepfexecutive@conservation.org
- The project has planned for appropriate grievance mechanisms in the project activities and has budgeted for these activities and materials. Notification of the grievance mechanisms will take a few different forms and will use Khmer language. Firstly, these will include outdoor signboards with the required information in the to be installed at the location of each pond.

At both villages where the pilot project will operate, SMP has helped support the formation of Village Marketing Network (VMN) groups and Community Protected Area (CPA) committees. These groups usually meet at the group leaders' house. In addition to the outdoor signboards, posters and letterboxes with the required information will be printed and placed in visible locations at these meeting points for convenient access existing community management entities. Posters and letterboxes will also be installed at the two respective Commune Halls that house the offices and administrative services of local government authorities of the villages.

Additionally, the project will fully explain the grievance mechanism verbally at the beginning of the project implementation and during specific phases of the project progress, including at the groundbreaking ceremonies of the pilot ponds

- “We will share all grievances – and a proposed response – with the Regional Implementation Team and the CEPF Grant Director within 15 days. If the claimant is not satisfied following the response, they may submit the grievance directly to the CEPF Executive Director at cepfexecutive@conservation.org or by surface mail. If the claimant is not satisfied with the response from the CEPF Executive Director, they may submit the grievance to the World Bank at the local World Bank office.”

F. Implementation Arrangements

The project intends to implement the pilot in villages where SMP already operates and has prior established relationships with farmers, local authorities and other stakeholders such as park rangers and provincial level environmental officials, and CPAs.

One of the issues addressed by this project – water availability for agriculture – has been determined by farmer's concerns, Ibis Rice data, and SMP's understanding from our work in the communities and implementing other projects. Any decisions for the specific locations of the irrigation ponds will be made in close consultation with the aforementioned stakeholders and excavations will not take place without prior informed consent and endorsements of a conservation agreement.