



**Process Framework
for restrictions on access to natural resources**

6 January 2023

CEPF Grant 113618

Grantee: WWF-Laos & WWF-Thailand

***Project Title:
From Mountain to Mekong - Empowering local
communities along the Phou Xiang Thong-Pa Tam Mekong in participatory
freshwater fisheries and aquatic species conservation and management***

Project Location

LAOS

**Province: Salavan
Districts: Lakonpheng, Kongxedone**

THAILAND

**Province: Ubon Ratchathani
Districts: Pho Sai and Khong Jiam**

Grant Summary

1. **Grantee organization:** World Wide Fund for Nature
Project title: From Mountain to Mekong - Empowering local communities along the Phou Xiang Thong-Pa Tam Mekong in participatory freshwater fisheries and aquatic species conservation and management
2. **Grant number:** 113618
3. **Grant amount** (US dollars): USD 150,000
4. **Proposed dates of grant:** 1 April 2023
5. **Countries where activities will be undertaken:** Lao PDR, Thailand
6. **Summary of the project:**
As an integral part of a larger project, the CEPF project will aim at improving the sustainable management of freshwater resources in the Phou Xieng Thong/Pha Taem Lower Mekong Section bordering Lao PDR and Thailand for the benefit of climate-vulnerable and fishing-reliant rural communities. It will do so by regulating fishing activities through a participatory and co-management approach. It will particularly work in 7 of the 14 target villages to set up Fish Conservation Zones as a model nature-based solution to maintain sustainable freshwater fish stocks in support of local livelihood, while also indirectly contributing to the protection or repopulation of rare or endangered species.
7. **Date of preparation of this document:** 6 January 2023

8. Restrictions on access to natural resources:

In response to declining fish stocks and diversity, partly driven by unregulated fishing practices, the present project will work with local communities to set up Fish Conservation Zones (FCZs) in seven villages. In April-May 2022, a Feasibility Study was completed to assess the relevance and potential of strengthening fisheries co-management in the target area and for this purpose, consultations were undertaken with community members of the target villages. A total of 238 community members (mostly fishers), including 20% women, attended the consultations and provided extensive information and data on changing fish population trends and current fishing practices, as well as shared their insight on the multiple challenges they currently face in terms of sustaining their sources of livelihood. These are explained in the Rationale section of the proposal and have helped to inform the project design. Through the consultations, communities have also confirmed their interest and willingness to engage in participatory sustainable fish management strategies that can help them sustain fish supplies upon which they depend for their livelihood.

Yet, as FCZs will entail restrictions on access to aquatic resources, with possible temporary implication on local communities livelihood, particularly that of the fishing-reliant households, community members have also stressed the need for livelihood support to compensate the loss of income and food source as an outcome of FCZ intervention. Such livelihood support has been integrated as a parallel strategy under the larger project funded by WWF-CH, which will look at reducing pressure on fishing resources by providing support for alternative or improved nature-positive and climate-smart income-generating activities to fishing-reliant households.

9. Participatory implementation:

The implementation of FCZ usually follows a bottom-up co-management approach where communities play a central role in deciding by themselves the need for FCZ, the FCZ model that best meets their needs, and actively enforce the adopted FCZ regulations in coordination with government authorities. In line with such an approach, WWF will deploy a number of engagement strategies:

→ **FPIC process** (to be conducted with WWF's internal funding sources): As per WWF standard practice, WWF will conduct a consultation process in line with WWF FPIC guidelines to obtain free, prior and informed consent from communities to proceed with the project. The consultation process will involve a total of three consultations per village over a period of two months allowing each village sufficient time to consider their involvement in the project based on the pros and cons of FCZ. WWF will prioritize the participation of fishing-reliant households as a prime target group and will take into consideration gender-based sensitivities, by for example conducting separate discussions for women and men. It should be noted that village participation in the project will also be determined based on two prime conditions that will be explicitly conveyed to the communities during the FPIC consultations:

(i) Communities' willingness and commitment to eventually self-fund FCZ running costs if these successfully demonstrate sufficient benefits for the communities. Once FCZs are running, regular fish catch monitoring involving fishers will be undertaken to partly serve the purpose of gathering evidence of FCZ impact, based on which discussions with the communities will be engaged to explore self-funding mechanisms that can sustain FCZ beyond project life.

(ii) Communities' commitment to involve women's participation in all baseline and end-line assessments, FCZ decision-making and enforcement, livelihood activities and land-use planning discussions.

→ **Site visits:** As part of the FPIC process, WWF will organize site visits to villages where FCZs are already successfully implemented as a model nature-based solution to sustainably manage aquatic resources. Two representatives of each target village will be invited to join the site visit, allowing village representatives to learn from the experience of other villages and better visually understand the benefits of FCZ to maintain sustainable aquatic resources. Cognizant of women's particular reliance on fish products for income generation and securing household consumption needs, the project will to the extent possible encourage the presence of at least one female representative per village (ideally from fishing households) to join the site visit. Similarly, women's participation in the host villages will also be encouraged to share their experience and perspective on how they have benefited from the FCZs.

→ **Consensus building:** Achieving consensus within villages is essential for the successful implementation of FCZ regulations. Further consultation will therefore be

organized in each target village to allow communities to discuss the need of applying sustainable fisheries management within their respective villages and how to implement them with minimal trade-offs for those reliant on fish resources. In this regard, best-practices and lessons learned from previous FCZ will be presented to inform community consensus.

- **Consultation on FCZ Regulations:** Based on the initial consensus reached within each village, the project will support the development process of the FCZ village regulations which will be led by an FCZ Task Force composed of a smaller group of villagers and DAFO/FDO representatives, in consultation with the broader communities, particularly fishing-reliant households.

- **Socio-economic survey and consultations for selection of beneficiary fishing households** (to be conducted with WWF-CH funding sources): WWF will complete a pre-intervention socio-economic survey of fishing households to draw a socio-economic profile of each fishing household in the target village. Based on the data collected, WWF will select through a participatory approach between 20 households most in need of support. Priority will be given to low or medium-income fishing households which generate the biggest portion of their income from fisheries, have limited alternative sources of livelihood (e.g. no cultivation plot lands) and may be impacted the greatest by FCZs. As part of WWF's effort to empower women, priority will be given to one female member per selected beneficiary fishing households to join livelihood support activities. This particular point will be made a requirement for communities' participation in the project and will be explicitly conveyed to communities during the FPIC process. Furthermore, eligibility for livelihood support will be linked to compliance with FCZ regulations. These eligibility criteria will be discussed with communities, which may suggest additional criteria to consider in the selection of beneficiary households.

10. **Measures to assist affected persons:**

With additional funding sources from WWF-CH, WWF will deploy a parallel strategy to either improve current livelihood activities or diversify livelihood activities of fishing households, especially those with a greater portion of income generated from fisheries. In doing so, this complementary intervention strategy will ensure that the enabling conditions are in place to mobilize fishing households' support to FCZ implementation. Similarly to the FCZ, this strategy will apply a participatory approach whereby beneficiary households will decide on the livelihood models they wish to engage. The process will include the following steps:

- **Identification of group-based nature-positive and climate-smart livelihood models:** WWF will seek partnership with an experienced Business Development service provider - i.e. KAPA - to support beneficiary households to identify alternative livelihood models or opportunities. Each household will be represented by one member only (ideally female member) and group-based discussions will be facilitated to

prioritize the identification of group-based livelihood models that can involve the participation and merging of input from several beneficiary households. Beneficiary households will be asked to propose a tentative list of preferred livelihood activities, the feasibility of which will then be assessed through a SWOT analysis, looking specifically at the following indicators:

- a) Production process, costs and return on investment
- b) Households capacity: skills, knowledge, experience
- c) Household assets (e.g. land availability, equipment, etc.)
- d) Natural assets (availability of natural resources)
- e) Marketing opportunities, market accessibility
- f) Environmental impact
- g) Climate resilience

Based on the SWOT analysis, beneficiary households will be asked to choose one or two livelihood models that potentially offer the highest prospect of marketing opportunities, and best capitalize on households' current capacities and assets.

- **Business development capacity building:** with the support of the business development service provider, WWF will facilitate training sessions for the production groups on entrepreneurship skills, such as business planning, basic accounting, branding and marketing strategies; and provide tailored coaching on business plan development. Where needed, additional technical training on specific soft skills and production techniques will be provided with the participation of other specialized resource persons/entities to advise for example on adapted climate resilient agriculture techniques or handicraft techniques, management skills, negotiation skills, marketing skills, etc.
- **Provision of production assets:** Provision of production assets is important in terms of livelihood support as it allows beneficiaries to jump-start economic activity, while providing physical collateral which will help production groups to access loans from financial institutions. Based on the assessment, WWF will provide in-kind support to beneficiaries with physical assets (tools, supplies, raw materials, etc.) that are essential for production. Only assets requested by the beneficiary and justified by viable business plans will be provided to ensure proper utilization, ownership and sustainability.
- **Access to market support:** Market access will be improved by linking beneficiaries to buyers/private companies. This will include facilitating beneficiaries' participation to promotional events (e.g. exhibitions, show rooms, etc.), organizing cross-visits, and improving access to information and markets through the use of digital platforms (e-commerce websites) and social media tools (i.e. WA, Instagram). In Laos, WWF already has a working relationship with the Lao Handicraft Association which will be involved as an advisory partner in establishing networks with relevant government services and private sector partners.
- **Access to finance support:** capital constraints inhibiting business expansion will be addressed by facilitating beneficiaries' access to finance through information dissemination on available credit schemes, organizing field visits of micro-credit institutions to beneficiary villages, and training on how to apply for loans. In Laos,

WWF already has a working relationship with the Lao Micro-Finance Association which has extensive experience in training rural communities on microfinance access.

11. **Timeline and resources:**

#	MEASURES	TIMELINE	RESOURCES*
1	FPIC consultations	March-May 2023	USD 3,458 (covered by WWF's internal source)
2	Site visits	April 2023	USD 4,060 (co-funded by CEPF & other project)
3	Consensus building	September 2023	USD 967
4	Consultation on FCZ Regulations	Sept 2023 Feb 2024	USD 2,468
5	Socio-economic survey and consultations for selection of beneficiary fishing households	May-July 2023	USD 6,428 (covered by WWF-CH funding sources)
6	Identification of group-based nature-positive and climate-smart livelihood models	Sept-Oct 2023	USD 13,896 (covered by WWF-CH funding sources)
7	Business development capacity-building	Nov-Dec 2023	USD 58,840 (covered by WWF-CH funding sources)
8	Provision of production assets	Dec 2023 - Jan 2024	USD 35,000 (covered by WWF-CH funding sources)
10	Access to market support	Jan 2024-Dec 2025	USD 14,000 (covered by WWF-CH funding sources)
11	Access to finance support	Jan 2024-Dec 2025	USD 14,000 (covered by WWF-CH funding sources)

* Indicated amounts exclude staff and office costs.

** Costs for protective supplies against Covid-19 (i.e. masks, hand sanitizer) are included in meeting/consultation/training costs

12. **Monitoring and evaluation:** This section will outline arrangements for participatory monitoring of project activities as they relate to (positive and adverse) impacts on persons at the project site(s), and for monitoring the effectiveness of the measures listed in Section 11.

With regard to FCZ, the project will set up Village Fisheries Monitoring Teams composed of volunteer fishers (10 per village) who will be actively involved in collecting data using Fish Catch Monitoring Reports. The Fish Catch Monitoring Report is a simple tool that WWF-Laos and WWF-Thailand have commonly used in previous phases once FCZ are set up to monitor changes throughout project intervention on the type and quantify of fishes caught per unit effort, the fishing gears used, the location of fishing, the weather/water level condition during fishing time and the portion of fish catch used either as a source of income or food. These reports are completed by fishers each time they go fishing and will be collected on a monthly basis by WWF teams for data entry and analysis. Data collected by the third year will be used to engage preliminary discussions with communities to assess initial FCZ performance and outcomes, identify gaps, impact on fishing households and explore way forward in terms of sustaining the FCZs beyond project intervention. Similar discussion will be held by the end of the project once clearer benefits have been generated by the project in terms of fish population and livelihood outcomes.

With regard to livelihood support, monthly monitoring will be done by the WWF Project Team over a period of 24 months to assess the performance of production groups and identify challenges. Depending on the challenges encountered, WWF will identify measures to further support production groups. These can include additional training or coaching on either specific production techniques or business management aspects. An additional USD 14,400, covered by WWF-CH, has been allocated for this purpose. It should be noted that access to market and access to finance support will be carried out on a continuous basis over a period of 24 months.

Lastly, WWF will also use its Grievance Redressal Mechanism as a source of information to monitor beneficiaries' satisfaction or dissatisfaction with regard to project activities. Communities will be fully informed of their right to report complaints/suggestions/feedback at the start of the project. See Section 14 below for more details on WWF GRM.

13. **Disclosure:**

Community members will be informed of the project objectives, approach and activities during the FPIC consultations (see Section 9 above) and GRM information sessions (see Section 14 below).

14. **Grievance redress mechanism:**

As part of the mitigation and response measures that WWF will deploy under the present project, WWF will set up a Grievance Redressal Mechanism. This is a standard practice applied by WWF to most of its projects that entail a level of social and environmental risks. Both WWF-Laos and WWF-Thailand have already Grievance Redressal Mechanisms in place which outline the process for the submission, identification, follow-up, evaluation, resolution, and monitoring of any grievance, suggestion, or feedback related to program/project

implementation activities. Please refer to the attachment section for a copy of the GRM Guiding Tools.

Channels of communication to submit reports

Based on the existing Guiding Tools, WWF will, in the context of the present project, offer a number of options for communities to communicate either verbally or in writing grievances, suggestions, and feedback. These will include:

- Direct reporting to an appointed WWF Project Officers present in the field who will either receive the Grievance Register Form or help to complete the form on behalf of the person wishing to submit a complaint, suggestion or feedback;
- Complaint boxes located at strategic locations decided in consultation with communities;
- Local hotline number (mobile number) to receive calls/messages managed by the Project Officers in charge (numbers TBD once PO are recruited);
- Postal address where the Project Officers will be based;
- Email managed by the ESSF Manager who will then coordinate with the Project Officers in the field. For Laos, the emails are: wwf-laos@wwf.org.la. For Thailand: ProjectComplainth@wwf.or.th
- WWF WhistleB webpage where a standard complaint report is made available in several languages including Lao and Thai (<https://report.whistleb.com/en/message/wwfcommunity>)

Other options for submitting grievances, suggestions and feedback will also include:

- Contacting the CEPF Asia-based Regional Implementation Team via email (CEPF-INDOBURMA@iucn.org) and/or telephone: (+66) 2 6624029
- Contacting Conservation International via the CI Ethics Hotline (toll-free telephone line: +1-866-294-8674) or secured website: <https://secure.ethicspoint.com/domain/media/en/gui/10680/index.htm/>

Plans for informing communities on GRM

- WWF has already standard information materials on GRM that are being used for other projects (see example attached). Yet with additional internal sources, print and digital information materials (flyers and posters) on WWF-Laos' and WWF-Thailand's Grievance Redressal Mechanisms will be adjusted to the specific requirement of the project (i.e. summary of project and inclusion of CEPF and CI contacts) and disseminated during in-person information sessions conducted at the start of the project and through social media platforms (WA, instagram, FB) with the support of key community leaders.
- Information materials, mostly posters, will also be placed in strategic locations such as community centres and schools.
- Content of materials will be sufficiently accessible for audiences with different literacy backgrounds. Community members will be informed of the project (brief introduction), their right to submit complaints/suggestions/feedback, channels to submit complaints/suggestions/feedback and the process in place to respond to complaints/suggestions/feedback.

- Community members will be regularly reminded of their right to raise a complaint during subsequent project events - e.g. information sessions on newly set-up FCZs - and site visits by project team members to monitor FCZ Patrolling.
- Reference to the WWF GRM will also be included in the Declaration signed by each FCZ Patrollers as well as in the FCZ Enforcement SOPs intended to be developed under the project.

Processing of complaints/suggestions/feedback

WWF shall follow the process outlined in the GRM Guiding Tools to process complaints/suggestions/feedback. See attached. In the context of this specific project, WWF will also share all grievances — and a proposed response — with the Regional Implementation Team and the CEPF Grant Director within 15 days.