

# **The Process Framework for Avoidance of the Adverse Impacts on Indigenous Peoples and Involuntary Restrictions of Access to Resources**

(Compliance with CEPF's Social Safeguard Policy)

**Project title:** Project for Strengthening Local Community Network for Fish Conservation in Ing River Basin

**Organization:** Living River Siam (LRS)

**Project Duration** 1 November 2012 - 31 October 2013

## **1. Project background**

LRS will work with the local communities to organize the activities mainly based on local knowledge, culture, and belief systems. The activities are not just tools for raising awareness to protect the riverine ecosystems but they are also tools for networking. They are good tools for communication with and between local communities. The success in one area will spread to and accepted by other area because it is based on local ways. Visiting and supporting each other, the communities can strengthen their networks. Many messages can be sent through those activities, such as messages about the importance of people's participation, communities' rights and capacity, climate change, policies and plans for large-scale projects, and networking

Local communities are the key for protection of biodiversity in the Mekong River Basin. They have rights and capacity to protect and manage their natural resources. In many areas in the basin, local communities have got together to manage their natural resources effectively. The work of those communities should be supported and promoted as a good practice for riverine ecosystem management in the basin. A good example of those is the network of nineteen local communities in the Ing River, which create fish protection zones in the river in their villages.

Ing River is a tributary of the Mekong River. It originates from Phi Pannam mountain range in Prayao province. The river runs through many districts in the two provinces and enters the Mekong river at Pak Ing Village, Sridonchai sub-district, Chiang Khong district, Chiang Rai province. The river is 250 kilometer long. The river basin is 7,338 square kilometers.

Local communities along the Ing river from the upper to lower Ing River have done many activities for natural restoration. For example, watershed restoration, community forest, organic agriculture, and fish protection zones. The most important activity is creating fish protection zones, which have been created in nineteen villages already. Creating fish protection zones or river ordination is environmental innovation. However, their work lacks of continuous support and promote. This loose network is also needed to be strengthened.

## 2. The project approach

The **main approach** of this project is people's participation in riverine resource management. Another approach is local knowledge and culture. Our main **vision** is that "local communities have a vital role in maintaining the riverine-ecological balance".

The results we want to achieve for this project are; 1) the aquatic species in the project area are protected. The main species will be benefited from this project are Jullien's Golden Carp, Asiatic Softshell Turtle, Giant Catfish, and Mekong Freshwater Stingray., 2) the strengthened network of local communities in the river for fish protection. A tributary is important for the ecosystem in the Mekong River. And the work as a network is important for the protection. The success of this network in a tributary will be good example of other areas and foundation for expansion to be an international network of Mekong communities.

This project has four objectives;

- 1) to protect rare and endangered aquatic species in the area,
- 2) to support fish protection of the local communities,
- 3) to strengthen the network, and
- 4) to promote the work of the network as a good practice.

Major activities will be taken to achieve the above objectives, include;

1. River ordination to strengthen the nineteen existing zones
2. Establishing three new fish protection zones in three communities
3. Conduct participatory action research

## 3. Assessment on the adverse impacts on indigenous peoples and involuntary restrictions of access to resources

This project will not be implemented in lands or territories traditionally owned, customarily used, or occupied by indigenous peoples. And it will not cause negative impacts to indigenous peoples. All of targeted communities in this project are not indigenous peoples. The aim of this project is not just to protect the fish and ecosystem but also to empower them. Establishing the zone is a tool for cooperative effort and democracy strengthening.

All activities and the access will not be done by involuntariness. The three main activities will be decided and organized by local communities.

### 1. River ordination to strengthen the nineteen existing zones

River ordination in the targeted communities has been done for couple years by villagers themselves with support from NGOs. River ordination is social innovation for environmental protection adapted from Buddhism. It is a tool for environmental conservation based on local culture and belief. Villagers and village committees are organizers of the activities. The activity has been organized based on their voluntariness and culture. The rules and management system of the zones in each community are different depending on the agreement and voluntariness of the members of each community.

Since the activity is based on their culture, practice, and voluntariness, it is unlikely to create adverse impacts to the local communities and the accesses. Moreover, this activity will not only protect the fish but also strengthen local organization and local culture conservation.

### 2. Establishing three new fish protection zones in three communities

All of the processes to establish the new zones will be done by the members of the three local communities. First we will have a meeting with the village committees to explain about the project and ask them if they are interested in this project. After that, we will organize a fieldtrip for them to learn about establishing the fish protection zones from the existing communities. The community's member especially the village committees then will decide whether they want to create the zone or not. To establish the zone, they will discuss to create the rule depending on the context of their villages. Some villages might allow the members to fish in the zones one a year. We will work just as assistants and consultants. River ordination will be organized to make villagers understand more about environmental conservation. Our role is to provide them financial support to organize meeting and ordination activities. We also give them advice and help them to cooperate with local authorities. The rules of the zones can be changed any times depending on the agreement of the communities' members. They don't have to get approval from us or authority.

### 3. Conduct participatory action research

The research is another activity to empower the local community because this activity does not only aim to document data. This research uses the same approaches as Thai Baan (villager) Research approaches. They are indigenous knowledge and people's participation. Thai Baan research is research that all processes are done by villagers with assistance from outsiders such as NGOs. Living River Siam start it with villagers ten years ago. And it has been practiced in many places in Thailand and neighbor countries. Fishermen will be researchers depending on their voluntariness. And the research will be based on local knowledge. The data collection about fish and other aquatic species is not only about ecological aspects but it will be about cultural aspect too. Some examples of cultural data on the species are how to catch the fish, how to make fishing, and folk tale about the fish. The results of the research will be given back to the communities. The research will make villagers understand more about their natural resource and the reasons why they have to do protect fish. It will also make them proud of themselves. The results will make the project more sustainable because all villagers will understand clearer and in the same direction about the importance of the protection. They will have more evidence to explain to outsiders about the importance of their natural resources.

### 4. Measures to avoid the adverse impacts and for mitigation

The success of this project depends on the understanding and voluntariness. Before working with any community, we will organize meeting with them to get approval to do the activities. The work processes will be explained to the communities. And they will be adjusted to meet the needs of the communities. Before establishing a new zone, we will inform them that they are the owner of the zones and they are the one who will organize every activity and the project staffs are their assistants. So the working processes can be changed if they want to. The results of the activities will reported back to communities to make them understand about the project. Besides project staff, we will invite local authority and academic to give advice to communities too.

The project staffs and other staff members of Living River Siam will keep monitoring the situation in the communities. We will organize a meeting with village committees and villagers if there is a problem to be solved. Local authority and academic will be invited to participate in the meeting and give advice too.

Consent by stakeholder participants will be documented for each activity. Participants who offer their consent and wish to continue participation, will be requested to sign a consent form (or affix a finger print next to their name if necessary) that clearly outlines the activity they will be participating in and states that they clearly understand and willingly participate from an informed position. If people are not familiar with Thai language, efforts will be made to ensure that the consent form is explained in the person's relevant local language. Further, this document will also include information on the communication channels they should follow if they are dissatisfied with the project for any reason.

Note: All local communities involved in this CEPF-funded project will be informed of the concept and process of Free, Prior, and Informed Consultation during the course of the project. Further, if subsequent funding is raised during the life time of this project, local communities will be consulted in line with this policy.

## **5. Monitoring avoidance of the adverse impacts**

Monitoring to avoid adverse impacts will be taken continuously throughout the duration of the projection. Project staff will regularly visit the communities in order to monitor the project. We will also contact the committees of the zones and local authority regularly. Villagers can complain about the problems directly to their committees. Workshop or network meeting is a tool to monitor and evaluate the project.

## **6. Conflict resolution and grievance/complaint mechanism**

There are many mechanisms for the villagers or other participants to complain about the project or any activity. The zone committees, headman, and village committees are the existing mechanisms for the conflict resolution and complaint. Community's members can complain about the problems directly to the committees. The rules of the zones can be changed any times depending on the agreement of the communities' members. They don't have to get approval from us or authorities. Villagers can organize a meeting to change it or even cancel the zones.

We will also provide a channel for them to communicate with project staff. In the beginning of the project, we will inform the targeted community about their rights to complain and not to participate in the project if they are not satisfied. We will inform them that they can contact the project staff directly or via a headman, committee, traditional leader, or local authority. We will give them phone number, email address, and mailing address. In the meeting or workshop, we will make sure that every participant has a chance to express their opinion. And we will make sure that they can express freely.

Moreover, this project is based on local culture approach. And to implement this project, we have to gain trust from the villagers. Therefore, cultural mechanisms will also be channel for the expression of dissatisfaction. We will regularly visit the villagers and participate in other community activities besides our activities.

### *Complaint Communication Channel/Mechanism.*

Should participants or other local people express their dissatisfaction with the project for any reason; the project will provide opportunities for them to communicate their dissatisfaction to one or all of the following: village committees, project staff, and other staff members of LRS. This channel/mechanism will be communicated to communities through a single-page hand-out that summarizes the project, provides the contact details of the LRS and CEPF-RIT staff in Hanoi, Vietnam. The project staff will ensure that copies of this complaint communication channel/mechanism will be kept with Community Authorities, placed on Community notice boards, made available during the course of project activities and upon request.