

Embedding Sustainable Community Management Practices at Key Sarus Crane Wetlands in the Cambodian Lower Mekong

PROCESS FRAMEWORK FOR INVOLUNTARY RESTRICTIONS

A. INTRODUCTION

The Letter of Inquiry (LoI) to the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) for the ‘**Embedding Sustainable Community Management Practices at key Sarus Crane Wetlands in the Cambodian Lower Mekong**’ project outlines the implementation of a range of projects and activities based on implementing sustainable wetland management at two legally designated protected areas (Boeung Prek Lapouv (BPL) and Anlung Pring (AP) aka Kampong Trach) including law enforcement activities and how these have the potential to trigger CEPF’s Safeguard policy to address social impacts from restrictions of access to natural resources as per the World Bank’s Involuntary Resettlement Policy (OP 4.12).

CEPF reviewers have requested Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust (WWT) and its partners to produce this document, the Process Framework (PF), to address how the project will avoid, minimize, or mitigate potentially adverse effects of restrictions of access to natural resources. The PF will also outline how the local communities will participate in the project activities and how they will be involved in the decision making process. **Please note that no indigenous peoples live at the project sites or use its natural resources.**

Negative social impacts on the people and communities who currently use BPL and AP may exist if law enforcement is continued at the site and given that the site has legal protection as a protected area. The negative social impacts would be due to restrictive or limited access to or total loss of access to income generating natural resources.

If negative social impacts on the people and communities occur while continuing to support the protected area, it's conservation objectives and law enforcement activities, relevant provisions of the laws of Cambodia, such as the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries, Forestry Law (2002), the Ministry of Environment's Environmental Protection and Natural Resource Management Law (2006), the Royal Decree on the establishment and designation of Natural Protected Areas (1993), other legislations and the World Bank Operational Policy, OP 4.12 on Involuntary Resettlement are invoked.

B. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Sarus Crane is a CEPF priority within the Indo-Burma biodiversity hotspot because it is a globally threatened (Vulnerable VU), ‘landscape species’ which requires species-focused interventions at the landscape scale. The two sites that are the focus of this project support significant (over 300 birds, >20% of the regional population collectively) numbers of Sarus Cranes during the dry season. They form the Cambodian parts of a small, connected network of transboundary sites for the species in the Lower Mekong.

The two sites also support important representative areas of Lower Mekong seasonally inundated grassland – a habitat which has suffered massive conversion to agriculture - and several other bird species of global concern, including Bengal Florican *Houbarops bengalensis*

(Critical, CR; with very recent sightings at BPL), Lesser Adjutant *Leptoptilos javanicus* (Vulnerable VU, 6 recorded at BPL in 2009), Greater Adjutant *L. dubius* (Endangered EN, 8 recorded at BPL in 2009), Black-headed Ibis *Threskiornis melanocephalus* (Near-threatened NT, 285 recorded at BPL in 2009 and 16 at AP), Spot-billed Pelican *Pelecanus philippensis* (NT, 21 recorded at BPL in 2009), Painted Stork *Mycteria leucocephala* (NT, 398 recorded at BPL in 2009 and 6 at AP) Oriental Darter *Anhinga melanogaster* (NT, 36 recorded at BPL in 2009), and Asian Golden Weaver *Ploceus hypoxanthus* (NT, 20 recorded at BPL in 2009).

Anlung Pring (aka Kampong Trach IBA) is located in the district of Kampong Trach of Kampot Province, and includes the communes of Boeng Sala Khang Tboung and Preak Krus. Boeung Sala Khang Tboung commune is comprised of 3 villages with a population of approximately 8,096 people (1,727 families, 50% are female) while Preak Krus Commune consists of 4 villages with a population of approximately 9,886 people (4902 families, 50% are female). All are Cambodian people and there is no indigenous group present. A social economic survey undertaken at these sites (ICF, BirdLife, 2008) indicated that most residents are living in poor conditions, earning US\$1.5-2.5 per day, per household (\$575 to 900 per household per year). Soil quality is poor, leaching acidic sulphates into the water column if not managed appropriately. The majority of people are dependent on agriculture for their livelihood with few alternative livelihood options open to them. The two main economic activities are rice production and making Lepironia and bamboo products. Most people in these two communes have traditional skills in making handicrafts from Lepironia, but the site is not suitable for Lepironia growth so local people have to cross the border to buy the raw material from Vietnam. There is currently no government or NGO assistance to improve and market their product. At least one third of households depend on the natural resources of Anlung Pring/Kampong Trach IBA and the surrounding area for their livelihood, particularly cattle raising, fishing and collecting fire wood (Melaleuca) for cooking. Increasing numbers of people accessing this IBA is thought to result in disturbance to Sarus Cranes and other bird species at the sites.

Boeung Preak Lapouv is surrounded by two communes (Chey Chouk and Kampong Krasang) of Borey Chular district and four communes (Romenh, Prey Klar, Chhouk, and Prey Yuthkar) of Koh Andeth district. In total there are 4,689 households living in these six communes (all are Cambodian and there are no indigenous people present). Most of these local people previously had land within the reserve and they still depend on its natural resources for fishing, collection of lotus, water lily, morning glory, fire wood and fodder for cattle. In the past, people living in Borey Chular and Koh Andeth districts cultivated deepwater rice which provided good yields to support their families. However, in the last 5- 8 years floods have destroyed their crops as a result of a dam constructed in Vietnam along the border to prevent flood waters from entering the country. This has impacted negatively on the local communities in the area (Seng, 2005) and currently local people are only able to grow dry season rice, once a year with a low yield. A recent study conducted by the Royal University of Phnom Penh, showed that most local households still don't have formal land tenure yet except Chey Chok Commune. BPL is not a suitable site for cattle raising due to this area being flooded six months of the year. Most (80%) residents live in poor conditions (Seng, 2003), and income from cultivation is insufficient to meet their needs. Local people (mainly men) have to go fishing and rat-catching in the reserve at night for both commercial and for household consumption whilst women collect grassland products.

As a result of the subsistence and small market economy, both sites suffer impacts related to human pressure that threatens the cranes and other biodiversity, primarily exploitation of

wildlife, agricultural encroachment, agro-chemicals pollution, inappropriate fishing methods, hydrological changes (and consequent vegetation changes), use of fire, and invasive alien plants.

There is an urgent need to continue to address these threats. Both sites are now designated as Sarus Crane Reserves and both have extant management plans (2014 – 2018) agreed through participatory planning processes during the last CEPF funded project. These plans detail the conservation management and livelihood development priorities for the next 5 years. However, even with such plans there are few resources for implementation although certain activities (establishment of community fisheries at BPL, establishment of a community-based eco-tourism initiative at AP) show great promise but need further immediate development to build truly sustainable alternative income streams.

Recent CEPF-funded work by WWT at both sites and at AP by Mlup Baitong and at BPL by Chamroen Chiet Khmer (CCK) was completed in July 2013. We will work with Mlup Baitong, CCK and other partners as appropriate to avail the project of appropriate technical expertise, to build on the activities undertaken under these projects. It is hoped that CEPF funding will be secured for three coordinated projects, led by each project partner, as soon as possible to ensure a smooth transition of project activity. These projects are as follows:

WWT - Embedding Sustainable Community Management Practices at key Sarus Crane Wetlands in the Cambodian Lower Mekong - Overall coordinating role among the three projects. Will directly support management structures and activities at both of the sites and build capacity among partners, establish and manage participatory learning and action. Provision of expert technical advice on sustainable wetland management, wetland ecosystem assessment, sustainable tourism. Three year project.

Mlup Baitong - Embedding Sustainable Community Management Practices at key Sarus Crane Wetlands in the Cambodian Lower Mekong – Environment and livelihood improvements at AP Sarus Crane Reserve - Will undertake awareness raising, community activities to support protection of the site and livelihood support activities in AP and support the establishment of community organisations (including CBET group and sustainable farming partnerships with WWT). Three year project.

CCK - Embedding Sustainable Community Management Practices at key Sarus Crane Wetlands in the Cambodian Lower Mekong – Environment and livelihood enhancement at BPL Sarus Crane Reserve - Will undertake awareness raising, community activities to support protection of the site and livelihood support activities in BPL and support the establishment of community organisations (including development of two community fisheries and establishment of sustainable farming partnerships with WWT). Three year project.

The project **purpose** is:

To fully establish sustainable community management practices at the two protected areas to secure the long-term future of the reserves, the wetland habitats and biodiversity they contain including the Sarus Crane population and in so doing support and enhance local livelihoods.

Project **objectives** are:

1. Enhance protection of the Sarus Crane population in BPL and AP

2. Enhance management of seasonally-inundated grasslands and associated habitats at BPL and AP
3. Increase capacity of local communities and government to participate in sustainable co-management of BPL and AP
4. Effectively co-ordinate the projects delivered by WWT, MB and CCK (and others where appropriate) and to gather and disseminate results and learning

Objective 2 activities may impact on household livelihoods as detailed in the World Bank Operational Policy, OP 4.12. Objective 2 activities will include some albeit limited, involuntary restrictions to resource use. The project-supported Local Conservation Groups (LCGs) will only enforce against activities which are illegal, unsustainable and destructive as listed below:

- Burning of vegetation (grass and forest burning for the purpose of encroachment, wildlife poaching or unsustainable resource collection).
- Poaching of wildlife (including all species of mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, insects, other invertebrates, and their eggs or offspring).
- Trapping of rats in the core zone during the dry season.
- Use of illegal fishing gear (vertical slit traps, long traps, electrocuting devices, fishing nets and/or bamboo fences with mesh size of less than 1.5 centimetres).
- Land encroachment (for the purpose of agricultural expansion, urban development or canal development for irrigation).
- Unsustainable resource exploitation (all activities that are excessive, including abusive collection of native timber, forests or wetland pollution, forests or grassland fires, uprooting of Chinese water chestnut, *Eleocharis dulcis* and Water lily, *Nymphaea* sp.). Unsustainable fishing activities at BPL will be addressed thoroughly through participatory development of community fisheries and fishery management plans (including mutually agreed quotas)

All these activities will be enforced under the following legislation:

- Prime Ministerial Decree (Sub Decree) on establishment of a Boeung Prek Lapouv Management and Conservation Area for Sarus Crane and other birds located in Borei Chulsa and Koh Andeth districts, Takeo province. Received approval of the ministerial meeting on 14 September, 2007.
- Prime Ministerial Decree (Sub Decree) on establishment of Anlung Pring/Kampong Trach Management and Conservation Area for Sarus Crane located in Kampot Province.
- Forestry Law, 2002
- Fisheries Law, 2006
- Land Law, 2003

C. PARTICIPATORY IMPLEMENTATION

The project has been designed to support the management of the protected areas and support the LCGs to enforce wildlife protection legislation. Previous CEPF funded projects, delivered by Mlup Baitong and Chamroen Chiet Khmer (CCK) initially supported the LCGs and carried out awareness raising activities and livelihood support activities with local communities. Local communities are represented on the LCGs through membership of Commune Chiefs so all LCG activities are understood and communicated to communities surrounding both the sites.

As part of this project, a range of techniques/activities will encourage full participation of all stakeholders in decision-making, management and monitoring in the project. Development of livelihoods projects/initiatives will be based on participatory learning and action principles so that local needs and knowledge are fully integrated into project planning and delivery leading to more sustainable outcomes.

To facilitate community participation that improves decision-making and builds a legacy of involvement for the future, we will:

- Establish and support liaison panels and community fora for each site to meet quarterly to ensure effective communication, knowledge exchange and participation of all stakeholders
- Design and deliver training programme on sustainable natural resource management based on needs assessment of target groups using team of extension trainers and other professional staff. Extension trainers will be recruited from the local communities and as well as developing their own skills and knowledge will act as wetland ambassadors
- Train up to four local young people in a pioneering wetland management apprenticeship, developing skills/knowledge in wetland ecology, reserve management, biological surveying and team-leading. This team of people will greatly assist in widening participation of local people.
- Initiate a survey and monitoring programme to provide baseline biological data for both sites; undertake ecosystem service appraisals to help advocate wetland values to locals and government alike. Data collection and analysis will be undertaken by locals following appropriate training and lead by WWT.
- Lead and support the delivery of law enforcement activities undertaken by the Local Conservation Groups (LCGs) established during the previous CEPF project. LCGs include members drawn from the local community and will work to raise awareness of the protected areas and their values.

A principle embodied in all activities undertaken within this project is that ecosystem service values derived from the sites by local people will be maintained, improved or replaced by equivalent sustainable livelihood activities.

Furthermore, WWT will be collaborating with two other CEPF-funded projects undertaken by Mlup Baitong and CCK that will focus on developing alternative and sustainable livelihoods for local communities (supported as required with expert advice from WWT). People most affected by the enforcement laws and have restricted access to wetland resources will be targeted among these projects for support.

D. CRITERIA FOR ELIGIBILITY OF AFFECTED PERSONS

It is unlikely that anybody will be eligible for compensation as involuntary restrictions will only be targeted at activities which are clearly illegal, unsustainable and/or destructive of the natural resources that people depend upon for their survival.

However, as discussed previously, WWT and its partners are aware that limiting access to some wetland resources could impact on the livelihoods of some members of the local communities. Where access to wetland resources which make up a significant proportion of household

incomes are restricted then affected households will be eligible for support. These individuals and households will be identified through the following mechanisms:

- Socio-economic assessments undertaken at the sites by partner NGOs
- Representation to Village Volunteer Committees and Self-Help Group leaders (It will be made clear, at the quarterly forums and through awareness raising meetings, that individuals and households that feel they have been adversely impacted should contact the head of the Village Volunteer Committees and Self-Help Groups to raise their specific concerns with the LCG and NGO project managers).
- Through quarterly meetings of Liaison panels
- Direct reports to LCGs. A new reporting mechanism will be developed to ensure local community's concerns/issues raised with LCG members are effectively dealt with based on recommendations contained in an independent evaluation of WWT's recently completed CEPF project (Nuy Bora/WWT 2013)

E. MEASURES TO ASSIST THE AFFECTED PERSONS

Individual households that have been significantly impacted by a restriction on exploitation of specific wetland resources will be encouraged to participate in sustainable livelihood support activities. These will be developed within the WWT, CCK and Mlup Baitong projects to support and encourage livelihood activities such as:

- Sustainable farming partnerships (to include rice banks and development and marketing of "wildlife-friendly" agricultural products)
- Community fisheries
- Sustainable tourism

As a result of project activities, it is envisaged that household incomes will be significantly increased beyond current levels. This will be monitored as part of project delivery.

F. CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND COMPLAINT MECHANISM

Grievances and conflicts raised by impacted households can be brought to the LCGs, to the quarterly meetings of the liaison panels and community forums, to the Village Volunteer Committees, to the Self-Help Groups and the NGO project staff. All communities will be made aware that grievances can be reported at any time to any of the organisations listed above. If any of these organisations receives reports of grievances or other issues, they will be passed to WWT and the partner NGOs for a response. WWT will immediately notify BirdLife and CEPF of any grievances received, and keep them updated about any follow-up action.

WWT and the partner NGOs have the responsibility to communicate any grievance raised to each other and to ensure that they are dealt with promptly. Upon receipt of a grievance, all project partners will meet with the persons affected to discuss the issues and develop an agreed solution which will then be implemented by the project(s) and recorded.

Independent mediation for any grievance can occur through one of the partner NGOs, not operating at the specific site, if required.

G. IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

WWT will have overall responsibility for coordinating the project and all activities undertaken as part of it including those of the project partners. They will have ultimate responsibility for the implementation of this framework but will work closely with the other two partner NGOs in actual delivery.

All project NGO partners, community groups and the LCGs will be made fully aware of this process framework to ensure it is delivered successfully and to ensure no negative impacts on household livelihoods as a result of project activities.