

Embedding sustainable community management practices at key Sarus Crane wetlands in the Cambodian Lower Mekong: environment and livelihoods enhancement at BPL Sarus Crane Reserve

Process Framework for Involuntary Restriction on Access to Natural Resource

1. Project background

Boeung Prek Lapouv (BPL) Sarus Crane Reserve contains some of the last remnants of seasonally-inundated grassland in the Cambodian Lower Mekong. Since 2000, 1440ha of crane habitat has been converted to paddy field largely as a result of a growing population, rapid economic growth and demand for rice in particular. This not only threatens the vulnerable crane populations (over 30% of which uses this site during the non-breeding season) but also the human population which depends on the reserve for its well-being.

Work undertaken recently by CCK and the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust (WWT) as part of the recent CEPF project showed that at BPL, almost 3,000 households use the wetland to collect firewood and wild food (fish, molluscs, etc). Clearly, the future of the protected area and therefore crane populations is intimately linked to the fortunes of local people. CCK will work with WWT, BirdLife Cambodia and the Cambodian government to continue efforts to ensure a future for BPL, its people and the Sarus Crane population. CCK's project will form part of a co-ordinated approach led by WWT to conserve two of the most important non-breeding crane sites in Indo-Burma

This project will fully engage with people so that they can appreciate the true value of the "wild" wetland, understand how best to manage it and the resources it provides and to build their capacity to co-manage alongside the government and other stakeholders. As part of this, CCK will work to facilitate liaison, co-working and a better understanding between government and local people.

CCK has recently completed a 1 year project (namely, Community Actions to Improve Livelihoods Linked to Protection and Conservation of Sarus Cranes and Other Globally Threatened Species in Boeung Prek Lapouv Conservation Area, Cambodia) as part of the larger project coordinated by WWT. Currently, it is working on another two CEPF projects ("Establishing Sustainable Community Fisheries and Wetland Management at Boeung Prek Lapouv Sarus Crane Reserve" and "Enabling continued protection of the Boeung Prek Lapouv and Anlung Pring Sarus Crane Reserves") which will both terminate by October 2013. It has successfully built awareness and ability to participate in reserve management but much work remains to be done to develop stronger foundations for this local involvement before effective co-management structures can be developed. The activities of this project are:

- Complete the establishment of the Kampong Krasang community fishery
- Establish another Community Fishery in Koh Andet district
- Facilitate the establishment of a community based eco-tourism (CBET) group;
- Investigate and introduce sustainable farming to local communities
- Training and provide capacity building to local community about the ecosystem value of BPL
- Enhance the participation of local community in BPL reserve management

2. Social threat analysis

Fisheries-related activities within this project in theory have the potential to trigger CEPFs safeguard policy to address social impacts from restrictions of access to natural resources as per the World Bank's Involuntary Resettlement Policy (OP 4.1.2). This safeguard refers not only to physical resettlement of people, but also to restriction of access to resources. We believe, however, that the current project does not pose such risks.

Some 3,000 households are heavily reliant upon natural resources they collect from within the reserve. Conversion of the reserve to intensive rice and shrimp farming – as has already occurred across much of the Mekong Delta – would deny these people access to these critical resources. This project will consolidate the position of these existing resource users, thus mitigating a very substantial social threat. Further, existing users will be protected from incomers seeking to illegally exploit natural resources.

The fisheries habitat restoration component will reverse recent habitat degradation, increasing the capacity of fisheries habitat to support fish populations, and thus increase sustainable offtake levels. Training in sustainable harvesting will further increase the capacity of users to exploit resources in an ecological benign way, reducing the risk that fish populations will decline through time. This is another net positive livelihood outcome.

The sustainable farming component will support existing farmers within the buffer zone, aiming to stabilise the extent of agricultural land and reducing the threats posed by illegal land grabs. By testing environmentally-friendly farming techniques, the project will address threats, to natural resources used by local people, posed by excessive chemical use and intensive land drainage associated with high-yielding monocultures. Existing, well-established farmers within the buffer zone will better understand markets for wildlife-friendly rice, potentially stabilising and increasing farm incomes. Farmers will receive training in agricultural extension, enabling good practice to spread among floodplain users.

A Local Conservation Group (LCG) is active at Boeung Prek Lapouv. The LCG carries out law enforcement activities, upholding relevant provisions of the laws of Cambodia, such as the Forestry Law, Fisheries Law, Decree on Wildlife Protection and the official national sub-decrees for the existing protected area. The LCG will do this at the community fishery established during previous CEPF small grant support project and a new propose community fishery. The CEPF process framework for involuntary restriction on Access to natural resources is not triggered when dealing with illegal activities.

3. Plans for participatory implementation

The project will fully engage with people so that they can understand how best to manage the reserve and the resources it provides and to build their capacity to co-manage the reserve alongside the government and other stakeholders. As part of this, CCK will work to facilitate liaison, co-working and a better understanding between government and local people.

This project continues work with communities aimed at establishing sustainable management of two community fisheries. Capacity building activities will bolster user's ability to sustainably utilise fish resources.

The community ecotourism component is community-led and benefits derived from visitors will be retained within participating local communities.

Existing Voluntary Village Committees, established through a previous CEPF grant, provide a vehicle through which project components can develop, be discussed and debated, and where experiences can spread among community participants.

It is important that the reason for involuntary restrictions, imposed pursuant of legal requirements, are properly assessed. Often local people are not aware that an activity is illegal. It will therefore be that staff from CCK, facilitating community meetings, have a thorough and accurate understanding of the laws that apply to natural resource collection and wetland reserve conservation. To that end refresher sessions will be held for project staff explaining and reviewing laws pertaining to natural resource extraction and to the

conservation areas immediately ahead of community meetings. This will help raise awareness of applicable laws among communities.

4. Impact mitigation and assistance to affected groups

No groups are expected to be adversely affected by this project. However, the Voluntary Village Committees will provide a forum within which any issues can be highlighted and discussed, and agreements reached as to their resolution.

The project will provide a platform for local communities to voice any complaints they may have about activities undertaken during the project implementation period and thereby enable periodic assessments of whether mitigation measures are necessary and adaptations to project implementation need to be considered.

5. Mechanisms to monitor safeguard issues

The project coordinator, Chamroen Chiet Khmer (CCK) which works with communities surrounding Boeung Prek Lapouv, already holds regular meetings with community members as part of its role in the previous CEPF funded and current project funded by UNDP/GEF small grant.

For the community fishery project, CCK will hold, at Semester intervals, community forums at appropriate locations so that all stakeholders from local villages are able to attend. The first community forums will be held in June/July 2014 followed by a further five before project end.

Experience from previous community forums will help to improve and ensure all voices from local communities are recorded and acted upon. An officer of CCK will take minutes during each community forum so that these can be shared with project partners (including WWT, BirdLife International Cambodia Programme, Forestry Administration and other community stakeholders) and CEPF.

Legally-valid involuntary restrictions highlighted in community forums will be flagged and the project will document mitigation measures taken. Subsequent community forums will be used to assess if the issue has been dealt with appropriately.

6. Grievance mechanism

The community forums will be built on regular end of the month meetings CCK with community groups that they have formed under current and previous CEPF grants, i.e. Village Volunteer Committees, Self-Help Groups, Community Livelihood and Development Management Committees, and Kampong Krasang community fishery. All members of the community can participate in the forum and the time and date of the forum will be announced and widely publicised beforehand. Project staff will be on-site and community members can discuss concerns with them at any time. All such discussions, and actions agreed, will be fully documented. CEPF and the Regional Implementation Team will be informed of any grievances raised within 30 days, together with a plan for remedial action.