

**Social Assessment**

**Date: 25 March 2022**

**CEPF Grant: CEPF-112688**

**Grantee: People Resources and Conservation Foundation (PRCF)**

**Project Title: “Strengthening co-management in the François’ Langur Conservation Landscape and promoting the measure to policy level”**

**Project Location: Sinh Long commune—Na Hang district; Thuong Lam and Khuong Ha communes-Lam Binh districts, Tuyen Quang Province, Vietnam**

## **1. Grant Summary**

- i. Grantee organization: People Resources and Conservation Foundation (PRCF)
- ii. Grant title: Strengthening co-management in the François' Langur Conservation Landscape and promoting the measure to policy level
- iii. Grant number: CEPF-112688
- iv. Grant amount (US dollars): USD 249,995
- v. Proposed dates of grant: 01 Jun. 2022 to 31 May 2025
- vi. Countries or territories where the project is located: Vietnam
- vii. Date of preparation of this document: 10 March 2022

## **2. Indigenous People affected**

The two major ethnic groups in the project landscape are Tay and Dao. The primary land use in the Lam Binh/ Sinh Long landscape is subsistence cultivation of rice and maize, supplemented with cassava and a variety of vegetable and fruit species (e.g. sweet potato, peanut, banana, papaya, jackfruit, sugarcane, citrus fruits, mango, taro, plum). Agricultural activity in the site is limited to several relatively small and discrete areas, in which valleys are used seasonally by local communities that live outside the southern borders of the proposed conservation area for rice, maize, and cassava production and livestock grazing to supplement production in nearby village lands. The principal forest resources used in the landscape are timber (for house construction and fuelwood for cooking human foods and livestock feed) and wildlife.

The project herein endeavors to retain local communities' access and use of Lam Binh/ Sinh Long forest resources, although protection measures will fall on particular karst forest areas critical to the survival of François' Langur in the landscape. The primary source of livelihoods in the region is agriculture and limited plantation forestry, none of which will be impaired through the establishment of the implementation of this project or its activities towards the legitimization of community-based conservation management.

### **Tay ethnic minority**

Tay is the largest ethnic minority group in Vietnam. The Tay is the earliest known minority in Vietnam, who are thought to have arrived from inland South East Asia about 500 BC. Tay language belongs to the Tay – Thai language group.

The Tay worship ancestors, the house spirit, kitchen spirit, and the midwife. Their alphabet is based on the Latin alphabet devised in 1960, similar to the Viet alphabet. The Tay are farmers with a tradition of wet rice cultivation and a long history of intensive cultivation and irrigation methods like digging irrigation canals. They also maintain the custom of harvesting the rice and thrashing the grains out on wooden racks while still in the fields, then carrying the threshed rice home in baskets. In addition to cultivating wet areas, the Tay also plant rice on terraced fields and the other crops and fruit trees. Cattle and poultry raising are well-developed, but a free-range style of animal husbandry is still prevalent. The market is also an important economic activity.

The Tay social system used to resemble a feudal society. One man in each village owned the land, forest, and rivers. He ruled over the people living on that land. Tay now live in villages of mixed ethnic groups, enter into mixed marriages and leave their traditional settlements to work in other areas. They have adopted different elements of Kinh culture and are therefore considered the most integrated into mainstream Vietnamese culture. In the project landscape, Tay is the dominant ethnic minority, and they live near paddy-rice lands, with no Tay family living on the mountain areas. They access forests to collect medicinal plants, hunt, and harvest timber, particularly for home construction and reconstruction purposes.

### **Dao ethnic minority**

The Dao is the ninth most prominent ethnic group in Vietnam. They belong to the H'mong Dao language group and are believed to have started migrating as very small groups from China in the 13th century. The Dao writing is based on Chinese characters adjusted to accommodate their own spelling. The Red Dao men play a dominant role in the family, community, and economy. They also play a significant role in ceremonies such as marriages, funerals, and building new houses.

The Dao people have many different family names. Each lineage has its own system of other middle names to distinguish people of different generations. Dao households subsist on terraced rice fields and adopt fairly advanced wet rice cultivation methods, switching from their former nomadic way of life to sedentary farming. They now mainly live from rice cultivation on burnt-over land and submerged fields. They also grow subsidiary crops. They still use rudimentary farm tools but apply many progressive techniques in cultivation. Sideline occupations are developed, including weaving, carpentry, black smiting, paper-making, and vegetable oil.

The Dao social structure is based on the family unit, with men heads of household ruling the family and acting as village leaders. Like other ethnic minorities living within larger ethnic groups, they gradually adopt elements of these larger groups, which would be Tay cultural elements in the case of the Lam Binh area. In the Lam Binh area, Dao is a real minority group, living in the most mountainous regions, accessing forests to collect medicinal plants, hunt, and harvest timber products as needed for home construction and reparations.

### 3. Table 1. Village socioeconomic information

| Village  | House holds | Population   | Most at Risk | Livelihood Sources  | Ethnicity  | Ethnic %                                     | Most at Risk & |
|--|-------------|--------------|--------------|---|--|--|----------------|
| <b><i>Sinh Long commune (Na Hang district)</i></b>   |             |              |              |   |  |  |                |
| Trung Phin   | 24          | 117          | 24           | Paddy rice, livestock, forest resources, fishing                                    | Mong: 20<br>Dao: 4 HHs                                   | Mong: 83%<br>Dao: 17 %                       | 100.0%         |
| Phieng Ten   | 34          | 171          | 32           | Paddy rice, livestock, forest resources, fishing                                    | Mong: 32HHs  | Mong: 100%                                   | 95.0%          |
| Phieng Thoc  | 102         | 502          | 82           | Paddy rice, livestock, forest resources, fishing                                    | Kinh: 7 HHs<br>Tay: 4 HHS<br>Mong: 46 HHs<br>Dao: 45 HHs | Kinh: 6%<br>Tay: 4%<br>Mong: 46%<br>Dao: 44% | 80.4%          |
| Nam Duong  | 95          | 441          | 85           | Paddy rice, livestock, forest resources, fishing                                    | Mong: 30 HHs<br>Dao: 65 HHs                              | Mong: 32%<br>Dao: 68%                        | 89.5%          |
| Phieng Ngam  | 123         | 607          | 107          | Paddy rice, livestock, forest resources, fishing                                    | Mong: 10 HHs<br>Dao: 113 HHs                             | Mong: 8%<br>Dao: 92%                         | 87.0%          |
| Lung Khieng  | 132         | 587          | 102          | Paddy rice, livestock, forest resources, fishing                                    | Mong: 26 HHs<br>Dao: 92 HHs,<br>Tay: 14 HHs              | Mong: 20%<br>Dao: 70%<br>Tay: 10%            | 29.0%          |
| Ban La   | 72          | 308          | 72           | Paddy rice, livestock, forest resources, fishing                                    | Dao: 72 HHs  | Dao: 100%                                    | 76.0%          |
| Khuoi Phin   | 114         | 506          | 113          | Paddy rice, livestock, forest resources, fishing                                    | Mong: 18 HHs<br>Dao: 96 HHs                              | Mong: 16%<br>Dao: 84%                        | 99.0%          |
| <b>Totals:</b>                                       | <b>765</b>  | <b>3,597</b> | <b>696</b>   |   |  |  |                |
| <b><i>Thuong Lam commune (Lam Binh district)</i></b> |             |              |              |   |  |  |                |
| Coc Phat   | 57          | 277          |              | Paddy rice, livestock, forest resources, fishing                                    | Tay: 3 HHs,<br>Dao: 54 HHs                               | Tay: 5%<br>Dao: 95%                          |                |
| Khau Dao   | 26          | 128          |              | Paddy rice, livestock, forest resources, fishing                                    | Tay: 26 HHs  | Tay: 100%                                    |                |
| Na Lau   | 111         | 510          |              | Paddy rice, livestock, forest resources, fishing                                    | Tay: 111 HHs   | Tay: 100%                                    |                |
| Na Thuon   | 96          | 414          |              | Paddy rice, livestock, forest resources, fishing                                    | Tay: 96 HHs  | Tay: 100%                                    |                |
| Na Tong  | 126         | 571          |              | Paddy rice, fishing, livestock, forest resources, home-stay service, small business | Kinh: 7 HHs<br>Tay: 119 HHs                              | Kinh: 5%<br>Tay: 95%                         |                |
| Na Lung  | 112         | 496          |              | Paddy rice, livestock, forest resources, fishing                                    | Tay: 112 HHs   | Tay: 100%                                    |                |
| Ban Bo   | 155         | 837          |              | Paddy rice, fishing, livestock, forest resources, home-stay service, small business | Kinh: 2 HHs<br>Tay: 153 HHS                              | Kinh: 1%<br>Tay: 99%                         |                |
| Na Dong  | 82          | 364          |              | Paddy rice, livestock, forest resources, fishing                                    | Tay: 82 HHS  | Tay: 100%                                    |                |
| <b>Totals:</b>                                       | <b>765</b>  | <b>3,596</b> | <b>0</b>     |   |  |  |                |

| <b>Khuon Ha commune (Lam Binh district)</b> |            |              |           |  |                          |                    |       |
|---|------------|--------------|-----------|--|--------------------------|--------------------|-------|
| Na Kem                                      | 86         | 403          |           | Paddy rice, livestock, forest resources, fishing | Tay: 86 HHs              | Tay: 100%          |       |
| Lung May                                    | 65         | 301          | 22        | Paddy rice, livestock, forest resources, fishing | Tay: 65 HHs              | Tay: 100%          | 33.8% |
| Na Muong                                    | 90         | 388          |           | Paddy rice, livestock, forest resources, fishing | Tay: 82 HHs, Dao: 8 HHs  | Dao: 9%, Tay: 91%  |       |
| Na Vang                                     | 60         | 301          |           | Paddy rice, livestock, forest resources, fishing | Dao: 6 HHs, Tay: 54 HHs  | Dao: 10%, Tay: 90% |       |
| Na Rao                                      | 43         | 217          |           | Paddy rice, livestock, forest resources, fishing | Dao: 43 HHs              | Dao: 100%          |       |
| Na Chang                                    | 119        | 539          | 60        | Paddy rice, livestock, forest resources, fishing | Dao: 40 HHs, Tay: 79 HHs | Dao: 33%, Tay: 67% | 50.4% |
| <b>Totals:</b>                              | <b>463</b> | <b>2,149</b> | <b>82</b> |  |                          |                    |       |

Note: Data is sourced directly from the communes on 04 April 2022.

#### **4. Summary of the proposed project**

The project target site is within the proposed Community-based François' Langur Conservation Area, in the Lam Binh/ Sinh Long conservation landscape. The area is within a larger conservation landscape commonly referred to as the 'Ba Be / Na Hang Limestone Forest Complex.' The site comprises a watershed area and holds high-value karst limestone forests that once covered most northern Vietnam and southern China. In the Gam River Dam catchment, it forms part of an approximately 250,000 ha expanse of forest located outside of Vietnam's network of protected areas. The region holds high global biodiversity significance, particularly primate species and a wide variety of other endemic taxa.

Straddling the district boundaries of Lam Binh and Na Hang, in Tuyen Quang province; one of Vietnam's poorest mountainous provinces, the project targets areas with communities of Tay, Dao, Nung ethnic minorities with 2,132 households (9,891 people—2021 Dept of Statistics data) who live close to the forest. Twenty-two villages adjacent to the Lam Binh and Sinh Long watershed forests focus on PRCF's previous and ongoing work. See Table 1 for village names and general descriptions.

Initially in 2010 and upscaling thereafter, PRCF began initiatives that focused on engaging local villagers in collaborative management, targeting co-management of the watershed forest and habitat to Vietnam's last known viable population of the globally endangered François' Langur. Through ongoing PRCF work, local communities are gaining better options to negotiate their position in impartial decision-making (co-management) related to natural resources management and participate in conservation governance.

Present PRCF Vietnam Program activities at the site seek to establish a community-based conservation area linked to community-led conservation of high-value forests home to the François' Langur and other threatened species. Previous work by PRCF has, among other things, established Village Co-Management Committees—VMCs, which support carrying out management responsibilities and benefits brought from links between conservation and development in the landscape. To support local livelihoods, Village Self-help Groups-VSHGs have been established to help improve socioeconomic conditions in the village; under this project, the VSHGs will be linked to agriculture and agroforestry training and on-farm demonstrations by Key Farmers (selected by villagers under pre-determined criteria).

Building on past and present work and the current momentum with local communities and government, the project herein will benefit conservation of the last viable Vietnamese population of François' Langur and proposed community conservation initiatives through the operation of already established VMCs. In support of community-based conservation governance in the conservation landscape, the current project will help to strengthen the network of VMCs and register it as a legal community-based organization in Tuyen Quang province. Definitions of conservation functions and support will seek involvement from local government agencies, such as the Forest Protection Management Boards and the Forest Protection Department.

The project promotes a community-based conservation model at the Tuyen Quang site; it establishes a successful precedent and provides opportunities to exchange experiences and information through project partners and stakeholders and local, provincial, and national government agencies.

## 5. Potential impacts

Proposed activities by the project will help strengthen local community involvement in conservation management of natural resources and biodiversity in the François' Langur Conservation Landscape while simultaneously helping stakeholder villages retain the access and use of resources. However, protection measures (pretty much defined by local communities in liaison with the Forest Protection Management Boards and the Provincial and District Forest Protection Departments) will apply to the karst cave and forest habitat areas critical to the survival of the François' Langur population.

The project includes community development work to support and complement conservation activities, most of which have conservation-support links/ measures. It focuses on the strengthening of community-based conservation measures. It supports the bolstering of community-based institutions--starting at the village level, which will help co-management initiatives in the landscape (eg. VSHGs with revolving funds to facilitate agricultural modeling and intensification, and forestry development in established agricultural areas, VMCs to support and lead village-level measures entailing biodiversity conservation and village socioeconomic development, and links therein. Community Conservation Teams (CCTs) comprising members of stakeholder villages conducting forest and habitat patrolling and conservation and monitoring, and reporting to the VMCs and the District Forest Protection Departments). The primary source of village livelihoods is agriculture and agroforestry, none of which will be impacted by project conservation measures.

Annual socioeconomic assessments and semester safeguard assessments will show any changes in socioeconomic and or access to resources from baselines established at project onset. Our socioeconomic reviews examine, in particular, changes to "most at risk" households via pre-determined surveys. We do not foresee any negative impacts from the project to the local communities. On the contrary, we see benefits and increased ownership of their surrounding natural resources, including a strengthened voice towards governance and sustainability of natural resources.

Notwithstanding the above, and although the project proposes increasing local communities' decision-making voice into the management of biodiversity and natural resources in the conservation landscape, particularly areas holding critical habitat to the endangered François' Langur, several resource-use restrictions will occur. These are of two types: (i) Restrictions that relate to voluntary illegal, unsustainable, and destructive activities, and (ii) Restrictions that are involuntary in nature and relate to non-damaging access to resources.

**Restrictions to damaging activities** - Through the establishment of a community-based conservation area, and in the meantime by putting into place conservation-based restrictions on forest use, although these are placed by local communities themselves and thus foreseen to be managed by local communities, the project will result in the strengthening of measures that will restrict access to watershed forest areas for wildlife hunting and trapping, timber logging, and unsustainable harvest of non-timber forest products. In effect, however, these activities are already prohibited by Vietnamese law. The site is a watershed protection area, and some of the species within, such as the flagship François Langur, are protected in Vietnamese.

**Restrictions to non-damaging activities** - The proposed protected area, comprises karst forest areas offering little forest resources to the neighbouring villages. Still, some non-damaging extractions do take place, particularly for non-timber forest products and some animal species that are not strictly protected by Vietnamese law. By establishing the protected area, although to be managed by local communities, access to some of these forest products will be restricted.

The project will measure the impact of both types of restrictions upon the local community by establishing a baseline on present 'legal' and 'illegal' benefits from the Lam Binh and Na Hang forests and measuring changes on a six-month basis. Further, a grievance box will be placed at each of the nine village centers to receive any villager complaints, concerns, or issues regarding the imposed restrictions. These will be collated and presented in the annual participatory social monitoring workshop to review the situation, see solutions, and assess CEPF social safeguard policies compliance. Grievance notes and process results will be reported to CEPF on a six-month basis.

## **6. Participatory preparation**

Since the beginning of the community-based conservation program at the Lam Binh/ Sinh Long site, all activities have been carried out through the involvement of local communities, with local communities pretty much being involved in implementation and project staff facilitating and providing technical advice and direction.

The present project design had already been discussed and considered on various occasions with village leaders and community members. The project proponent (PRCF) has also discussed the project herein with the Tuyen Quang Forest Protection Department, the Lam Binh Forest Management Board, Na Hang Forest Management Board, and the three stakeholder communes of Sinh Long, Thuong Lam, and Khuong Ha.

### ***Process into FPIC***

A statement of Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) by local communities had not yet been requested at the time of writing—mainly to avoid expectations on behalf of the community prior to project approval. However, the project will secure such written statement within two months of project approval.

The project has scheduled the collection and update of socio-economic baseline information at each of the 22 stakeholder villages (19 villages update of baselined information and three villages new baseline information) within the first two months of project initiation. At each village, prior to the collection of baseline socio-economic data we will hold a dedicated meeting to inform villagers about the project objectives, activities, proposed outputs and outcomes, and its community-based implementation modality. We will present grievance redress measures and hold an open session of questions and answers, where villagers are able to express opinions and or request clarification on any project-related item. At the end of the meeting expected to last a full morning, project staff will request the signing of an FPIC document by village representatives, which will also be presented to the village community.

Further to the above, the PRCF believes that the FPIC is meant to be an ongoing process that takes place at all times during project implementation, as opposed to just taking place via a meeting where an FPIC document is signed. This is a fully participatory project whereby villagers are truly involved in all project activities, from planning, to implementation, to monitoring, and evaluation. At all times villagers are informed freely about project plans and activities prior to implementation and there are no activities that take place without their consent. This is all embedded within the community-based co-management framework championed by the project.

### ***Process for endorsements***

Except for letters of endorsement by the Lam Binh District Forest Protection Department and the Na Hang District Forest protection Department, letters of project endorsement from the other various stakeholder project government agencies had not yet been secured at the time



of writing. This, in particular, given the Tuyen Quang province policy of not issuing such letters until certainty of project funding, after which a 'Letter of Agreement' is produced, instead of a letter of endorsement.

The mentioned 'Letter of Agreement' by the Tuyen Quang Department of Agriculture and Rural development (DARD), likely via the Tuyen Quang Forest Protection Department (FPD) will be secured soon after a project inception meeting, where project objectives, activities, proposed outputs and outcomes are presented by project staff..

We are proposing to secure letters of endorsement by the three communes (ie. Sinh Long), Thuong Lam, and Khuong Ha) and the two districts (ie. Lam Binh and Na Hang) prior to the project inception meeting with DARD, FPD, Forest Protection Management Boards. We are proposing to secure the stated letters of endorsement, conduct the project inception meeting, and secure the Letter of Agreement with Tuyen Quang province within the first two months from project start-up. Once secured, we shall submit the Letter of Agreement to CEPF.

## **7. Mitigation strategies**

PRCF measures to avoid adverse impacts to the local stakeholder communities include:

- Conduct periodical village meetings and consultations to learn about any emerging socioeconomic or otherwise issues surfacing concerns from local communities regarding project impact.
- Conduct an annual assessment of changes in socioeconomic standing of vulnerable and most-at-risk households from the established baseline and six-month safeguard monitoring for issues and grievances.
- Dedicated Grievance Redress information is provided in posters to be distributed at all stakeholder villages. A Community Grievance Box is placed at each village school and centers to help inform on issues directly from the community. Formularies will be produced to assist in the process with anonymous inputs.
- Semestral dedicated social assessment meetings and yearly workshops to discuss and resolve grievances through offset mechanisms such as inputs into forest livelihoods, agriculture livelihoods, or small-scale business development activities

## **8. How groups eligible for assistance and vulnerable groups will be identified**

A baseline assessment of the community, including a guided random survey of representative households in the target villagers and a socioeconomic questionnaire to village leaders and elders, will help identify those households most dependent on forest resources to be restricted. Based on initial survey results, a more in-depth socioeconomic survey of these most vulnerable households will be conducted to establish a baseline and measure the impact of restrictions upon these households, measuring changes on a six-month basis.

## **9. Monitoring and evaluation**

Monitoring of social safeguard issues will be included in regular field visits to the project site and through monthly reporting by project field staff, including a summary of issues brought forth by the local communities during periodical meetings or through grievance boxes placed at each village center. Semestral village safeguard meetings and consultations by project staff will take place to listen and annotate any village concerns and pay attention to villagers who may have limited literacy or understanding of the Vietnamese Language.

The project will produce a series of posters explaining the project goals and objectives and providing direct contact details with project headquarters and CEPF, as described below.

Posters will be delivered in Kinh and major local languages to ensure all villagers in the Lam Binh landscape will understand. These will also be presented and explained periodically during village meetings and consultations to ensure understanding by Dao stakeholders.

Participatory discussions on social safeguard issues will occur regularly, most notably at six-month intervals and resulting in a six-month safeguard monitoring report submitted to CEPF. Further, on an annual basis, the project will conduct a participatory social monitoring workshop to assess project impact on village socioeconomics and compliance to CEPF social safeguard policies. Any grievance surfacing or raised from communications will be communicated to CEPF directly within 15 days, together with a participatory plan for remedial action.

## 10. Grievance mechanism

At its onset, the project will initially discuss with all village stakeholders to present its aims and objectives towards biodiversity conservation and socio-economic development, clarifying its participatory monitoring procedures and safeguard measures, including grievance redress mechanisms.

Through its implementation, the project will produce a series of information posters and establish and update information boards that will provide information such as project aim, objectives, geographical scope, and ways for local stakeholder communities to contract project management should it be needed of grievance. All grievance redress posters and information boards will include information for direct contact to PRCF project management, the CEPF Regional Implementation Team, and the CEPF Secretariat. Contact information is as follows:

*PRCF Asia Secretariat (Hanoi)*

Email: [PRCF@prcfoundation.org](mailto:PRCF@prcfoundation.org)

Telp: Vietnam +84 (0) 243 7185677 USA +1 213 4780484

*CEPF Regional Implementation Team*

Email: [CEPF-INDOBURMA@iucn.org](mailto:CEPF-INDOBURMA@iucn.org)

Vietnam National Coordinator, Nguyen Duc Tu +84 913 247 551

*CEPF Secretariat*

Conservation International Ethics Hotline

Website: <https://secure.ethicspoint.com/domain/media/en/gui/10680/index.html>

Telp: United States +1-866-294-8674

The following text will be included in all information posters and signboards holding grievance redress purposes in Vietnamese as follows:

Chúng tôi sẽ chia sẻ tất cả các thắc mắc khiếu nại và các giải đáp đề xuất với Nhóm thực hiện Vùng và Giám đốc tài trợ CEPF trong vòng 15 ngày. Nếu người khiếu nại không hài lòng với các phản hồi đề xuất, họ có thể khiếu nại qua đường dây nóng của Tổ chức Bảo tồn quốc tế (đường dây điện thoại miễn +1-866-294-8674 / trang web:

<https://secure.ethicspoint.com/domain/media/en/gui/10680/index.html>

The above text translates to English:

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 via the CI Ethics Hotline (toll-free telephone line: +1-866-294-8674 / secure web portal:

<https://secure.ethicspoint.com/domain/media/en/gui/10680/index.html>

## **11. Budget:**

Budgeting activities to support social assessment work are already embedded within the project set of activities. There is only one particular and separate budget line for this work, as per item (c) below.

Budget allocations for the social assessment works are within (a) Salaries and Benefits, as PRCF field staff will carry out the activities; (b) Travel and Special Events, and staff will carry activities in the field, and meetings and workshops will be included in the works, although likely linked to other project meetings and workshops; (c) Dedicated budget on Socioeconomic and Safeguard Surveys at USD 650.0 year for a total of USD 1,950.0.