

Liuzhou Bird Watching Society (LZBWS)
Fostering Community-based Conservation in Nonggang Nature Reserve
Social Assessment

Indigenous peoples in the project area

Nonggang National Nature Reserve (NNR) lies on the northern fringe of the 'Torrid Zone' of China. It features typical karst topography, with mountains and streams. The vegetation found there includes examples of some of the best preserved tropical karst forests in the world. It is one of the 14 most internationally-important areas of terrestrial biodiversity in China, and is also one of 40 A-class nature reserves selected by the national Forestry Department and the World Wildlife Fund. Guangxi Nonggang NNR is found between longitude 106°42'28" and 107°04'54" east, latitude 22°13'56" and 22°39'09" north. It is located in southwestern China, within the territory of Longzhou county and Ningming county, Chongzuo, Gaungxi. It ranges across seven townships within Longzhou and Ningming county (Zhupu, Wude, Shanglong, Xiangshui, Shangjin, Fulong, and Tingliang). Nonggang NNR forms a northwest-southeast strip, with a length of 33.53km. It consists of three parts -- Longhu, Nonggang, and Longshan, covering a total area of 10,077km².

The project site, Nongheng village, is located in the outskirts of Nonggang NNR. It shares its ecological environment with Nonggang NNR, including karst topography and tropical rain forest. The village is surrounded by a large tract of arable land, including rivers and wetlands, which provide habitat for bird colonies and other species. The village is home to 40 households, totaling almost 180 people, all of whom are of Zhuang ethnicity.

Expected project impacts (positive and negative) on them

Through the implementation of the project, the communities will receive various positive benefits. The incomes of some community members will increase, as a result of them working as local tour guides. As a result, the community as a whole will become more prosperous. Knowledge about environmental issues (particularly birds) will increase (particularly among school children), as a result of training provided by bird and insect specialists. Facilities for community-based bird-watching activities (such as binoculars, laser pointers, cameras, information boards, maps, road signs, species profiles, and bulletin boards) will be improved.

However, since not all families will see their incomes increase through this initiative, there is a potential for this to lead to conflict between them. We predict that about 15% of households (the owner of the Green Magpie Inn, local tour guides, the owner of the local shop, etc.) will see direct benefits from this work.

In addition, there is a potential for the development of tourism in this area to have a negative impact on traditional cultural practices (such as traditional hunting and logging practices, and traditional agricultural practices), and lead to an increase in plastic waste affecting the area. We will attempt to mitigate these risks by training local tour guides to recognize the value of traditional practices, and practice proper waste disposal.

Free, prior and informed consent

During the design of the project (multiple occasions in 2013 and 2014), LZBWS held a series of dialogues with various stakeholders including Xiaonong, the farmer who initiated collaboration between LZBWS and this community, and Lurong, who has also worked closely with LZBWS. Both of these individuals have extensive knowledge about the birds found in this area, and have previously worked on bird conservation with research institutions such as Guangxi University. We discussed the implementation of this project, the likely impacts of this project on the

community, and learned about the community's priorities regarding this and future collaboration efforts. We discussed mechanisms for minimizing potential negative impacts on indigenous culture in the community caused by our work. These include using only local materials to build bird-feeders etc., planting fruit trees, and working in close collaboration with the local community leader. In addition, LZWBS has repeatedly communicated with other farmers in the project area, in order to learn about community perspectives and priorities about nature conservation (particularly bird conservation).

Measures to avoid adverse impacts and provided culturally appropriate benefits

Before initiating project implementation, LZWBS will work closely with Tun Zhang (the administrative leader of community), the Village Head (the superior leader of the community), and other key stakeholders (including Xiaonong, Lurong, and people in charge of local schools). We will meet to discuss how community members can usefully participate in the project, and how the project progress can be usefully monitored. This will include regular meetings between community representatives and LZWBS staff. LZWBS will work to mitigate any problems that arise during project implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. Timely feedback will be given to the community, in order to improve project management, and ensure that the community is fully engaged, and benefiting appropriately. We anticipate that through these measures, the project will be successful in achieving its objectives, and minimizing any negative impacts. We will ensure that the project has a basis of respect for local culture and traditions, by ensuring full participation of community members in project implementation, monitoring, and evaluation.

How will these measures be monitored?

LZWBS will facilitate establishment of the project team by the community itself. The team will assign roles to its members, describe their responsibilities, and undertake active monitoring of project implementation and impacts. Monitoring will take place through mechanisms including regular project team meetings, and joint meetings with LZWBS staff. These meetings will include discussions on how to advocate the project progress and impacts throughout the whole community, in order to reach a wider audience. The project finances will be made available to the community for inspection, and a grievance mechanism will be established.

Grievance mechanism

The project team members will publish posters summarizing the project, and make these available to community members. These posters will include descriptions of the goal and objectives of the project, the project team members, the project monitoring mechanism, and contact information for LZWBS and Jiangbo (jiangbo@kfbg.org) at Kadoorie Farm and Botanic Garden (the CEPF RIT National Coordinator for China). Through this we intend to ensure full transparency about the implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of the project.