

Social assessment – indigenous peoples Safeguarding the Saola, WWF

Indigenous Peoples

Approximately 75 villages traditionally use parts of the core zones of Bach Ma National Park extension, Thua Thien Hue Saola Nature Reserve and Quang Nam Saola Nature Reserve. Despite the area's proximity to the major cities of Da Nang and Hue, human population densities are among the lowest in Vietnam. Inhabitants belong predominantly to the Ta Oi and Ka Tu ethnic minority groups who traditionally practice shifting agriculture and hunting and move their villages approximately every three years (Arhem, 2005 unpub).

However, since the 1980s the great majority of Ka Tu villages have been sedentarised according to government initiatives; meaning that villages previously located near to the centre of the project area, e.g. in Huong Nguyễn and Thuong Quang communes are now situated far to the north near highway 49, over 10km away. Other villages have been moved less far but the vast majority are no longer within their traditional areas. Higher numbers of Kinh people also live in villages and towns along the Hồ Chí Minh highway, including the district towns of A Luoi, Khe Tre and Prao.

Extensive, currently unpublished participatory mapping work by N Wilkinson and N Arhem since 2005 has shown, however, that people still do use their traditional forest areas intensively. Hunting, in particular, is an activity which tends to be carried out in the traditional village area, regardless of convenience. There are complications to this pattern, however, with certain villages and individuals becoming specialised in hunting and extending their operations well beyond the traditional area into those of other villages, often without permission and hence in contravention to traditional culture.

The majority of the population in the project area in Quang Nam Province, belong to the Ka Tu ethnic group. In the areas in Quang Nam, Katu people typically make up over 90% of the population in most communes whereas in A Luoi and Nam Dong in Thua Thien Hue, there is a greater proportion of Kinh people. In A Luoi district there is also an equal population of Ta Oi people, mostly concentrated in the densely-populated commune of A Roang and the population of the buffer zone of the Saola Reserve in that district is divided approximately equally among the three ethnic groups (Saola reserve feasibility study, FIPI Thua Thien Hue, 1998).

In Tay Giang District, Quang Nam – one commune of the proposed Saola Nature Reserve - Ka Tu people represent 95%, 90%, 100% and 100% of the population in 25 hamlets of A'Vuong, Bhalee, A'Nong and A'Tieng Communes respectively, comprising approximately 6000 people in total (Long 2005). An economic valuation of communities (Ka Tu) living in the A Vuong Watershed was conducted in 2004 (Dang and Schuyt, 2005). Annual total economic value of these different natural resources per household at that time was found to be the following: timber 108,400 VND (\$7); NTFP including wildlife 2,743,077 VND (\$175); Aquaculture 534,823 VND (\$34) ;

agriculture 5,014,469 VND (\$319). Breaking down NTFPs into smaller categories, gross value per household per year was calculated to be: foodplants \$18; wild honey \$2; fibrous plants \$40; wild animals \$46 and firewood \$69. Firewood and wild meat are the most important non-timber forest products contributing to livelihoods in this area.

Furthermore, 100% of households were dependent on agriculture for food, 73% dependent on timber for houses and furniture, 100% dependent on firewood, 68% dependent on rattan (furniture, food) and several households were dependent on wild animals; 36% hunted mice, 14% bamboo rats, 14% barking deer and 7% civets. Mice and bamboo rats are usually eaten by households, whereas common barking deer and civets are usually shared among households.

In Dong Giang commune, in the northeast of Quang Nam Province and the eastern sector of the proposed Nature Reserve, Ka Tu represent 68% of the population, the remainder Kinh or Kinh/Ka Tu (Long 2005).

Impacts and prior consultation

Relocation of the local communities has already occurred, communities were re-located out of the project focal areas between 1979 and the late 1980s. This relocation was done under government resettlement programmes and was not connected with plans to establish protected areas, which in fact it pre-dated, or with any kind of biodiversity conservation agenda. Consequently, hunting is already illegal in all the areas where patrols will operate under this project. In practice, however, hunting is common throughout the area and this project will certainly negatively impact the income of some hunters. At first glance, the impacts seem potentially severe as wild meat is an economically valuable resource. Furthermore, hunting is a central element in the Ka Tu culture (Arhem, 2005) and almost all the areas where the project will act to prevent all hunting in fact lie within the traditional hunting grounds of local communities (N Wilkinson, unpublished data from community mapping surveys). However a more detailed examination of the local situation reveals a quite different picture.

Firstly, it appears that most hunting in the area, especially in areas far from the current village locations, is not by local people but by professional hunters from district towns and cities such as Da Nang and Hue (Robertson et al 2004). In Quang Nam (Long, 2005) and Nam Dong (N Wilkinson, unpublished data) local people complain of the impact of these outsiders and, in 66% of villages surveyed in Quang Nam this was considered the greatest threat to local community harvests (Long 2005). This means that most of the economic impacts from this project will not be on local people but on outsiders. Nevertheless, local people do hunt, and do sell almost all the meat they catch, even if the main purpose is sometimes for crop protection (Long, 2005, Arhem, 2005). Extrapolating from Dang & Schuyt's study to the whole project area would suggest that the total income to local communities from wild meat could be around \$300,000 annually. It is important to note that much of this income is from snares set close to agricultural fields which also fulfil a crop protection function. This project will concentrate on remote forest areas and

therefore have minimal impact on these snares. Negotiations with communities in Quang Nam found that most were prepared to accept a ban on hunting in areas over 2 hours walk from the village if they were still able to snare in nearby areas. Most activities of this project will be in these more distant areas and so have little or no impact on hunting near to the village. In the long term, capture rates of wild pig near the village would probably be increased by protection of source populations in more distant areas.

This clear-cut division of hunters into professional outsiders operating in deep forest, and indigenous people snaring near their fields is, in reality, simplistic. There are certainly some indigenous people who are prolific 'professional' hunters (N Wilkinson, pers obs) and there exists a continuum of hunting behaviour between the two extremes. Modern hunting behaviour is very different from that enshrined in the traditional norms of Ka Tu culture and frequently attracts the opprobrium of village elders. Ka Tu culture demands sharing of meat with the whole community rather than sale to outsiders. Furthermore it is a common opinion within local communities in both Quang Nam and Thua Thien Hue that modern hunters waste their ill-gotten gains on alcohol, prostitutes, karaoke and other social evils (Arhem 2005, N Wilkinson pers obs). Furthermore all local people are well aware that populations of most wild species are being driven to extinction and that hunting therefore provides benefits only in the short term. It could be reasonably argued that this is irrelevant, that the Ka Tu should be given the right to hunt in their traditional lands and that it is not up to anyone else to dictate how they do it. However, to argue in this way is to compare the effects of this project to a hypothetical idealistic situation rather than to the current reality.

In fact WWF strongly advocates the transferral of land use rights to indigenous peoples (WWF International, 2008), not only as an ethical stance, but because it reflects our understanding that secure use rights are an effective alternative to blanket bans enforced by underfunded state agencies. Our previous work throughout Vietnam, and in these two provinces particularly, demonstrates our commitment to this approach. We have extensively advocated and supported initiatives to allocate land to local communities and all our large projects in the area (MOSAIC, Green Corridor and ADB-BCI) have taken a conservation approach where land allocation to indigenous communities is the first, and most fundamental, step. However, the current national legal framework for forest land allocation, and the prevailing attitudes in certain sectors of local government, continue to render this approach difficult. We have achieved some progress on the ground and also, we believe, have played our part in influencing national policy. But these changes are slow and, while we are hopeful that allocation of traditional lands to indigenous communities will be possible in future, this time remains a long way off (see, e.g. Dickinson & Hoang Ngoc Khanh, 2008; Corbett, 2008 for more details).

Currently, it is simply not legal for FPD patrols operating in an area to spare hunters from the village that traditionally 'owns' the area while acting against hunters from outside. Equally it is not possible for local people to manage resources in their area sustainably when those resources are open to access by outsiders, and it is not

economically realistic to expect them to try. The only choice we are currently able to offer to the Ka Tu and Ta Oi people is between a situation where everybody is allowed to hunt in their traditional areas, and a situation where nobody is. In all negotiations which have been conducted to date (Long, 2005, Wilkinson unpub, 2008) they have preferred the latter option. We have not yet investigated the factors underlying this preference but, given that the legal enabling environment for community forest management is developing favourably, we believe this decision is in their long term best interests as well as the Saola's. The current, de facto open access system, on the other hand, seems to provide large benefits to a small number of already relatively wealthy hunters at the expense of the community at large.

It has not yet been possible to conduct a comprehensive assessment of impacts or a comprehensive prior consultation across the project area. This is due primarily to the large number of communities and individuals that would need to be covered. The issue is further complicated by the difficulty of gathering interview data on illegal activities and the more general problem of implementing participatory decision-making approaches within the hierarchical decision-making structure of rural Vietnam. The situation outlined above is based on the, already quite extensive research and consultation which we have already conducted but it remains an extrapolation from inadequate data.

This and the Darwin project now offers an opportunity to improve both the breadth and the depth of our current analysis and of our consultation work to date and activities proposed here would make this work comprehensive. A comprehensive community mapping survey would uncover the spatial resource use patterns of the whole communities. In-depth 'grounded-theory' research in a select number of communities into the factors influencing hunting decisions by local people and also a direct survey of snare distribution across the landscape. Early in 2010 we plan to begin work in two pilot communes to discuss current conservation options in detail with local people. This work would be conducted by an independent researcher spending at least three weeks in the villages themselves. Therefore our understanding (as summarised above) of the potential impacts of this project on local communities will be refined and expanded throughout the lifetime of the project.

In summary, there are potentially some individuals who are not engaging in illegal, unsustainable or destructive forest resource use, who could be negatively affected by project activities (e.g. NTFP collectors). The participatory mapping component and community consultations will provide the framework for the process of Free, Prior and Informed Consultation of all local communities within the project area. This will focus on the indigenous ethnic minority groups such as the Ta Oi and Ka Tu who make up the majority of community members and will also include non-indigenous groups. All local communities will be informed of the project activities prior to their inception and have the opportunity to discuss local community involvement and the implications of the project on local livelihoods. Local communities will be encouraged to freely discuss how the project can or is affecting their livelihoods with WWF and the Darwin project throughout its implementation, so that mitigation

strategies can be developed in close collaboration with the appropriate persons (individuals, communities, civil society groups) and implemented accordingly.

Mitigation

According to the information presented above, any negative impacts from enforcement of regulations against illegal, unsustainable and destructive resource exploitation are likely to either

- (i) have a negligible impact on individuals or households (e.g. where illegal hunting is opportunistic), or
- (ii) have a non-negligible impact on a small number of individuals who are primarily engaged in illegal, unsustainable and destructive hunting
- (iii) have a non-negligible impact on a small number of individuals whose livelihoods are are reliant to some degree on other forest resources (e.g. NTFP collectors)

Finally, and most importantly, we expect that the long term negative impacts of improved enforcement against all hunting will be less than the negative impact of the current open access situation which has emerged since the emergence of the wildlife trade and the breakdown of traditional management systems.

However, regardless of this, the project and the linked Darwin Initiative project will develop conservation models that will benefit local communities as well as achieve conservation objectives. Model development will be achieved through participatory mapping and holding community consultations, funded by both projects. We have extensive experience in the area of implementing different kinds of community development and livelihood support projects, including community forestry and community development funds. WWF has already operated projects to convey livelihood benefits on communities in all but five of the project area communes. We are now developing models of community-based conservation specifically relevant to the Saola areas and these will continue to develop as this project, and the Darwin project, both progress. We are already actively applying for funds to develop and trial pilot approaches based on our existing models.

We will also investigate links to other WWF projects involved in this kind of work. Currently the EU-funded SWITCH project for Establishing a Sustainable Production System for Rattan Projects has the potential to bring significant long-term livelihood benefits to 11 of the villages currently using the project area, including many of those that appear to use it most heavily. This work is conducted as community-based conservation and supporting sustainable harvesting, however we believe that these activities, in the past present and future, will significantly mitigate against any negative impacts of this project in these areas.

If our research, under this and the Darwin project reveals exceptions to the situation presented above demonstrating that communities are suffering real negative impacts from this project, we expect to be able to target community-based conservation initiatives to affected communities in such a way as to mitigate any economic effects. Should this prove impossible, WWF are committed to raising additional funds necessary to provide compensatory benefits to communities.

Support with livestock rearing was suggested by community representatives at recent workshops in A Luoi and Nam Dong as an appropriate way of mitigating any negative impacts that might arise from the establishment of the new Saola nature reserve (N Wilkinson, unpublished data 2008) and, subject to further consultation, we would endeavour to take this approach in such a situation.

Indigenous Peoples Action Plan

- All local community members in the project area negatively affected by project activities, will be eligible for compensation and mitigation, (including those engaged in illegal, unsustainable and destructive activities such as hunting, under the SWITCH project)
- All local communities will be undergo a process of Free, Prior and Informed Consultation regarding the CEPF and Darwin projects
- Affected persons will be identified and monitoring conducted through these community consultations and mitigation/compensation strategies discussed and developed with those persons and local communities/civil society groups
- Community consultations will be held in 50% of communities in the 2nd quarter of 2010 and the remaining 50% in the 2nd quarter of 2011.
- Compensation and mitigation will be implemented through:
 1. WWF SWITCH project, involving sustainable rattan harvesting and production, where affected persons occur within the SWITCH project area
 2. This CEPF-funded project and/or subsequent funding raised during the lifetime of this project
- Mitigation strategies implemented by the CEPF project are likely to include employment of the affected persons under the joint enforcement and monitoring component, for which there is already sufficient budget allocated. Any other mitigation strategies are likely to need further fundraising from other sources, which will be conducted throughout the lifetime of this project.

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