

## CEPF FINAL PROJECT COMPLETION REPORT

<b>Organization Legal Name:</b>	International Center For Living Aquatic Resources Management
<b>Project Title:</b>	Stung Treng Ramsar Site in Cambodia – Integrating Fisheries Management and Wetlands Conservation
<b>Date of Report:</b>	28 August, 2013
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### CEPF Region: Indo-Burma Hotspot

**Strategic Direction:** Strategic Direction 3: Engage key actors in reconciling biodiversity conservation and development objectives, with a particular emphasis on the Mekong River and its major tributaries

**Grant Amount: US\$159,965**

**Project Dates: 1 April, 2011 to 30 June, 2013**

### Implementation Partners for this Project (please explain the level of involvement for each partner):

#### Community Fisheries (CFi) Organizations and its members

CFi are the most important implementation partner for this project. CFi members from 9 local villages formed a management committee for each of the 3 fish conservation zones established by the project, and jointly implemented day-to-day activities of the project. With WorldFish staff facilitating, they also developed detailed contents of the management plan for each of the 3 conservation zones, including the boundary, access rules, and fishing gear restrictions for those who were exempted from the access rules. Rotating membership consisting of a total 96 local fishermen was established to organize regular patrol teams for the 3 conservation zones. The patrol was conducted 7 days per month on average during wet season (low fishing activity), and 12 days per month during dry season (peak fishing activity), which significantly deterred illegal fishing operations in and around the conservation zones. Other activities implemented by the participating CFi members were: communication regarding the new conservation zones and the management rules to other members of the communities; daily recording of fish catch for monitoring purposes; and monthly reporting to the provincial FiA and MoE offices on their activities.

#### Other local community members

Local villagers engaging in fishing activities for livelihoods (but not necessarily active CFi members) all had to abide by the new management protocols for the fish conservation zones. Many of the villagers, including village chiefs and commune council members actively supported the implementation of the management plans and the coordination between CFi and other local authorities such as the police, commune councils, and district offices. Moreover, the experiences and lessons learnt from the management of the 3 pilot sites have been shared with all 21 communities living within the Stung Treng Ramsar site.

**Fisheries Administration (FiA), Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries**

The Department of Fisheries Conservation (DFC) at FiA in Phnom Penh, and FiA Cantonment (provincial) office in Stung Treng regularly participated in the project activities. One DFC official attended the project inception meeting and all the subsequent 6 monthly reflection workshops, and provided advice and the feedback to the local CFi and village representatives as to how to improve the design of fish conservation zones and the mechanism for patrolling. One official from the FiA Cantonment office regularly participated in the patrolling activities, which were jointly carried out with the Ramsar rangers (under MoE), FiA, local police, and CFi groups.

#### **Ministry of Environment (MoE)**

The Director of the Stung Treng Ramsar Site Management Unit, under the Department of Environment (DoE) in Stung Treng, and a representative from the Department of Wetlands, Watershed and Coastal Area at MoE in Phnom Penh regularly participated in the project activities. They joined the inception meeting and all the 6 monthly reflection workshops, and provided feedback to the local CFi and village representatives as to how to improve the implementation of the management plans, especially methods of patrolling. Under the Director's guidance, one DoE official and five local Ramsar rangers regularly joined patrolling duties with the local fishermen.

#### **Cambodian Rural Development Team (CRDT)**

CRDT also received funding from CEPF during the same period and implemented a variety of livelihood support activities to the villages in the same target areas as our project. The two projects were designed to complement each other. CRDT and WorldFish regularly communicated and updated each other of the progress. CRDT also joined the 6monthly reflection workshops organized by WorldFish project, and received direct feedback and requests from the local community participants regarding the livelihood support. WorldFish also conducted periodical review of own social safeguard strategy and provided the results to CRDT and other NGOs.

#### **Other Local NGOs**

Community development NGOs such as CEDAC and CIRD, and environmental NGOs such as WWF and Mlop Baitong joined the 6 monthly reflection workshops of the project where the representatives of the communities leading the 3 fish conservation zone management activities presented the progress and shared the lessons learned. At the final workshop in May 2013, WWF presented the plans for their upcoming BMZ-funded project in the same area to protect the Ramsar site.

### **Conservation Impacts**

*Please explain/describe how your project has contributed to the implementation of the CEPF ecosystem profile.*

Our project was implemented in the Stung Treng Ramsar site, a critically threatened conservation priority area within the Mekong River that previously had not received any support from CEPF-funded projects. On-the-ground conservation and management of aquatic ecosystem from development threats (especially fisheries) was also previously not directly covered by CEPF investment despite the fact that fisheries had been identified as one of the major threats to the biodiversity of the Mekong corridor in its ecosystem profile. Closing this major gap had been confirmed as an important geographic and thematic priority during the CEPF program review meeting held in Cambodia in July 2010. This project was designed to specifically address this gap.

Our project contributed to achieving the CEPF *Strategic Direction 3: Engage key actors in reconciling biodiversity conservation and development objectives, with a particular emphasis on the Mekong River and its major tributaries*. More specifically the project directly contributed to the following investment priorities:

*3.1: Support civil society efforts to analyze development policies, plans and programs, evaluate their impact on biodiversity and ecosystem services, and propose alternative development scenarios and appropriate mitigating measures.* The project supported local Community Fisheries to improve their understanding of the threats fishing activities cause to the biodiversity and ecosystem services of the Ramsar site, and to establish and manage conservation zones within their fishing grounds, based on sound biological principles so that the negative impacts of fishing activities are reduced.

*3.2: Support initiatives that leverage support for biodiversity conservation from development projects and programs.* The project combined fisheries management programs, traditionally a development effort, with conservation effort by piloting specific fisheries conservation approaches that also function as conservation measures for non-target species of significant biodiversity conservation value and also sustain ecosystem functions of key wetland habitats. By protecting the habitats for commercially important fisheries resources, the project also contributed to the recovery of some rare fish species.

***Please summarize the overall results/impact of your project.***

**Planned Long-term Impacts - 3+ years (as stated in the approved proposal):**

- The conservation of critical habitats and species within the Stung Treng Ramsar wetland complex and the sustainability of local livelihoods reconciled through ecosystem-based fisheries co-management.
- A model approach for aquatic biodiversity conservation and protected area management, replicable to other freshwater conservation priority areas in the Mekong River system and its tributaries, provided through the lessons learned from this project.

**Actual Progress Toward Long-term Impacts at Completion:**

Two deep pool areas and one wetland complex in the main river channel, all of which are important dry season habitat for fish and other aquatic animals, have been selected as fish conservation zones, and patrolling for illegal (i.e. destructive) fishing activities had been implemented for over 15 months at the time of project completion in June 2013. Thanks to the regular patrolling and voluntary compliance to the fishing ban in the conservation zones, both patrol teams and local villagers report dramatic reduction in illegal fishing activities as well as increase in fish biomass and diversity, not only in the conservation zones but in the waters around the conservation zones.

For example, the local fishers described the positive impact as “easier to catch enough fish now than the same time last year”, “some rare and high value fish species have returned to the area”

and “dolphins were seen passing through one of the conservation areas for the first time in many years”. Although it is still difficult to substantiate those observations with scientific data, the perception of positive impact was widely held among the local stakeholders who continued to support those observations during the second and third reflection workshops in December 2012 and May 2013. The perceived positive effect has created strong incentive for local participation and continuation of the patrolling. At the request of the CFI representatives, the frequency of the patrolling was increased during the peak fishing season to ensure that the positive impact on the fisheries resources would be sustained.

At the final reflection workshop in May, the participants broadly recommended that the fishing restrictions in the conservation zones should continue after the life of the project. But how to finance the cost of patrolling for illegal fishing remains as an unresolved issue. In addition, some concern was raised regarding the expansion and/or increase of conservation zones to other areas that are currently open to fishing. It was agreed that such expansion would need to be carried out carefully to ensure that the negative livelihoods impacts are minimized.

The whole process of establishing and implementing fish conservation zones have been documented in detail, including the site selection with the involvement of local community representatives, based on a set of agreed upon criteria, and the selection of specific protocols for regulating fishing activities, enforcement mechanisms, and measures to safeguard the poor within the communities. The lessons learned during the implementation are also summarized in to a report, and can be used as a model for developing similar initiatives elsewhere. The project has generated a concrete set of recommendations for a successful process for establishing and managing freshwater protected areas. We hope to replicate similar process elsewhere in the Stung Treng Ramsar site and also in Tonle Sap Lake where another Ramsar site is located.

#### **Planned Short-term Impacts - 1 to 3 years (as stated in the approved proposal):**

- Updated Stung Treng Ramsar site management plan approved by the steering committee.
- Implementation of community-based fisheries management for two priority conservation areas of the Ramsar site commenced.
- Implementation of key activities under the Ramsar management plan commenced.
- The direct resource users living in the Stung Treng Ramsar site engaged in the civil society efforts for the conservation of ecosystems and natural resources they rely on, while negative impacts on the livelihoods of the poor minimized.
- The members of 20 Community Fisheries groups, as the direct resource users, come to recognize the linkage between conserving the resource base and biodiversity and the sustainability of their livelihoods and future well-being.

#### **Actual Progress Toward Short-term Impacts at Completion:**

- Updated Stung Treng Ramsar site management plan approved by the steering committee.

This was not achieved during the life of the project. When this project started, the team consulted relevant individuals at the Ministry of Environment (MoE) and concluded that reactivating the existing Ramsar steering committee would face political difficulty. An alternative mechanism for revitalizing the Ramsar management plan was deemed necessary, involving a broader range of stakeholders than just MoE. Meanwhile, WWF initiated a consultation process to explore this alternative mechanism. WorldFish actively contributed to this WWF-led initiative as a member of the technical working group that was set up for this specific purpose, and provided inputs on fisheries management and social safeguards as part of the process of revising the Ramsar management plan. However, the official process at the government side had not yet started. As of June 2013, we were informed that WWF and MoE had finally reached an agreement to start the formal process.

- Implementation of community-based fisheries management for two priority conservation areas of the Ramsar site commenced.

Achieved. Local CFI groups selected three priority areas for fisheries conservation, one more site than the project had planned to establish. The communities have organized several patrol teams from participating villages and jointly implemented fishing regulations and patrolling for illegal fishing activities since April 2012.

- Implementation of key activities under the Ramsar management plan commenced.

Achieved. Local CFI groups have been strengthened in terms of its ability to: establish fish conservation zones based on a set of criteria; gain official endorsement from local authorities and technical support from line agencies; implement fishing regulations for the designated area. Their activities contributed to positive impacts, such as reduction in illegal fishing, recovery of some fish species, and increased fish biomass, as reported by the local communities.

- The direct resource users living in the Stung Treng Ramsar site engaged in the civil society efforts for the conservation of ecosystems and natural resources they rely on, while negative impacts on the livelihoods of the poor minimized.

Achieved. The project identified short- to long-term strategies for minimizing the negative impacts of conservation on the local livelihoods, and built some social safeguard measures into the management plan of the fish conservation zones. The management plans have been implemented by the local communities since April 2012, and three reflection workshops, stakeholder interviews in the villages, and monthly follow-up village meetings, were held to assess whether any actual negative impacts were felt or observed by the villagers themselves. No specific negative impact on the livelihoods of the poor was identified, with an exception of a few individuals complaining about their livelihoods in general, and the apparent inadequacy of the livelihood assistance programs offered by some local NGOs.

- The members of 20 Community Fisheries groups, as the direct resource users, come to recognize the linkage between conserving the resource base and biodiversity and the sustainability of their livelihoods and future well-being.

Achieved. Both fishermen in the patrol teams and other fishermen in the participating villages have reported reduction in illegal fishing activities and increase of fish biomass and diversity, in and around the conservation zones, making it easier for them to catch larger fish. The perception of the positive impact was widely held, and fishermen expressed their willingness to provide more concrete evidence to the WorldFish team and FiA through fish catch monitoring. One CFI group proudly reported sighting of Irrawaddy dolphins passing through the fish conservation zone they protect, as it is a rare occurrence there. During the three reflection workshops held in June and December 2012, the community representatives unanimously recommended that the fish conservation zones should continue even during dry season, to sustain the positive impact on fisheries resources. During the final reflection workshop in May 2013 the local stakeholders confirmed their willingness to continue the activities after the life of this project, through seeking funding from other donors or donation from wealthy individuals within the community. The negative impacts on the poorer members of the community, who rely more heavily on the income from fishing, seem to have been negligible thanks to the preferential access granted to them to continue fishing in a small designated area within the conservation zone. The localized increase in fish biomass in the adjacent waters seems to have more than made up for the inconvenience caused by the fishing ban within the conservation zones.

**Please provide the following information where relevant:**

**Hectares Protected:** Stung Treng Ramsar site, with the total size of about 14,600 hectares. The project has selected three sites as fish conservation zones: Anlong Kambor (170 hectares); Preah Sakhon (150 hectares); and Anlong Kol 46 (140 hectares).

**Species Conserved:** N/A

**Corridors Created:** N/A

***Describe the success or challenges of the project toward achieving its short-term and long-term impact objectives.***

A short-term objective, “Updated Stung Treng Ramsar site management plan approved by the steering committee”, has been adjusted to reflect the political sensitivity regarding the management of protected areas. The fisheries sector reforms which started early 2012, marked by the cancellation of all commercial fishing lots in the country, have caused some confusions among the stakeholders regarding what fishing practice is illegal and what is allowed, and where. Instead of trying to reactivate the Ramsar steering committee on our own, WorldFish decided to contribute to a new initiative by WWF to reactivate the Ramsar steering committee, with a longer time frame, a much larger budget, and more leverage to work with the Ministry of Environment at higher level. We have been informed that WWF and MoE have finally reached an agreement to start the process of revising the Ramsar management plan.

At the beginning of the project, the local communities assumed that the project was asking them to protect rare or endangered species in the Ramsar site, to satisfy the interest of a conservation NGO. It took the project team a while to explain that WorldFish was not a conservation NGO and that one of the project objectives was to restore the fisheries resources for the livelihood benefits of the local community themselves. It did not come naturally to the local communities that the fish conservation zones could be designed and managed to eventually benefit them. But once the community representatives realized that this project was meant for their benefit, it was easy to involve them in the selection and the design of the conservation zones, and have their ideas and opinions reflected in the decisions along the way. We feel that we successfully gave the local communities a sense of ownership to this project. This is reflected in several sensitive interventions they carried out on their own initiative, without direct advice of the project staff, including convincing migratory fishermen to move to another location to set up temporary fishing camps (and not result in conflict).

The potential for this project to serve as a model for scaling out of freshwater protected areas elsewhere partially depends on the ability of the project participants to communicate their experiences and lessons learned to those who are new to the concept and the activity.

One major challenge was that almost all project participants had difficulty articulating the lessons learned from successful/unsuccessful experience during the activity implementation. They were all good at describing what they did and what still needed to be done. But when something was working well, they were not able to identify it as a success, and could not tell us why it was working well. When something was not working well, they described it as a problem but were not able to describe the process in which they found a solution. The WorldFish project team had to try different facilitation approaches to better elicit the useful success factors and lessons from the local communities' experience in the project implementation. After a series of 3 reflection workshops (and the village level preparation meetings leading up to these events), some members of the local communities became better at identifying successful/unsuccessful experiences, why they were successful/unsuccessful, what they did to adapt to the situation.

***Were there any unexpected impacts (positive or negative)?***

We were fortunate that the recovery of fisheries resources was observed much sooner than we had anticipated. Within a few months from the start of patrolling, the local villages started reporting dramatic reduction in illegal fishing operation in the conservation zones and increase in

fish biomass. The positive impact on the fisheries resources so early in the project implementation was somewhat unexpected, but clearly indicated that the ecosystems and fish habitats we have targeted for conservation was the right ones and were still relatively in good health, with potential for rapid recovery. Sighting of the dolphins in one of the conservation zones was completely unexpected; this was an outcome that any conservation project would dream of, and gave everyone involved in this project great hope and encouragement for the future.

## Project Components

**Project Components:** *Please report on results by project component. Reporting should reference specific products/deliverables from the approved project design and other relevant information.*

### **Component 1 Planned:**

Existing national/provincial policy framework is reviewed to ensure that the management plans and the activities at the Ramsar site and community levels are in line with these policies and a policy-level commitment is confirmed through a Ramsar steering committee meeting.

### **Component 1 Actual at Completion:**

An inventory of the relevant laws and policies and a checklist for the Ramsar management plan revision process was completed as planned in the second quarter after the project started. The initial ambition of having the revised Ramsar site management plan approved by the existing Ramsar steering committee under MoE was significantly adjusted. Because the existing committee was not operational, we initially explored an option of renewing the committee membership. However, we found that it would be politically too sensitive to initiate a new committee membership under the existing draft sub-decree, and convene meetings. Instead WorldFish has decided to join forces with a WWF initiative, starting with a consultation process for forming a steering group on the Ramsar site management, involving relevant ministries at national and provincial levels. We also joined a technical working group to revise the existing Ramsar management plan.

### **Component 2 Planned:**

Management plan for the 14,600 ha Stung Treng Ramsar site is updated/ revised with components elaborated and priority actions identified, with emphasis on fisheries management activities, through local stakeholder engagement and consultation mechanism including the establishment of a Ramsar village network.

### **Component 2 Actual at Completion:**

At the policy level, technical inputs to revising the fisheries component of the Stun Treng Ramsar management plan were prepared based on the lessons from the Component 3 activities, and were shared with WWF and other members of the ad hoc technical working group. Meanwhile, at the community level, a network of villages living within the Ramsar site gathered together for a series of workshops organized by the project, to share information and experiences around the implementation of fish conservation zone management. Through the village network, around 15 priority sites were nominated within the Ramsar site and considered as possible target sites to pilot test fish conservation, and 3 sites were selected based on a set of criteria agreed by the participants.

### **Component 3 Planned:**

Resource user-led fisheries conservation and management measures are piloted by CFI groups in the Ramsar site, while negative impacts on the livelihoods of fisheries-dependent poor households are mitigated.

### **Component 3 Actual at Completion:**

Three management units have been formed for the selected sites, involving more than one village for two sites, and management plans were developed for field testing, with the ideas and suggestions of the local community incorporated. Lessons from and the progress of CFI-led fisheries conservation and management activities were discussed and shared among the project participants during monthly community meetings held at the villages. The progress and the lessons were consolidated and presented by the community representatives at the 6 monthly reflection workshops held in Stung Treng town, to the participants including government agencies and NGOs based in Stung Treng town as well as Phnom Penh. Social safeguard

strategies and livelihood enhancement recommendations have been prepared for all 3 sites and shared with CRDT and other development NGOs working in the Ramsar site. A set of social safeguards were put in place to mitigate the possible negative impact of the management plans on the poorest members of the local communities. The actual impact was monitored through the monthly village meetings and the periodical stakeholder interviews conducted by an external consultant who were not the member of the project team that helped the communities design the management plans. The reports providing the updates on the implementation status and the effectiveness of social safeguards were submitted to CEPF.

***Were any components unrealized? If so, how has this affected the overall impact of the project?***

Two deliverables that were originally in the workplan were not realized: revitalization of the Ramsar steering committee under MoE, and the approval of the updated Ramsar Site Management Plan by the Ramsar steering committee. This has not negatively affected the implementation of the overall project because the new management plans for the fish conservation zones were approved on the basis of the CFI by-law revisions, and their legitimacy was secured by obtaining mission letters from the commune councils and approvals from district level authorities.

***Please describe and submit (electronically if possible) any tools, products, or methodologies that resulted from this project or contributed to the results.***

During the project implementation, the team used a variety of PRA and survey tools to gather information about the local livelihoods and stakeholder identification / analysis. The team also developed a simple survey form for fishermen to fill out to monitor their daily fish catch. A set of baseline maps for the project site were compiled and converted into digital format for the ease of data sharing. In addition, a set of detailed GIS maps were prepared for the whole of Stung Treng Ramsar site and for each of the 3 conservation zones to facilitate the conservation planning and discussions among the stakeholders.

## **Lessons Learned**

***Describe any lessons learned during the design and implementation of the project, as well as any related to organizational development and capacity building. Consider lessons that would inform projects designed or implemented by your organization or others, as well as lessons that might be considered by the global conservation community.***

***Project Design Process: (aspects of the project design that contributed to its success/shortcomings)***

Strong local community involvement was the most important success factor of this project. From the start, the project team was able to engage the local stakeholders into the design of the project---site selection for the fish conservation zones, contents of the site-specific management plan, and partnership arrangements and procedures for the government approval/reporting. The local involvement in decision-making processes gave the stakeholders a sense of ownership to the project and provided the foundation for every activity that was successfully implemented under this project.

During the design phase of the project, the local village representatives initially assumed that establishing conservation areas was only for the purpose of protecting rare and endangered species, and nominated too many sites as “priorities” than were realistic to protect. However, as we continued the discussion and eventually clarified that the main management objective of the fish conservation areas should be sustainable use and enhancement of fisheries resources, the villagers were able to select a smaller number of sites where fishing regulation is much needed while being more realistic to implement.



Many site selection criteria were considered at the early stage of the discussion but when it came to making the final decisions the criteria regarding practicality, such as the distance from villages and availability of alternative fishing grounds, were thoroughly debated. At the same time, the participants also expressed strong interest in taking on a challenge of protecting biologically important, but large and remote fishing grounds that were entirely unmanaged previously, rather than selecting smaller, closer, and thus easier sites for them to manage.

Local community representatives also considered the potential negative impacts on the poorest people within the community as a key criterion. If a particular site was perceived to cause more negative impact on the poor when protected than other sites, they did not select the site.

***Project Implementation: (aspects of the project execution that contributed to its success/shortcomings)***

***Describe any lessons learned during this period.***

An unexpected challenge during the implementation was that the local communities had a tendency to place too much emphasis on combating illegal fishing activities, and apprehending the offenders. Confrontational approach posed security risk to the patrol team members; a few cases of retaliation by illegal fishermen, including a theft of boat engine, were reported. The project team explained to them that the objective of patrolling was to discourage illegal fishermen to return to the protected fish habitats, not necessarily to arrest them (the patrol teams are not authorized to make arrest, unless accompanied by relevant government officers). The team also needed to remind the local CFI that communicating about the management protocols for new fish conservation zones to the other community members and seeking their voluntary compliance is also an important part of protecting the fish conservation zone.

A key success factor during the implementation was the partnership that evolved between various stakeholders within the co-management arrangement, namely CFI, district/commune authorities, provincial FiA officials, and the Ramsar site rangers. During the reflection workshops, several local community representatives mentioned the stronger relationship with the government partners as the main reason why they have become more efficient in organizing regular patrolling. Sharing the responsibility for the joint patrolling resulted in mutual accountability and respect.

Local authorities and relevant government stakeholders who were not directly involved in patrolling activities also contributed to its success by providing commission letters and resolving problems that CFI could not resolve by themselves.

***Other lessons learned relevant to conservation community:***

When given an authority to prioritize and select target areas for conservation, the local communities used mixed criteria for making the decisions, resulting in a set of sites with very different characteristics. Of the 3 sites selected, 1 site was large and remote, difficult to patrol, but high potential in terms of fisheries resource recovery and less negative impacts were anticipated on the local livelihoods as no village was located near the site. Another site was also large and high potential for resource recovery but close to villages with high incidence of illegal fishing, and more burden on the local livelihoods if protected. The third site was small deep pool near a village where incident of illegal fishing was high but also easy for the nearest village to guard the site. One key criterion commonly used across all 3 sites was that the fishermen who previously used the conservation sites would have easy access to another fishing ground. This indicates that conservation projects that are socially very disruptive are unlikely to gain broad support from the local communities in general.

The local communities who participated in this project demonstrated an ability to organize monthly meetings at village level and share their experiences and advices to each other. The village network seemed to have become a useful mechanism for promoting "self help" among

them, without the intervention of WorldFish team to resolve all the problems occurred during the project implementation.

However, the level of organization and the quality of communication within each of the participating villages varied, and were reflected in how confident the village representatives were in expressing their opinions at reflection workshops. In the future we need to facilitate more discussions within the villages where local villagers have limited experience with group discussions and collective decision-making.

## Additional Funding

*Provide details of any additional funding that supported this project and any funding secured for the project, organization, or the region, as a result of the CEPF investment in this project.*

Donor	Type of Funding*	Amount	Notes
Japan Ministry of Foreign Affairs / WorldFish	A	\$48,159	Thematic program co-funding to cover staff time and office facility cost in Stung Treng

**\*Additional funding should be reported using the following categories:**

- A** *Project co-financing (Other donors or your organization contribute to the direct costs of this project)*
- B** *Grantee and Partner leveraging (Other donors contribute to your organization or a partner organization as a direct result of successes with this CEPF funded project.)*
- C** *Regional/Portfolio leveraging (Other donors make large investments in a region because of CEPF investment or successes related to this project.)*

## Sustainability/Replicability

**Summarize the success or challenge in achieving planned sustainability or replicability of project components or results.**

The project activities were built on the previous / ongoing activities by WorldFish and CEPA through SIDA-funded *Wetlands Alliance Program* (WAP, 2006-present), and also the previous effort by IUCN, MRC, and UNDP through GEF-funded *Mekong Wetlands Biodiversity Programme* (MWBP, 2003-2005). It was hoped that the outputs and lessons of this project would be taken up through the WAP partner network not only in Cambodia but in other Lower Mekong countries, and some components of the project would be taken up for continuation through WAP-funded activities at the Stung Treng Ramsar site. However, the donor SIDA has announced in May 2013 that it would not support the next phase of WAP (the current commitment will end at the end of 2013).

During the reflection workshops in December 2012 and in May 2013, the WorldFish team facilitated some discussions on the continuation of the project activities after June. The local participants expressed strong willingness for continuing the activities, especially the patrolling of the conservation zones, however, acknowledged that without external financial support for the cost of patrolling (e.g. fuel) and for getting the network together for meetings, it would be difficult to continue on their own with the same level of efforts. Alternative sources of potential financial support were discussed, including the new WWF project, CEPA, and Commune Development Fund. The latter option is part of the government fund promoting decentralization and the capacity building of local authorities, and is promising target for future support as the 3 fish conservation zones established by this project has solid endorsement of the local authorities (village chiefs and commune council members). However, to access the Commune Fund, CFI members will need to built more credibility and track record of successful fish conservation zones as a “development intervention” that can generate economic benefits to the local people through enhancing fisheries

resources. They will also need to learn how to go through cumbersome administrative procedures to secure funding.

WorldFish and the local partners plan to seek continued funding through the CEPF phase 2. If successful, the project can be sustained for another 3-4 years, sufficient time to explore this particular issue of sustainability, and to build CFI teams to systematize the implementation processes and carry on with variety of funding sources. Meanwhile, WorldFish is supporting the essential activities with basic level of technical support from the staff, with funding from other sources.

***Summarize any unplanned sustainability or replicability achieved.***

We had anticipated some political obstacles associated with re-activating the Ramsar steering committee since the project started, and responded accordingly to the challenge as described in the section above on "Short-term impacts". FiA and MoE have maintained cordial relationship during their involvements in this project, and especially at the provincial level, were actively involved in the project activities. Instead of trying to legitimize the project activities through revising the Ramsar management plan and getting it approved by the steering committee, FiA and MoE officials advised CFI groups to integrate the fish conservation zone management protocols into CFI by-laws and to obtain "mission letters" directly from the local authorities (communes and districts), authorizing the CFI to implement the activities on the ground. This recommendation was taken up by the participants and mission letters were swiftly obtained. This also helped establish the regular communication linkages between the CFI groups and the local authorities regarding the progress of the project and helped CFI seek high level intervention from the local authorities in case of conflict.

One of the risks identified before the project started was proposed hydropower development upstream and downstream of the project site. During the project period, the status of these projects has not progressed. While the medium to long-term risk of dams remains in the picture, the local communities were able to focus on the more immediate problem at hand, namely illegal fishing.

Previously unanticipated policy changes in the fisheries management at national level (fishing lot cancellation and associated change in gear restrictions) caused some confusion among the local authorities as well as fishermen as to what is allowed and what is no longer allowed, elsewhere in the country. However, around the project site, the effect of these policy changes was not yet visible.

## **Safeguard Policy Assessment**

***Provide a summary of the implementation of any required action toward the environmental and social safeguard policies within the project.***

When the project started a broad stakeholder analysis was conducted to identify sub-groups within the community who would be more vulnerable to negative impacts of fishing regulations. Local NGOs active in supporting community livelihoods in the Ramsar site, CRDT, Mlop Baitong, CEPA, CEDAC, CIRD, participated in the village consultation process, and provided useful insights on poor people in the villages within Ramsar site.

During the selection of target areas for fisheries conservation, local community representatives decided to avoid sites that would likely cause more immediate social impacts compared to other candidate sites. When the specific conservation protocol were being considered for inclusion into the management plan of each site, the project team consulted various stakeholder groups, including the poorer households, women, migrant fishermen, so that the implementation of the

management plan would not cause negative impacts on the poorest groups, and if any negative impacts are anticipated, mitigation measures are in place to address them.

The main social safeguard strategy of the project was preventive---the management plans of the fish conservation zones allowed for some exemption of the most vulnerable families from the fishing ban in the conservation zone, with certain limits. Another strategy taken by the project was to designate conservation zones in fishing areas where majority of the current users could easily find alternative sites for fishing elsewhere.

In addition to these immediate social safeguards that were built into the management plan, the project also identified longer-term vulnerabilities for each of the sites, and social incentives for voluntary compliance to the conservation rules, and recommendations on livelihoods assistant needs of the affected communities.

The project team conducted monthly visits to follow up on the villages around each of the three conservation areas, and during the reflection workshop involving all 3 village networks, asked the villagers if there had been any negative livelihood impacts to the poor families within the communities as result of the project. Some families in the villages had been known to experience food shortage months during rainy season, right before the rice harvest time. However, these problems were pre-existing conditions for those families before the project and were not exacerbated by the project activities. On the other hand, the local villagers reported that fish catch in the waters around the fish conservation areas increased since the project started; less time is required for them to catch enough quantity or larger size fish (i.e. less time spent for making the same or more income). In some incidence when negative social impacts of the project was reported, it turned out, after some investigation, that poorer villagers were manipulated by others into saying that there was negative impact, in hopes of seeking monetary compensation.

An external reviewer/consultant visited all three conservation areas and interviewed poor families living nearby specifically on those issues; the interviewees generally said that the safeguards already in place were sufficient and that although fishing was banned in the designated conservation zones, their fish catch improved because of the overall decline in illegal fishing operations in the area.

### **Additional Comments/Recommendations**

## Information Sharing and CEPF Policy

CEPF is committed to transparent operations and to helping civil society groups share experiences, lessons learned, and results. Final project completion reports are made available on our Web site, [www.cepf.net](http://www.cepf.net), and publicized in our newsletter and other communications.

**Please include your full contact details below:**

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**\*\*\*If your grant has an end date other than JUNE 30, please complete the tables on the following pages\*\*\***

**Performance Tracking Report Addendum**

**CEPF Global Targets**

**(Enter Grant Term)**

Provide a numerical amount and brief description of the results achieved by your grant.  
Please respond to only those questions that are relevant to your project.

<b>Project Results</b>	<b>Is this question relevant?</b>	<b>If yes, provide your numerical response for results achieved during the annual period.</b>	<b>Provide your numerical response for project from inception of CEPF support to date.</b>	<b>Describe the principal results achieved from July 1, 2012 to May 30, 2013. (Attach annexes if necessary)</b>
1. Did your project strengthen management of a protected area guided by a sustainable management plan? Please indicate number of hectares improved.				Please also include name of the protected area(s). If more than one, please include the number of hectares strengthened for each one.
2. How many hectares of new and/or expanded protected areas did your project help establish through a legal declaration or community agreement?				Please also include name of the protected area. If more than one, please include the number of hectares strengthened for each one.
3. Did your project strengthen biodiversity conservation and/or natural resources management inside a key biodiversity area identified in the CEPF ecosystem profile? If so, please indicate how many hectares.				
4. Did your project effectively introduce or strengthen biodiversity conservation in management practices outside protected areas? If so, please indicate how many hectares.				
5. If your project promotes the sustainable use of natural resources, how many local communities accrued tangible socioeconomic benefits? Please complete Table 1 below.				

**If you answered yes to question 5, please complete the following table**





