

## CEPF Final Project Completion Report

<b>Organization Legal Name:</b>	Wildlife Conservation Society
<b>Project Title:</b>	Phase II: Building Sustainability for the Mekong Turtle Conservation Project in Kratie, Cambodia
<b>Grant Number:</b>	66600
<b>CEPF Region:</b>	Indo-Burma II
<b>Strategic Direction:</b>	4 Empower local communities to engage in conservation and management of priority key biodiversity areas
<b>Grant Amount:</b>	\$44,584.00
<b>Project Dates:</b>	May 01, 2017 - June 30, 2018
<b>Date of Report:</b>	September 04, 2018

### Implementation Partners

List each partner and explain how they were involved in the project

**WCS has long been working with Cambodian Fisheries Administration (FiA) for nearly 20 years. FiA is one of the main actor within this project playing an important role in educating and training local communities about the fisheries law, fisheries conservation, and especially the important of Cantor's Giant Softshell Turtle in fisheries law and how they are so crucial in fisheries resources. FiA also trained local communities about the important of flooded habitats along the Mekong for fisheries and communities (protecting from storm, flood and erosion).**

**WCS involved local Buddhist monks to the project helping to spread out conservation messages to local communities and students through school education and annual hatchling release ceremonies.**

**WCS also worked with local authorities to support the conservation project. These included district, commune, village and community fisheries who have jurisdiction in natural resource management in the area. We also invited them to participate in outreaches and education training as well as release events. The project also recruited some local people to be nest protectors that recognized by all involved authorities.**

**WCS also worked with Provincial Department of Education, Youth and Sport to ensure that they are supporting the education program at all schools in the conservation sites.**

**Turtle Survival Alliance is also our partner to provide technical advice.**

### Conservation Impacts

Summarize the overall impact of your project, describing how your project has contributed to the implementation of the CEPF ecosystem profile

After taking the project from CI, WCS has agreed to have Sun Yoeung as the project lead with WCS, recruited the current six nest protectors as WCS nest protectors and hired a new permanent staff as the Mekong Turtle Project Coordinator. The Coordinator has started with the project from December 2017.

There were two release ceremonies during the project period together with press releases. The first one was in June 2017 to release some hatchlings from the 2017 nesting season and some were from the head-starting center when WCS and FiA agreed not to have them at the center any more due to healthy and condition of the center recommended by many turtle experts. There were more than 150 turtles released into the river in the first release and 565 hatchlings from the second release in June 2018. There were attendants from nearly 200 people such as students, monks, nest protectors, government officers and film crews. The ceremonies were chaired by His Excellency Eng Cheasan- General Director of Fisheries Administration and his officers, WCS Country Director- Dr. Ross Sinclair and Sambour district governor.

After release, local media produced some video clips about the nest protection program interviewing local nest protectors, Sun Yoeung and government officers. There were more than 10 media outlets filming the release and when it went online, there were more than 100 million views and engagements. The second press release was in June 2018 in relation to release ceremony of hatchlings. There were many participants from Buddhist monks, students, fishermen, local authorities, and fisheries administration representatives.

As a result, there were many coverages by national and international media. Over 100 national and international media outlets have reported on it. Those media outlets, which include Yahoo, New York Times, Washington Post, Fox News, Daily Mail, ABC News and Star Tribune and that over 300 millions of people around the world viewed and know about the global importance of Cambodia for threatened wildlife conservation.

Two drawing competitions and five night shows were conducted in Kratie at five different villages and schools.

500 posters were also produced and distributed within the conservation areas.

Four trainings on endangered freshwater fisheries and other fisheries laws and regulations were conducted by FiA in the two provinces of Kratie and Stung Treng.

There was also a short summary of the *P. cantorii* on WCS annual report in 2017 showing the conservation aspects of the species in the Mekong and the annual reports were sent out to many stakeholders including FiA, NGOs, embassies and other government agencies.

All the nest protectors and Project Coordinator were trained about the data collection and entry by Technical Advisor.

We have involved Buddhist monks in the project as well because monks play crucial roles in educating people to participate in the conservation. The project invited monks to do the blessing to hatchlings before release and gave conservation messages to local people involved in the release ceremony to spread out to other people who could not join. The coloring books have been prepared and produced and will be distributed to local schools once finished. This will be the significant materials to educate young students to contribute to the species conservation looking into the decrease in this turtle hunting and trading in the area.

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

Impact Description	Impact Summary
<p>Turtle project is maintained and community continue to protect the species. There is a broad understanding from the public on the species conservation gaining their participation.</p>	<p>Having the species protected, the community nest protectors will be able to spread out conservation messages to local people. Throughout the education and outreach to local schools and villagers, this will improve local understanding towards the species conservation, especially all communities along the river habitats from both provinces. Local students and monks will play a key role in educating local villagers to stop hunting and collecting eggs of the species and gather their participation to conserve the species. The project has organized some release events as well as press releases inviting many media outlets to film the activities. Their posts on Facebooks, TV channels and newspapers have reached million people worldwide, especially Cambodian people. This is a very effective approach to educate people in general about the species conservation. In the long-term, we hope that there will be a lot people in the country participating in the conservation by not buying and eating wildlife, especially <i>P. cantorii</i>. FiA has put a large junction of river covering almost all nesting locations into a ministerial proclamation as Mekong Fisheries Flooded Forest Conservation and Management Zone (attached map). This is due to part of WCS conservation efforts.</p>

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

Impact Description	Impact Summary
<p>Community members are empowered and another generation of turtle nests is protected.</p>	<p>We have trained and built capacity of six local people to be the project nest protectors. These protectors are well-known in their respective villages and they are good at protecting the nests. As a result, 1384 hatchlings are protected during the two nesting season and released back into the river. For the last four nesting seasons, the project has protected 178 nests and 3,315 hatchlings which are four generations of species. With these large number of hatchlings released, the project expects that these generations will be able to thrive to restore the wild population back into their previous status and that species will not be going to extinct. Having this species conserved, it will also contribute to the fisheries conservation set by FiA and also gradually improve local livelihoods of communities.</p>

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

### Successes

The overall successful result is the number of nests protected during the project period. Seventy-three nests have been protected during the two nesting season resulted in 1384 hatchlings. There is a remarkably high hatching success rate within 2018 nesting season (67.43%). There were 24 nests protected in 2018 resulted in 565 hatchlings out of 825 eggs. All eggs were released back into the river.

The project has maintained good relation with all stakeholders having them involved in different stages of the conservation activities such as nest protection, outreaches and education, meetings, and release events. They have been impressed by the efforts put into the species conservation seeing many hatchlings released into the river and that their habitats are also being protected.

### Challenges

There has been a lot of reports from local communities who we are working with about the illegal hunting and collection of juveniles and adults of *Pelochelys cantorii* within one nesting area in Stung Treng Province. Apart from this, there has a lot locally-sand collection from villagers at different nesting beaches that disturbed females to laying eggs due to the damage of the beaches. These have led to no nest found in this area during the 2018 nesting season.

Were there any unexpected impacts (positive or negative)?

The nesting locations of this species stretch from Stung Treng to Kratie Province which is around 48 kilometers and there is a huge distance from each nesting beach to another. This is a big challenge for WCS project staff to conserve the species because the project currently has only six nest protectors (four in Kratie and two in Stung Treng) and one Project Coordinator who is going around between the sites. The nest protectors are only working with the project during the 7-month nesting season which is also a big gap for the species conservation.

Illegal hunting of the species has occurred at night, especially along the nesting habitat in Stung Treng Province. The project has no capacity to do the crackdown during both day and night time. This is something we need to look into the future to ensure that there is no such hunting which will eradicate the species from the river.

## Project Components and Products/Deliverables

Describe the results from each product/deliverable:

Component		Deliverable		
#	Description	#	Description	Results for Deliverable
1	Nests of Cantor's Giant Softshell Turtle are protected by communities	1.1	Posters and other material promoting the nest protection program produced and distributed in key villages	<p>500 posters were also produced and distributed within the conservation areas. The poster included the conservation messages, illegal hunting gear and species status in the fisheries law. The posters were distributed to different villages and schools in the area and some were distributed to authority offices such as village and FiA Cantonment office. Some of them were displayed at all nesting beaches/sandbars within the conservation areas.</p> <p>One educational signboard about the turtle conservation was produced and placed at the Sambour district town on the edge of the river. This is the location of boat port where there are a lot of people come and see the signboard.</p>
1	Nests of Cantor's Giant Softshell Turtle are protected by communities	1.2	Report on refresher training given to community members on nest protection protocol	<p>Technical Advisor, Sitha Som, trained all six nest protectors and the Project Coordinator on how to collect bio-data each found into datasheet. The datasheet was developed in accordance with CI's old datasheet. Some regulations about the to-do and not-to-do for the conservation were also informed to all field project staff to ensure that everything is going according to plan set by WCS and that it would not harm to social norm and local tradition as well as government regulations. They were also trained how to use the datasheet and the proper handling of eggs and hatchlings. Some other techniques on bio-data measurement were also provided such as measurement of clutch size (width and depth), distance to water, habitat, vegetation, water depth, track size (female) and so on.</p>
1	Nests of Cantor's Giant Softshell Turtle are protected by communities	1.3	Report on the number of nests found by community members, the distribution of those nests and the process used to assign	<p>WCS has produced short monthly reports on the nest protection program. The project recruited the same local people who used to be with the project the previous year to be the nest protectors. These people are used to be egg collectors and they are also well-known by local people and recognized by village chiefs. They were assigned to the project within the 7-month contract of nesting season. Their job is to search all identified nesting beaches where there is used to find nests in the previous years. They always went on boats every early morning to</p>

			individuals to protect turtle nests	ensure that they reach the sites before other fishermen to avoid any illegal collection. Once found, they removed nests that might be disturbed and collected by other fishermen and nests that were away from visibility were left at their actual sites. They were guarding nests for the whole incubation period and once hatched, our Coordinator counted and released into the river. Some of them were kept for release ceremony. The project also paid them some fees for protecting and feeding hatchlings before released as well.
1	Nests of Cantor's Giant Softshell Turtle are protected by communities	1.4	Report on the outcome of the nest protection program during the 2017-2018 breeding season, including numbers of nests protected, number of eggs found and number of hatchlings emerged	The reports included number of nests found, number of eggs, as well as location of each nest. Maps were also produced to show all nest locations. All the details of each nest were put into the table and excel document for references. Once found, all nests were protected by nest protectors and some nests were relocated to nest protectors' houses or nearby to avoid any illegal collection and natural predation. As of the end of 2018 nesting season, there are 1,384 hatchlings from 73 nests within the last two nesting seasons. These nests were found from three main locations (two in Kratie and one in Stung Treng). All nest locations were GPS recorded and put onto the map.
2	Awareness of Cantor's Giant Softshell Turtle raised among communities, restaurant owners and Fisheries Administration	2.1	Materials are developed to raise awareness of Cantor's Giant Softshell among sub-national Fisheries Administration officials and local communities	FiA has produced training materials to train local communities about the conservation of the Cantor's Giant Softshell Turtle as well fisheries resources along the Mekong River in the two provinces. The materials included all related FiA law, proclamations on endangered freshwater species which is also included our protected species, fishing regulation, community fisheries law and by-law, as well as penalties for different types of illegal fishing. Four village trainings were conducted in 2017 by FiA officer through the consultant agreement as part of the project deliverables. There were 143 participants during the four meetings which included men and women.
2	Awareness of Cantor's Giant Softshell Turtle raised among	2.2	Posters and social media are used to communicate	The project staff have produced a conservation poster illustrating messages about the conservation of the species and how they are protected on Fisheries Law and encouraging messages to the public to participate in the

	communities, restaurant owners and Fisheries Administration		conservation messages about Cantor's Giant Softshell to communities and restaurants	<p>conservation. 500 posters were distributed along the river habitats, especially nesting sandbars. Some of them were given to local fishermen, local people, schools, and local government offices. Some were distributed at restaurants and hotels in the conservation areas.</p> <p>Two educational signboards have been displayed for raising awareness to the public. One was stationed at the corner near the Sambour market. One was displayed at the boat port. These two locations are very good place for the signboards because there are a lot people traveling to the area, especially fishermen who are also going fishing.</p> <p>There are frequent posts on Facebook by WCS Facebook page about this species conservation. The posts included the release of more than 150 hatchlings in June 2017, the finding of an early nest in December 2017, the finding of more than 800 eggs from the 24 nests in 2018, and the release of 565 hatchlings in 2018.</p> <p>These posts together with posts by different media outlets have reached millions of people worldwide and especially Cambodian people.</p>
2	Awareness of Cantor's Giant Softshell Turtle raised among communities, restaurant owners and Fisheries Administration	2.3	Report on meetings and other awareness-raising events conducted in target villages to raise community awareness about Cantor's Giant Softshell	<p>Two competitions were conducted in two villages in Kratie Province. The competition was designed to give primary students to draw and color pictures of the conservation species together with their habitat, illegal fishing gears and conservation messages. There 87 students of which 51 of them were girls. The project staff explained to students about the species conservation together with picture posters and then having them drawing and coloring. The winners of five were selected by all students for each competition ranging from first to fifth and they were awarded with student bags having the species name on it, as well as some notebooks and pencils and pens for those who participated the competitions.</p> <p>Night shows and school training sessions were conducted at the same five villages and schools. The night shows were having high school students performing conservation stories during night time and student sessions were conducted during day time. More than 400 peoples and students participated in the sessions. During the shows, the team also played some conservation movies as well as the project conservation activities and</p>

				video clips to viewers. The activities have attracted and encouraged them to participate in the conservation activities.
2	Awareness of Cantor's Giant Softshell Turtle raised among communities, restaurant owners and Fisheries Administration	2.4	Report documenting community, Fisheries Administration and media participation in release of turtle hatchlings, including media reports and social media statistics as an annex	<p>WCS and FiA organized two formal releases during the last two nesting seasons. The releases invited many participants from all stakeholders such local communities, students, teachers, monks, local authorities, and media representatives. As a result, millions of people around the world viewed the events and expressed their sincerely thanks to our conservation efforts to save the species from extinction. Moreover, there are thousands of people in general in Cambodia have reached the news about this species conservation and we do hope that they are understanding more about conservation and that they will spread out the message to other Cambodians.</p> <p>Apart from the formal releases, the project also organized a number of releases with small groups of different local communities who live close to the habitat. They groups consisted of local students, monks and fishermen. These were the hatchlings that hatched earlier during the season whereas the late hatchlings were kept for formal releases with authorities.</p>

Please describe and submit any tools, products, or methodologies that resulted from this project or contributed to the results.

**The project uses nest datasheet to record all bio-data from each nest found each year. The information in the datasheet includes location (UTM), clutch size, clutch width and depth, distance from water to nest, surrounding habitat and vegetation, water depth, incubation period, and spoiled eggs. Boats are used to locate nest from nesting beach to another. Containers are also used to transport eggs from unsecured nesting beaches to avoid predation. GPS and camera are used to record coordinates of each nest and take photos at the site respectively. Six nest protectors and one Project Coordinator are the field project staff who are leading the nest protection.**

**Posters illustrating about the conservation of the species are also distributed to different villages, nesting sites, schools and village offices. Signboard was also displayed at the boat port in Sambour district.**

**Education lessons including coloring books are also used to educate local school students about the conservation of species aiming to widespread conservation messages to their parents and villagers. Endangered fisheries species list and fisheries law were also used during the village education provided by FiA counterpart. Monks are involved in some other village education.**

**We used projector to show educational video at villages about the conservation and high school students are engaged to perform night shows in relation to species conservation. This night shows require generator for light up the night and projector.**

**The project invited media outlets to film about the hatchling release events and press releases were also used to send out to different media outlets to publish in their channels.**



## 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:

- Project Design Process (*aspects of the project design that contributed to its success/shortcomings*)
- Project Implementation (*aspects of the project execution that contributed to its success/shortcomings*)
- Describe any other lessons learned relevant to the conservation community

**One thing that the project has learnt is that local people are poor and their livelihoods are largely dependent on fishing for income. They are also lack of education and their family income always comes first and they tend to care little about the conservation. Therefore, improving their livelihoods through conservation incentives is one of the best options to gather their participation in our Cantor's Giant Softshell Turtle conservation.**

**Local FiA at the provincial level has little capacity to enforce law enforcement along the river due to the fact that they do not have enough fund and human resources to do the patrol. It is important to look for funding to support their law enforcement team to do patrol regularly. Supporting fund should cover their fuel cost, patrol boats, new hires, and food for the river patrol guards. This will help stop illegal hunting of fisheries resources.**

## Sustainability / Replication

Summarize the success or challenges in ensuring the project will be sustained or replicated, including any unplanned activities that are likely to result in increased sustainability or replicability.

**This project is successful having protected many nests and hatchlings and that there are a lot of students and people participating in the conservation through the releases, training and awareness outreaches. The media and onlie news are also reaching million people worldwide to understand and value our conservation efforts and this is a great step to combat with illegal hunting of this species by encouraging people not to buy and eat wildlife.**

**Through succesful result from this funding project, WCS and FiA have secured another grants to continue conservation activities for this species and it is hoped that the project will be sustainably secured for the future to come which is very good for the survival of this species.**

## Safeguards

If not listed as a separate Project Component and described above, summarize the implementation of any required action related to social, environmental, or pest management safeguards

None

## Additional Comments/Recommendations

Use this space to provide any further comments or recommendations in relation to your project or CEPF

**We would like to have further support from CEPF and other funding agencies for this species through community livelihood support and law enforcement.**

## 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 CEPF investment

**Total additional funding (US\$)**

*\$97,000.00*

### **Type of funding**

*Please provide a breakdown of additional funding (counterpart funding and in-kind) by source, categorizing each contribution into one of 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)*

**The project also secured additional funding as below**

- 1. \$USD20000 from Conservation International for the nest protection program and education program**
- 2. \$USD7000 from Wildlife Reserve Singapore for nest protection program**
- 3. A recent funding of \$USD70000 from US Fish and Wildlife Service for combating illegal hunting and trading of this species. It is also for the nest protection and outreach and training programs**



## 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.

1. Please include your full contact details (Name, Organization, Mailing address, Telephone number, E-mail address) below

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