

CEPF SMALL GRANT FINAL PROJECT COMPLETION REPORT

Organization Legal Name:	Royal University of Phnom Penh (RUPP)
Project Title:	Community based protection and monitoring of threatened bird biodiversity in Sekong river IBA (Koh Thbeng island and surrounding area)
Date of Report:	30 October 2012
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CEPF Region:

Indo-Burma hotspot

Strategic Direction:

Strategic Direction 2. Develop innovative, locally led approaches to site-based conservation at 28 key biodiversity areas. The project will specifically address the Priority Investment 2.1: establish innovative stakeholder-based conservation management and caretaking initiatives at 28 key biodiversity areas.

Grant Amount:

\$19, 999

Project Dates:

01 May 2011 to 30 September 2012

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

This project was conducted with relevant partners such as WCC (Wildlife Conservation Cambodia), CEPA (Culture and Environmental Preservation Association), WWF, Border Army Platoon 101 of Stung Treng province military, local authorities, and community in the project area. Cooperated works were done through the meeting, coordination, bird nest protection scheme, protocol development, monitoring, and awareness raising. WCC has facilitated the work for RUPP students to carry out research and study tour for local community from Siem Pang to WWF project site in Siem Bok district of Stung Treng. CEPA also has facilitated field work with community and authority, and helped conduct training and workshop for community in project area. WWF assisted RUPP to organize study tour to its site of bird conservation project, and shared the useful experiences and information to the community from Siem Pang district. Border Army Platoon 101 of Stung Treng province has involved in community action like observing signboards and awareness raising for migrant fishers. Commune police participated in patrol activities with community monitoring team. There was also strong legal support by Local foresters and authorities (village, commune and district) for implementation of the project as indicated in bird nest protection agreement between project and community.

Conservation Impacts

Please explain/describe how your project has contributed to the implementation of the CEPF

ecosystem profile.

The Community based protection and monitoring of threatened bird biodiversity in Sekong river IBA project directly addresses the Strategic Direction 2: Develop innovative, locally led approaches to site-based conservation at 28 key biodiversity areas, and greatly supports the Priority Investment 2.1: Establish innovative stakeholder-based conservation management and caretaking initiatives at 28 key biodiversity areas. The project established a model of community based organization in Thmor Keo commune of Siem Pang district, Stung Treng Province (See appendix 1: map of project area), and trained eleven community members with adequate skill and knowledge to monitor and safeguard the three threatened bird species of river lapwing, great thicknee and river tern. In line with strong support and involvement of local community by awareness raising and capacity building, the project has developed a locally friendly monitoring method that local community uses it to guide their management process and decision making. The bird nest protection agreement scheme, however, fostered the livelihood of local community while engaging with active protection of threatened bird biodiversity of targeted species. Locally based approaches are more effective and sustainable for long-term conservation and protection of biodiversity in the project area than those of professional experts.

Because of success of this project, RUPP expanded its conservation activities to Sesan River IBA and Tonle Sap Great Lake with secured funding support of McArthur Foundation. In addition, the integration of good practices developed by this project into existing community based organizations in other IBAs has shown to be very advantageous for long-term conservation initiatives by attracting local community to have great involvement.

Please summarize the overall results/impact of your project against the expected results detailed in the approved proposal.

There are three expected results listed in the project document. We hereby comment the achievements against expected results that RUPP has gained in achieving the project aim.

- 1) Assessment report on key bird species and their habitats (sand and shingle bars), and natural resource use

The biological survey was carried out in order to assess the status and condition of nesting birds and natural resource use by stakeholders in Sekong River IBA. The survey results were largely employed as a guiding principle to formulate the project implementation modules for the implementation phase. In addition, this study was to figure out the sandbar bird nesting colonies, and using these data to identify potential bird nest sites, and their threat factors in order to propose bird nest protection scheme based on local community participation for Sekong River IBA, Stung Treng province. Based on the survey results, we then developed bird nest protection scheme with local community with strong legal support of commune chief and district governor. Furthermore, findings assisted us to develop capacity building program, awareness raising as well as locally based monitoring protocol for the community in project site.

- 2) Community based monitoring protocol

The protocol was used to detect the status of targeted birds on the islands protected on Sekong River IBA. It is simple that local community people are able to understand and implement with minor supervision by outside experts. It was designed in Khmer language to record the bird parameters and human activities by adopting patrol method to each conservation island. We employed participatory approach for design of protocol that specifically integrated the community's local knowledge on water birds and natural resources

into an operational friendly protocol. The bird species recorded are those of river tern, river lapwing, great thicknees, and Mekong Wagtail that need high conservation measure. Moreover, the record parameter of bird is classified into age (like adult, chick), egg and nest. Parameters for human activities include fishing, hunting, agriculture, logging, animal husbandry, mining, and other threats that may be discovered during monitoring activities, and possibly caused severe threats towards bird. The monitoring data are used for various purposes like improving management process, awareness raising, and reporting to concerned local authorities for further action. These include increasing number of policemen and soldiers with community patrol team, evacuating cattle from protected islands, increasing frequency of nest safeguard by involved households, and educating migrant fishers in the project area.

- 3) Initial six-month monitoring results workshop and monitoring report on trend of bird population and success of nest protection program

The monitoring results were discussed every month in order to analyze trend and nesting sites of target bird species, so that necessary interventions could be adjusted and enforced for strong safeguard of conservative islands. The monitoring includes records of bird parameters and human activities on the six islands. In addition to three target species like Great thicknee, River tern, and River lapwing; other bird species like Mekong wagtail, Grey heron, and lesser whistling duck are also recorded, as they use the islands for their dwelling habitat. The record was carried out from January until June 2012. During this period, we recorded the bird population of Great thicknees (44 birds), River tern (7 birds), River lapwing (164 birds), Mekong wagtail (3 birds), Grey heron (2 birds), and lesser whistling duck (40 birds). Moreover, 3 nests of river tern, 6 nests of river lapwing, and 3 nests of great thicknee were recorded from the protection islands (See Appendix 2 for bird record). The nest success was generally good as more than 50% of total clutch size was succeeded. No river tern was however recorded during the biological survey in June 2011 in the six target islands, but 3 river terns were recorded in Koh Tbung island. Among the six protective islands on upper Sekong river in Siem Pang district, Koh Dat Thom island is found to have had a high number of three target bird species, because it received a minor human disturbance due to strong intervention by the project (support by local community, authorities and border army). By implementation of nest protection agreement, it helped safeguard bird nests on the islands in which these islands have been raided by loggers and migrant fishers. The already formed community members are getting better experience to continue the nest protection scheme if there is funding support available. Because of the project intervention, the human activities such as fishing, farming, hunting and collecting, animal husbandry, and logging (loggers use islands as cow raising field) were significantly reduced. The success of nests is positively correlated with human disturbance, the less disturbance of human activities on the conservative islands, the greater success of nest which is evidenced from the field.

Because the project started in June 2011 after the nesting season, we were unable to produce the first six-month monitoring report of bird population and their nests, we instead made one final report consisting of results deriving from monitoring and bird nest protection scheme conducted from January to June 2012. The project results were disseminated through project completion workshop held on 28 September 2012 in Stung Treng provincial town with participation of local community, local authority form Siem Pang district, relevant provincial departments and NGOs. In addition to disseminating results, the workshop also identified the long-term strategy for conservation of threatened water-bird species in Sekong River IBA by synthesizing idea and opinion from the participants. It also laid out the mode of implementation for the next phase of another project with support of MacArthur Foundation.

Please provide the following information where relevant:

Hectares Protected: six islands of approximately 67 ha (see Appendix 1: map of project area)

Island Name	Area (Ha)
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Koh Hulman	2.86
Koh Kbal Tra Ngoal	1.64
Koh Kampha	4.47
Koh Chung Heang	20.02
Koh Dat Touch	3.97
Koh Dat Thom	34.05
Total	67.00

Species Conserved: River lapwing (*Vanellus duvaucelii*), Great thicknee (*Esacus recurvirostris*) and River tern (*Sterna aurantia*), Mekong wagtail (*Motacilla samveasnae*), Grey heron (*Ardea cinerea cinerea*), and lesser whistling duck (*Dendrocygna javanica*)

Corridors Created: No

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

1. Estimate the breeding population of the following sandbar nesting species (River lapwing, great thicknee and river tern) on the Koh Thbeng island and adjacent area on Sekong River and Western Siem Pang IBA.

The biological survey was carried out in order to estimate the population of sandbar nesting bird species and assessed their threats. Furthermore, the survey provided the necessary data and idea for very important design for project implementation such as bird nest protection scheme, monitoring and awareness raising for the target communities in Siem Pang district. It involved key community members in the survey and informed them of the project objectives and activities in which they will implement in the later stage. This has been demonstrated that there are greater participation of local community, authorities and concerned competent government agencies in the protection, monitoring and bird nest guarding. There have been good examples that future conservation project could follow this project model.

2. Improve the nesting success rate of species (River lapwing, Great thicknee and river tern) by developing nest protection agreements with local communities.

Through the project interventions such as nest protection agreement with local community and awareness raising, there has been a remarkable increase of sandbar nesting birds on protective islands in which local community has never seen before. The population of River tern was not found during the biological survey in June 2011, but they are now found in the protective islands following the implementation of nest protection agreement. The bird nest protection scheme also provides the protective umbrella to other species like endangered species of Mekong wagtail, dwelling on the island, and expands an effort for the total protection measures of the whole island, by not only concentrating on a location where bird nest is found. 15 households were selected from two villages in Thmor Keo communes to implement the nest protection program and they rotate the guarding schedule based on mutual understanding and agreement. The design of nest protection measures employed participatory approach with the following stages:

1) identifying and locating islands to implement bird nest agreement: We used the data from the biological survey for this purpose, and created a map of islands with high potential conservation significance for local community's recognition, because we have limited financial resources it

was impossible for us to cover all the islands of the whole Sekong River IBA.

2) selecting active community members and households who are permanent fishers on the target islands: Selecting the right people is a key success of nest protection program, especially those who have carried out livelihood activities on our project site. For the purpose, we selected fifteen households (about fifteen persons as well, including ten persons from the active community members). They may have sufficient time to look after the nests. We provided them with a short training on bird nest protection schemes and conservation approaches that have been implemented in other part of Cambodia and the region. This would necessarily stimulate involved community members to embark on bird nest protection agreement. At this moment, the trained community members are continuing the monitoring and nest safeguard activities in the project area with support of another project.

3) designing bird nest protection agreement: By exposing to training and awareness raising on bird nest protection and conservation, involved community members have priori knowledge of what bird nest protection agreement is. The design involved great participation of village and communal chiefs. The RUPP project staff facilitated the process through several meetings. RUPP project staff and five community committee members discussed and drafted the agreement, it was then put for comments by community members and local authorities (village and commune). It was modified according to comments and experiences gained from the study tour to WWF's project site in Siem Bok district. In addition, the study tour gave them with hand on experience to bird nest protection, including locating nest, day-to-day guard, and chick handling after hatching. And it was finally entered into force with signature of RUPP project director and head of community based organization with legal support of Thmor Keo commune chief and Siem Pang district governor.

4) monitoring and feedback to community members involved with bird nest agreement: To ensure whether the agreement is being enforced, RUPP project staff made regular visit to the target island by joining the patrol team; and held a discussion with community committee members and bird nest guarders about challenges, progress, and nest situation; and sought appropriate solution and enforced the management measures.

3. Formulate indicators and develop monitoring protocols to detect the trend of bird species and the success of nest protection program under community nest protection agreement

Through participatory approach, two main indicators were formulated in order to assess the success of nest protection and project interventions. These are: 1) the population of three water bird species increase remarkably as results of project interventions; 2) the human disturbance activities on the target islands have reduced immensely. We facilitated the design of the monitoring protocol largely based on these two indicators with active involvement of local community members whose local knowledge was addressed. Without the monitoring protocol, we are unable to evaluate the success of bird nest protection scheme, and regular adjustment of conservation systems of natural resources in their localities may be impossible to improve.

Were there any unexpected impacts (positive or negative)?

By the implementation of monitoring protocol, the project has built up the capacity of involved community members and formed structure of active monitors in the project area. By expanding the conservation islands, there has an increase of monitoring cost because of an increased number of local community members to take part in the nest protection. Awareness raising model by poster and

signboards mounted on each protective island has also educated local people to be engaged in the conservation and safeguard of these threatened sandbar bird species.

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.

Bird nest protection agreement with local community is a suitable tool to increase the population of three targeted species of waterbirds. Working with local community provided an updated experience and knowledge on conservation and monitoring of water birds, as methods and approaches applicable in one area may differ significantly from one another due to varied ecosystems, ways of living, and different societal settings of indigenous communities in Siem Pang district. The collection of these would bring new knowledge and skills useful for conservationist and practitioner around the world who face similar conservation issues. It was a good lesson that community as well as RUPP project staffs learnt practical knowledge on bird nest protection scheme, ways how to locate water bird nests on island in project site, bird egg hatching cycle and egg biology, ornithological information of river tern, and turtle ex-situ hatchery techniques practiced by WWF's community counterparts. Experiences gained from the project site are vital for other part of Cambodia with similar riverine ecosystems, and these are replicated to Sesan River IBA in late 2012 with secured funding support of MacArthur Foundation for three-year period. Students from RUPP have used project site to conduct research on success of bird nest protection and monitoring for their final year theses.

In addition, the project provided RUPP with the firm support to create the field laboratory for students' field practices and further researches, and the results derived from the implementing the project would be used to update the teaching curriculum. Continued support for awareness raising for local community of additional communes in Sekong IBA would necessarily help protect the targeted bird species and other threatened wildlife in the area by minimizing the impacts caused by their livelihood activities, above all fishing.

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

This project is designed to conserve threatened bird biodiversity through nest protection agreement, participatory monitoring, and capacity building of local communities in Sekong River IBA. The project is successful and works smoothly. Because Cambodia has limited finance and little number of competent technical staff to directly protect the threatened bird species and natural resources, it is therefore that strong involvement of local community or direct beneficiary is inevitably required at this period. During the proposal development, it was very ambitious to cover the whole Sekong River IBA extending from Koh Thbeng island to Laotian border, but after biological survey we see that we are able to implement nest protection in selective part of IBA where protection is urgently needed, based on available budget and access by adjacent community.

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

There has been success and smooth implementation of project, as it is integrated with existing community-based organization structure. The project came on the right time that local community needed support to protect water bird, where other elements of natural resource conservation such as fish, forest and upland wildlife were already covered by other donors or NGOs working in the area. Because the project site is large with diverse human livelihood activities and there is finance constraint, we are unable to implement the nest protection scheme in the whole area of Sekong River IBA. However, with strong support by local authorities and border military to protect conservative islands, we are able to engage immigrants and seasonal fishers in bird nest protection program. Also, their cattle being raised on the islands are voluntarily evacuated to river bank where there is no sandbar. Overall, the implementing process of the project was conducted systematically, i. e. through step wide process like estimating the breeding population of the key bird species, designing implementation elements, improving the nesting success rate of key bird species by developing nest protection agreements with local communities, and formulating indicators and development monitoring protocols to detect the trend of bird species.

Other lessons learned relevant to conservation community:

Local community is new to bird conservation, including monitoring and nest protection agreement. With project investment, they have gained substantial skill and experience on participatory monitoring including design, forming monitor team, data collection, analysis, interpretation and use of monitoring data to improve their management process; and nest protection like designing agreement for their key community members, locating nests of various species, and safeguarding the nests they have found on the ground.

ADDITIONAL FUNDING

Provide details of any additional donors who supported this project and any funding secured for the project as a result of the CEPF grant or success of the project.

Donor	Type of Funding*	Amount	Notes

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

- A) *Project co-financing (Other donors contribute to the direct costs of this CEPF 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 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 was integrated with the existing community based organizations such as Community based water resource management and Fisheries resource management. The community carries out regular patrol of deep pools in Sekong river for conservation of fish and aquatic resources. It is expected that these organizations would continue to carry out the conservation activities, especially those with awareness raising, and monitoring their natural resources as a requirement by sub-decree on community fisheries management. With great deal of good experiences derived from project, RUPP has expanded the conservation activities to the whole Sekong River IBA and Sesan River IBA for three-year period with secured funding support of MacArthur Foundation. For this support, the community will build up stronger institution and network among the members and competent agencies, and their experiences on conservation become credibly mature and feel confident to be autonomous in their own organization and operation in the short future. Moreover, the project was designed to aid their livelihood improvement, as their lives are embedded with nature, so they do know very well about the situation in which they are living. Using their local knowledge and their involvement to protect the natural resources means to improve their livelihood as well.

Summarize any unplanned sustainability or replicability achieved.

For successful and long-term conservation of birds, a method of bird nest protection is not sufficient, it needs a combination of approaches available in the area or introduced with regard to local context. Awareness raising and education by use of poster and signboard would significantly increase involvement of many community members to protect and conserve the threatened bird species. The conservation going along with livelihood improvement of involved households definitely ensures long-term sustainability of our investment.

Safeguard Policy Assessment

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

N/A

Additional Comments/Recommendations

N/A

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.

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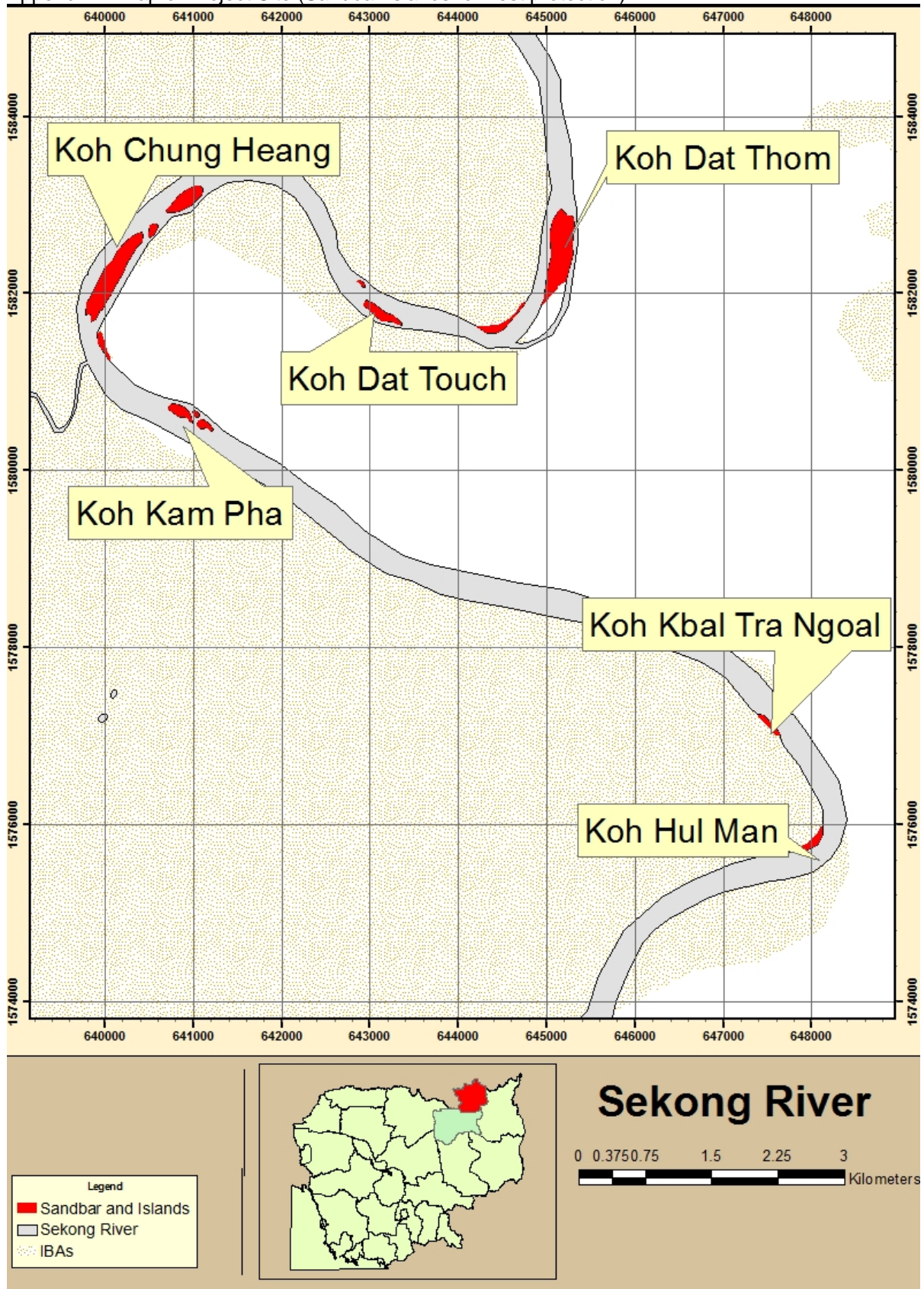
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Appendix 1. Map of Project Site (Sandbar Islands for nest protection)



Appendix 2

2A. Number of birds recorded from the conservative islands in Project site

No.	Bird Species	Protected Islands						Total
		Hulman	Kbal Trongoul	Kham Pha	Chhung Heang	Dat Touch	Dat Thom	
1	Great thicknee				21		23	44
2	River lapwing	21	15	27	40	9	52	164
3	River tern					1	6	7
4	Mekong wagtail				3			3
5	Grey Heron				2			2
6	Lesser Whistling Duck						40	40

2B. Recorded number of nests, clutch size, and success of nest (chicks hatched)

No.	Bird Species	Khampha			Chhung Heang			Dat Touch			Dat Thom		
		N	CS	S	N	CS	S	N	CS	S	N	CS	S
1	Great thicknee				1	3	2				2	7	5
2	River lapwing	1	3	2	1	4	2	1	3	3	3	10	7
3	River tern										3	9	4
4	Mekong wagtail												
5	Grey Heron												
6	Lesser Whistling Duck												

Note: N-nest, CS-Clutch Size, S-Success