

CEPF Final Project Completion Report

Organization Legal Name:	FISHBIO Lao Sole Co., LTD
Project Title:	Developing Best Practices for Evaluating Fish Conservation Zone Effectiveness in Lao PDR
Grant Number:	65817
CEPF Region:	Indo-Burma II
Strategic Direction:	8 Strengthen the capacity of civil society to work on biodiversity, communities and livelihoods at regional, national, local and grassroots levels
Grant Amount:	\$109,970.00
Project Dates:	May 01, 2015 - June 30, 2019
Date of Report:	August 19, 2019

Implementation Partners


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

WWF – World Wide Fund for Nature Laos was a subcontractor on this project. Their main role was assistance in compiling existing information on FCZs in Lao PDR that they had worked to establish. These results were summarized as part of the Status of FCZs in Lao PDR report produced as part of this project. WWF-Laos also identified one of their previous projects (Konglor FCZ) as a field site for pilot testing the FCZ guidebook, and assisted with collecting data for the assessment. Fisheries conservation staff from WWF-Laos also participated in both of the project workshops.

JVC – The Japanese International Volunteer Center identified one of their previous projects (Kengmeaw FCZ) as a field site for pilot testing the FCZ guidebook, and assisted with collecting data for the assessment. Agriculture staff from JVC also participated in both of the project workshops.

Lao Department of Livestock and Fisheries (DLF) – Provided information about numbers and locations of FCZs in Lao PDR that was summarized as part of the Status of FCZs in Lao PDR report produced as part of this project. They also provided feedback on the Lao translation of the FCZ guidebook. District-level officials (DAFO) accompanied FISHBIO into the field for meetings with communities during guidebook pilot testing. DLF and DAFO staff also attended both of the project workshops.

Conservation Impacts



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

The overall result of this project was filling a resource gap for assessing the effectiveness of freshwater Fish Conservation Zones. While several guidelines exist for monitoring the effectiveness of marine protected areas, none exist specifically for freshwater protected areas. The central component of a protected area assessment is identifying appropriate indicators to measure. As the first step of this project, we reviewed existing literature about marine and freshwater protected areas to compile a draft list of 50 indicators that we thought would be suitable for assessing FCZs in Lao PDR.

In September 2016, we held our first stakeholder workshop, where we introduced participants from more than 20 CSOs and government agencies (a total of 40 people, 8 women) to the concept of FCZ assessment, and the purpose of FCZ indicators. Working in small groups, the participants reviewed the draft list of indicators, which fell under the categories of governance, socioeconomics and ecology. The groups narrowed down the list to 6-7 indicators in each category that they felt were most relevant in Lao DPR, and discussed methods that could be used to measure these indicators.

Based on the results of this workshop, FISHBIO staff wrote a draft version of the FCZ assessment guidebook, which included a description of the FCZ assessment process, descriptions of each indicator, and examples of methods that could be used to measure each indicator. This draft was circulated for peer review by external experts, who provided feedback and recommendations. Based on feedback about the complexity of the indicator selection process, FISHBIO created a second resource called the FCZ Field Handbook. This shorter companion guide to the full guidebook walks through the process of selecting appropriate indicators for FCZ assessments based on the goals of a particular FCZ.

In July 2017, a training was held for project partners from WWF Laos and the Japanese International Volunteer Center (JVC), which had agreed to participate with FISHBIO to field test the FCZ Guidebook at two of their project sites: Konglor FCZ for WWF and Kengmeaw FCZ for JVC. The third pilot site was the northern Laos FCZ Network established by FISHBIO in Xayabouri and Luang Prabang provinces in 2014.

From October 2017 to June of 2018, pilot testing was conducted at the three field sites. This included conducting FCZ assessments at each village, which consisted of interviews and field surveys to assess governance, socioeconomic, and ecological indicators at each FCZ. Based on the results of the pilot testing, FISHBIO revised both the FCZ guidebook and field handbook. These revised versions were again circulated for external peer review. Additional indicators were added to bring the final total to 21. The full guidebook and field handbook were both translated into Lao language.

The final project workshop was held in May 2019 to disseminate the final guidebook and handbook to more than 50 stakeholders (7 women) working on FCZs throughout the Mekong Basin. Participants received training in how to use the guidebook to select appropriate indicators of FCZ effectiveness, and also had an opportunity to share their experiences and lessons learned from establishing FCZs. The workshop included a field trip to a new FCZ site that has been established as part of a separate CEPF-funded project (CEPF-103512). Following the workshop, final field visits were made to each of the participating pilot sites to share the results of the FCZ assessment process with community members and provide resources for improving FCZ management, such as signs and enforcement equipment.

At the same time as developing the FCZ guidebook, FISHBIO also worked with staff from WWF Laos and the Lao Department of Livestock and Fisheries to synthesize information on the number and location of existing FCZs in Lao PDR. This report provided the first ever official tally of government-recognized FCZs in Lao PDR (1,313 in all). The overall impact of this project has been to fill critical knowledge and resource gaps related to FCZs in Lao PDR, and to train CSOs on how to use resources created by the project to improve management of FCZs and fish conservation in Laos. These CSOs now have an opportunity to share experiences in FCZ assessment with each other through the Mekong Fish Network. FCZ management was also strengthened at three FCZs through the guidebook pilot testing process. Ultimately, as CSOs continue to use the guidebook to improve fish conservation, they will contribute to increased resilience of aquatic species in the IndoBurma hotspot.

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

Impact Description	Impact Summary
1 A network of CSOs will be established and connected through the Mekong Fish Network to enhance fisheries management and conservation practices.	CSOs working on Fish Conservation Zones from across the Mekong Basin had an opportunity to meet at the final project workshop on May 9 and 10, 2019, and several of their FCZ project experiences have been disseminated via the Mekong Fish Network website and newsletter.
2 CSOS wil receive tools to adaptively manage FCZS in Lao PDR to maximize their effectiveness for conservation and food security.	On May 9 and 10, 2019, representatives from 21 CSOs from Laos, Cambodia, Myanmar, and Thailand received copies of the FCZ Assessment Guidebook, a tool for evaluating FCZ effectiveness as part of adaptive management. This tool was also widely disseminated to other CSOs via the Mekong Fish Network website and newsletter.
3 "Paper parks," or FCZs that are not meeting their intended goals, will be identified and management strategies improved.	While no "paper parks" were encountered during the course of this project, achieving this impact is now possible thanks to the tools provided in the FCZ Assessment Guidebook. We believe that CSOs who have received training in how to use the FCZ Guidebook can now work to achieve this impact over the long term. During the course of the project, we evaluated three FCZs that appeared to be operating effectively, and provided recommendations and resources to further improve management.
4 Increased or more resilient populations of globally threatened fish and aquatic species within FCZs throughout Lao PDR.	Interviews with community members at three FCZ sites evaluated as part of this project indicated that community members believe fish species populations have increased inside FCZs. We believe that the FCZ guidebook developed as part of this project provides tools to evaluate and adapt the management of FCZs to improve their effectiveness at conserving fishes and other aquatic species throughout Lao PDR, which will

	ultimately lead to more abundant or resilient fish populations.
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Planned Short-term Impacts - 1 to 3 years (as stated in the approved proposal)


Impact Description	Impact Summary
1 Knowledge gaps on the current location and status of FCZs in Lao PDR will be filled.	Existing information on the location (at the provincial level) of officially-recognized FCZs has been synthesized for Lao PDR for the first time in an FCZ Status Report. Fine-scale information on location and performance of these FCZs remains a knowledge gap. An additional knowledge gap is location information (both provincial level and fine scale) for unofficially recognized FCZs that are being managed solely by communities without government support.
2 Dialogue and networking among national and international CSOs stakeholders will occur at two project workshops.	This impact was achieved through two workshops held on November 7–8, 2016, and May 9–10, 2019.
3 Common indicators of FCZ effectiveness will be agreed upon and widely adopted in FCZ management throughout Lao PDR.	21 indicators of governance, socioeconomic and governance effectiveness were agreed upon through a 2016 stakeholder workshop and incorporated into the FCZ guidebook. The guidebook has now been widely disseminated among CSOs and government officials in Lao PDR, providing an opportunity for these indicators to be adopted in FCZ management throughout Lao PDR.
4 CSOs will be trained and equipped with tools and templates for developing FCZ fisheries monitoring plans.	On May 9 and 10, 2019, representatives from 21 CSOs from Laos, Cambodia, Myanmar, and Thailand were trained in how to use the FCZ Assessment Guidebook to develop and plan an assessments of FCZ effectiveness. They were also provided copies of the FCZ Assessment guidebook, which includes example data sheets and survey questions.

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

FISHBIO was successful in leveraging the input of external experts to improve the final FCZ Guidebook and Field Handbook through the peer-review process. The perspectives of the external reviewers greatly improved the outcome of these project deliverables, ultimately increasing their potential to help communities improve freshwater fisheries management.

In order to fill knowledge gaps on the status of FCZs in Lao PDR, FISHBIO was able to successfully leverage previous efforts led by The Agro-Biodiversity Initiative (TABI) in partnership with the Department of Livestock and Fisheries and FISHBIO to compile information on FCZs at a national level. This helped inform the Status of FCZs in Lao PDR report produced as part of this project.

The project’s stakeholder workshops proved to be a valuable opportunity for building connections and networking among organizations involved in FCZs, given the lack of other platforms focused specifically on FCZs. The Mekong Fish Network also provided a valuable resource for disseminating



project information. For example, the presentations from the first project workshop that provide an overview of FCZ assessments have been viewed more than 1,300 times on the website SlideShare. Pilot testing the guidebook proved to be more challenging than anticipated because partner organizations did not have funding or bandwidth to prioritize the assessment of their previous FCZ projects, having moved on to other projects. Since the purpose of assessments is to evaluate the performance of an existing FCZ, this can prove challenging for organizations that are more focused on establishing new FCZs. As a consequence, FISHBIO staff took on more responsibility for the assessment process

Were there any unexpected impacts (positive or negative)?

One unexpected impact is that the timing of this project seemed to coincide with a growing interest in Fish Conservation Zones and freshwater protected areas more broadly across Southeast Asia. At the end of the project, we had discussions with other groups that would be interested in utilizing or replicating the guidebook in their own countries as part of future projects. Thus, this project provides a unique opportunity to transfer knowledge among organizations and countries.

Project Components and Products/Deliverables


Describe the results from each product/deliverable:

Component		Deliverable		
#	Description	#	Description	Results for Deliverable
1	Develop Best Practices Guidebook for Monitoring and Establishing Fish Conservation Zones (FCZs) in Lao PDR	1.1	Signed project agreements	The government project agreement was signed in August 2016.
1	Develop Best Practices Guidebook for Monitoring and Establishing Fish Conservation Zones (FCZs) in Lao PDR	1.2	Bibliography of references relevant to FCZs and freshwater protected areas	The annotated bibliography was completed in April 2019, and is attached to this report.
1	Develop Best Practices Guidebook for Monitoring and Establishing Fish Conservation Zones (FCZs) in Lao PDR	1.3	“State of the FCZs” overview report on the location and other information related to existing FCZs in Lao PDR	This report was completed in March 2019, was disseminated at the final project workshop in May 2019, and also made available to download online
1	Develop Best Practices Guidebook for Monitoring and Establishing Fish Conservation Zones (FCZs) in Lao PDR	1.4	Draft list of monitoring indicators for Lao PDR	A draft list of monitoring indicators was completed after the first project workshop in November 2016
1	Develop Best Practices Guidebook for Monitoring and Establishing Fish	1.5	Workshop summary report	The workshop summary report was completed in December 2016

	Conservation Zones (FCZs) in Lao PDR			
1	Develop Best Practices Guidebook for Monitoring and Establishing Fish Conservation Zones (FCZs) in Lao PDR	1.6	Draft guidebook for monitoring FCZ effectiveness	A first draft of the FCZ guidebook was completed in February 2017 and circulated for peer review
1	Develop Best Practices Guidebook for Monitoring and Establishing Fish Conservation Zones (FCZs) in Lao PDR	1.7	Peer review comments on guidebook	External peer review comments on the first draft of the guidebook were received in March 2017
1	Develop Best Practices Guidebook for Monitoring and Establishing Fish Conservation Zones (FCZs) in Lao PDR	1.8	Final draft of pilot version of guidebook	The draft/pilot testing version of the guidebook was finalized in July 2017.
2	Test monitoring guidebook in the field	2.1	Locations of project sites	Locations of the pilot testing sites were finalized in June 2017: Northern Laos FCZs in Xayabouri/Luang Prabang provinces, Konglor FCZ in Khammouane Province, and Kengmeaw FCZ in Savannakhet Province
2	Test monitoring guidebook in the field	2.2	Social Assessment for pilot sites	Social assessments were completed in the project pilot sites in March and April 2017
2	Test monitoring guidebook in the field	2.3	Civil Society Organization (CSO) representatives and government counterparts trained in monitoring and evaluation practices	The first training was held in July 2017, in which representatives from WWF-Laos and JVC were trained in FCZ assessment practices. A total of 20 CSOs and government agencies received training in FCZ assessment practices at the final project workshop in May 2019.

2	Test monitoring guidebook in the field	2.4	Training guidelines for using the monitoring guidebook	These were developed for the first project training in July 2017, and revised for the final training workshop in May 2019.
2	Test monitoring guidebook in the field	2.5	Safeguard monitoring report submitted to CEPF.	Monitoring reports were submitted in January and July of 2018.
2	Test monitoring guidebook in the field	2.6	Data from three pilot sites	Data at three pilot sites was collected from October 2017 to June 2018 and synthesized for case studies in the FCZ Guidebook.
4	Sub-grant awarded to WWF	4.2	Summary/map of WWF-established FCZs in Laos	The summary of WWF FCZs is included in the FCZ Status Report that was finalized in March 2019.
2	Test monitoring guidebook in the field	2.7	Summary reports of pilot testing	The results of the three pilot testing assessments were summarized in documents that were previously submitted to CEPF. The results were shared with each of the participating communities.
2	Test monitoring guidebook in the field	2.8	Improved management plans at pilot study FCZs	We worked with community members at the three FCZ pilot sites to install new FCZ signs and boundary markers to improve FCZ management, and provided some enforcement equipment like binoculars and walkie talkies. We also provided recommendations for communities to further improve the management approach of the FCZs if they wish too. Generally, management already appeared to be quite strong at the pilot sites, and many of our recommendations were related to better documenting existing processes.
3	Finalize and Disseminate Guidebook of Monitoring Best Practices	3.1	Draft final version of guidebook	A draft of the final version of the guidebook was completed in March 2019 and circulated to external peer reviewers.
3	Finalize and Disseminate Guidebook of Monitoring Best Practices	3.2	A finalized set of socio-economic, biological, and governance indicators	The finalized list of 21 socio-economic, biological, and governance indicators was completed in March 2019 following input from the second round of external peer reviewers.
3	Finalize and Disseminate Guidebook of	3.3	Translated Lao text	The Lao text translation was completed for the FCZ field handbook in May 2019, but is still being finalized for the full FCZ guidebook (will be completed after the project

	Monitoring Best Practices			end date).
3	Finalize and Disseminate Guidebook of Monitoring Best Practices	3.4	An easy-to-use guidebook in Lao and English languages	The FCZ Guidebook was revised to simplify the indicator selection process, and an accompanying field handbook was also completed to make the guidebook more easy to us. Final English versions of the guidebook and English and Lao versions of the field handbook were completed in May 2019. The Lao version of the guidebook is forthcoming.
3	Finalize and Disseminate Guidebook of Monitoring Best Practices	3.5	Meeting summary of lessons learned from the final workshop	A summary of the final workshop is posted online here: https://fishbio.com/field-notes/the-fish-report/filling-gap-new-guidebook-assessing-freshwater-protected-areas
3	Finalize and Disseminate Guidebook of Monitoring Best Practices	3.6	Continued networking provided for CSOs through the Mekong Fish Network	The Mekong Fish Network website and newsletter is being used to share stories of CSOs around the Mekong Basin who are working on FCZs. This includes recent project descriptions from WorldFish Cambodia (https://www.mekongfishnetwork.org/projects/integrating-fisheries-management-wetlands/) and The Learning Institute in Cambodia (https://www.mekongfishnetwork.org/projects/sustainable-fisheries-conservation-management-collaborative-approach/).
3	Finalize and Disseminate Guidebook of Monitoring Best Practices	3.7	Strengthened capacity of FISHBIO Lao Sole Co. Ltd based on comparison of civil society tracking tool scores at project start and end	
4	Sub-grant awarded to WWF	4.1	Subgrant agreement with WWF Lao Program, and six-monthly programmatic and financial reports	The subgrant agreement with WWF-Laos was completed in September 2016



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

The primary focus of this project was the development of a tool for assessing the effectiveness of Fish Conservation Zones. This took the form of a guidebook called **Guidelines for Assessing Fish Conservation Zones in Lao PDR (142 pp.)** and a companion **Field Handbook for Assessing Fish Conservation Zones (32 pp.)**. The guidebook consists of an overview of why and how to conduct an FCZ effectiveness assessment as part of the fisheries management cycle; descriptions of 21 indicators of governance, socioeconomic, and ecological effectiveness; and examples of methods for collecting and analyzing data on each indicator. The guidebook also includes case study examples of measuring various indicators based on the FCZ guidebook pilot testing at three field sites. The field handbook includes a list of the 21 indicators and a step-by-step guide of the FCZ assessment process, including detailed instructions for indicator selection. The intended audience of these two resources is technical experts at civil society organizations (CSOs) involved in establishing FCZs. These resources should give CSOs the ability to evaluate and improve the management of FCZs, thereby improving the state of fish conservation in Lao PDR.

An additional product that resulted from this project was the **Status of Fish Conservation Zones in Lao PDR report**, the first ever official tally of government-recognized FCZs in the country (1,313 in total). This report included a sum of officially recognized FCZs located in each province in Lao PDR, as well as information about factors that can contribute to the success or challenges of FCZs. This resource helps identify where effort has been expended to establish FCZs, and can inform where effort could be focused to assess FCZ effectiveness moving forward. It can also serve as a template for other countries wishing to compile an overview of their FCZs.

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

The biggest lesson learned was just how challenging and ambitious it was to create the FCZ assessment guidebook we proposed to do in this project. Drafting the guidebook proved to be more time consuming and labor-intensive than anticipated, and thus our project required multiple date extensions, and considerable in-kind contributions from FISHBIO's U.S.-based staff.

One particular lesson was trying to find the right level of technicality for the guidebook. We designed this project with intent of producing a technical resource for fisheries experts (given our own expertise in fisheries research), with the expectation that these technical experts could involve and train community members as part of the FCZ assessment process. However, we received extensive



feedback that a simpler resource that can be implemented by communities directly would also be highly desirable in Lao PDR. We agree with the value of such a community level resource, and believe it was still important to fill the technical resource gap. We are interested in partnering with other organizations in the future who have more experience developing resources for the community level to help produce more simplified guidelines for FCZ assessment.

Ultimately, this project had to strike a balance between making the guidelines technical enough to be scientifically robust, but straightforward enough to be understood more broadly. We attempted to strike this balance by simplifying aspects of the indicator selection process, and by creating the more simplified companion guide (the FCZ Field Handbook), which we had not originally included as one of our project deliverables.

One key lesson learned in terms of our institutional capacity was the challenge of translating a technical document from English into Lao language. FISHBIO Lao staff decided to do the translation ourselves, for fear that hired translators would not be familiar with fisheries terminology. However, the task proved to be much more time consuming than originally expected and contributed to our need for multiple project extensions. We committed to this task because we understand that it will make the FCZ guidebook more broadly accessible in Lao PDR, but learned that it is an ambitious undertaking.

We learned that the project would have benefited from having more funding to actively involve partner organizations in the guidebook pilot testing process. We had hoped that project partners could support their involvement in the pilot testing through in-kind funding, as the activity would be directly related to improving their past project sites, and that they would be able to lead the FCZ assessment process at their own sites. However, we learned that one challenge of needing to evaluate previously-established FCZs is that partner organizations have often already handed over responsibility for these sites to the local communities and government counterparts, and had moved on to other projects. Without sufficient funding to support partner involvement in the entire assessment process, FISHBIO assumed responsibility for leading the FCZ assessment process at all pilot sites.

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.

The FCZ guidebook is intended to serve as a lasting resource that can be used by CSOs at any point in the future to assess their project FCZs, thus sustaining the impact of the project. Translating the FCZ guidebook and field handbook into Lao language are intended to make the resource accessible to a wider audience in Lao PDR, thus contributing to its sustainability in the country. The dialogues and networking that occurred at the two project workshops will continue beyond the project through the Mekong Fish Network website and newsletter, which will be used to showcase lessons learned from the FCZ management and assessment process. Conservation practitioners working in other countries (e.g. Cambodia, Thailand, Bhutan) have expressed interest in using the FCZ guidebook to inform replicating a similar FCZ assessment model in their respective countries.

The primary challenge to sustaining the results of the project will be whether CSOs can obtain funding to support the FCZ assessment process, thus giving them the ability to implement the FCZ guidebook at their own project sites. While many organizations are beginning to recognize the value of long-term

assessment and evaluation to improve conservation outcomes, this is not always reflected in project proposals and budgets.

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

Consultation meetings were held with each of the communities involved in pilot testing the FCZ guidebook to obtain their consent to participate in the project, and inform them of the CEPF grievance mechanism to report complaints about the project. Each community participated in selecting the indicators for their FCZ assessment, and some villagers participated in field surveys to collect ecological data. Assessments of the FCZs made sure to include interviews with primary resource users (i.e., fishers) in each community to capture their perspectives on FCZ management. The results of the pilot testing were shared with each community to inform their management of their local FCZs.

Additional Comments/Recommendations

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

This project highlighted that FCZ assessment is a priority gap for many organizations when it comes to funding and project planning. We believe that monitoring and evaluation is an essential and missing piece of freshwater protected area management. This requires a commitment from both funders and facilitating organizations to support assessments to improve the management of existing FCZs, beyond establishing new ones. Conducting proper assessments requires time, effort, funding, and resources, but experiences from the marine environment have shown the value of investing in aquatic protected area assessment to improve management and conservation. We hope that the creation of the FCZ guidebook as a resource to facilitate FCZ assessments can help make FCZ assessments a priority for funders and practitioners alike.

Outreach materials related to the project can be found here: <https://fishbio.com/projects/guidebook-evaluate-fish-conservation-zones-lao-pdr>

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\$)

\$43,680.86



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)*

Project Co-Financing: FISHBIO U.S. offices contributed 1,406 hours of in-kind work on this project, which equates to \$43,680.86 of direct salary cost.

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, 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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