

## **CEPF Final Completion and Impact Report**

<b>Organization's Legal Name:</b>	FISHBIO
<b>Project Title:</b>	Building Freshwater Bridges: Connecting Fish Conservation Zones and Ecotourism in Lao PDR and Costa Rica
<b>Grant Number:</b>	CEPF-109839
<b>Hotspot:</b>	Multiple
<b>Strategic Direction:</b>	1 Multiple
<b>Grant Amount:</b>	\$108,660.00
<b>Project Dates:</b>	October 01, 2019 - February 28, 2022
<b>Date of Report:</b>	February 01, 2022

### **IMPLEMENTATION PARTNERS**

Asociación de Desarrollo Integral (ADI) Curré: The ADIs are the government representative of indigenous territories in Costa Rica. We worked closely with the ADI of the Rey Curré-Yimba Cajc indigenous territory for project decision-making, from logistics to political decisions.

Instancia Territorial de Consulta Indígena (ITCI) Rey Curré: The ITCI ensures that Costa Rican public policies that may affect the indigenous territory get prior informed consent from its people. We have been in communication to know when will be necessary to trigger a consultation process for setting up a protected area.

People & leaders of Curré and Las Vegas communities: They attended workshops to share the issues affecting the freshwater fauna, and participated in biological and socioeconomic studies.

Jorge Cole: Social scientist and key project partner, provided advice on best practices to work with communities. He co-organized and implemented many of the community workshops.

ASANA (Jorge Picado): He implemented the biological study, provided key recommendations and environmental education opportunities. He involved many youth in his fish sampling trips.

INCOPESCA: This is the fisheries administration of Costa Rica. We have been in coordination with them because Rey Curre would like to establish Responsible Fishing Zones.

Catalina Molina: She supported the implementation of virtual Laos-Costa Rica meetings to share ecotourism best practices.

FCZ committees of Sakai, Konglor, and Nam Et, Ang Gnay: The first 3 participated in the virtual workshops with Costa Ricans to provide context to receive ecotourism recommendations. All will receive equipment to improve their FCZ for tourists or visitors.

Ciany de Voto: She reviewed case studies and interviewed people to share successful ecotourism lessons from Costa Rica to the world.

Thaphabath FCZ, Vernthat FCZ, Donexay FCZ, and Konglor FCZ, and NamPienyolapa: Will participate in a local Laos ecotourism exchange.

## CONSERVATION IMPACTS

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

Impact Description	Impact Summary
Over the next ten years, conservation and management actions for freshwater fish and invertebrates are included in the management plans and fishing regulations established by MINAE and INCOPECA in Costa Rica, and the conservation of these resources is included in yearly strategic planning agendas, resulting in improved outcomes for freshwater biodiversity.	We expect that the pilot fish conservation area implementation in the two communities within Curre indigenous territory will serve as a leading example for other communities that want to implement these initiatives
Over the next ten years, key leaders of indigenous or non-indigenous communities in Costa Rica are regularly included in policy discussions of freshwater fish/invertebrate regulations and management plans, and their ideas are considered, thereby improving the visibility and participation of local people in freshwater management and conservation.	We are starting to have conversations with INCOPECA and some members of SINAC on the importance of including their voices in the management of certain species, especially on the management of amphidromous species that leave the rivers and go to the coasts, where they are caught by coastal fishermen.
Over the next ten years, communities in Costa Rica that implement Fish Conservation Zones demonstrate improved well-being as a result of increased natural resource sustainability, increased food security, and/or strengthened local governance surrounding natural resources.	The follow up steps of this project will coordinate with other projects in Rey Curre that focus on the payment of environmental services and on alternative productive sources of income, to integrate these into the freshwater conservation zones.

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

Impact Description	Impact Summary
By the end of the project, at least two Fish Conservation Zones established in Costa Rica, enabling community participation in freshwater conservation and providing a demonstration model for future development of a national policy framework in Costa Rica for freshwater conservation.	The ADI (indigenous territory local government), ITCI (the group in charge of indigenous consultations of public policies) and the local people of Curre and Las Vegas (2 communities inside of Rey Curre Indigenous Territory) officially declared the intent to pursue the establishment of INCOPECA Responsible Fishing Areas (RFA) in the communities of Rey Curre and Las Vegas. INCOPECA is the

Impact Description	Impact Summary
	fisheries administration of Costa Rica, and the RFAs are their protected area most similar to a "fish conservation zone". We are sending a letter of request to INCOPESCA on their behalf, and attaching the requirements requested by INCOPESCA. The rules will be unofficially implemented until they can obtain official recognition. The official recognition will take long because funding is needed to implement the widespread consultation process in the indigenous territory by the ITCI, and additional funds for running and implementation. The next steps have been drafted with the ADI and ITCI and funding will be sought after to continue.
By the end of the project, at least three civil society organizations in Costa Rica demonstrate improved capacity to implement freshwater conservation strategies, including participatory management plans.	We believe that the ADI, the ITCI and the local leaders of Las Vegas and Curre communities are learning about the implementation of freshwater conservation strategies as we draft the management strategies with them. There is still a lot to learn but the process has been started.
By the end of the project, at least three communities/civil society organizations in Lao PDR demonstrate improved capacity to sustain freshwater conservation, including the implementation of community-based ecotourism best practices and sustainability plans for at least three FCZs in the Mekong River, the Nam Et River, and the Hinboun River.	We expect that the recommendations of the Costa Rican partners, the Ecotourism case studies from Costa Rica, the study tour to share lessons between Lao Villages, and the equipment provided to improve the condition of the FCZs for visitors will collectively improve the capacity of villages in the Mekong river to implement community-based ecotourism. The COVID-19 pandemic has been a barrier to implement this impact as we originally expected. In February, we will implement the village study tour and finalize sharing Costa Rican recommendations and will have more information of this impact.

### Unexpected impacts (positive or negative)?

Economic support to the people of Las Vegas community and Curre. Among the beneficiaries were the Yimba Cajc high school, the recycling committee, the EBAIS (health entity)

A local leader, Shirley Jimenez of Las Vegas is highly organized and demonstrated so by recruiting 67 people of the community to join the biological study. This provided local economic benefits because we hired lunch services for that much people. In a meeting in Las Vegas, Shirley approached Eva Salas, Jorge Cole and Jorge Picado to request support to build a community meeting salon. They showed us that they dont have any. We provided advice and will be working with them to setup a go-fund me to raise funds to build the salon.

According to Jorge Cole, this project contributed to the integration and teamwork between ITCI and ADI. The ITCI was created about two years ago, is still strengthening and this is one of the few projects where the two organizations have been working together.

Due to COVID-19, the project created a WhatsApp group to continue in communication with the project participants between face-to-face workshops and activities. The group was intended to solely share project information and fish photos, but it has been adopted by them as a group to share some local activities, for example about recycling, about the

festivities, among many others. Now it will continue to be a useful communication channel. Many pictures and stories of the local fish and shrimp have also been shared.

## **PROJECT RESULTS/DELIVERABLES**

### **Overall results of the project:**

The main result of this project was to lay the groundwork and create enabling conditions to protect the freshwater fauna in a meaningful way on the long-term with the people of Rey Curre in Costa Rica. In the future this will set an example that other Costa Rican communities and indigenous territories can follow. The project was shaped and informed greatly from lessons learned from our Lao and SE Asia partners, thanks greatly to frequent informal knowledge exchange. Costa Rica never has established a freshwater protected area that is intended solely toward improving the management of fish and invertebrates, and this requires some specific recommendations that were learned from the lessons acquired by FISHBIO and other CEPF grantees in SE Asia.

For the implementation of a freshwater protected area in Rey Curre, this project is only the beginning, and it will be a long road, but we can ensure that it will always be in close coordination with the territory of Curre and at their pace. FISHBIO and its partners will continue to have the role of facilitating and providing technical advice, but always seeking to do it in the way that the people of the territory desire, and the intention is to continue doing it in a highly participative way. This project helped establish a relationship with the people of Rey Curré. Through the implementation of participatory workshops and a participatory biological study, it helped create awareness of the special fish and shrimp that live in the area and rekindled interest in protecting the freshwater resources.

The project implemented baseline biological and socioeconomic studies as important requirements to setup protected areas in the communities of Las Vegas and Curre (2 communities within Rey Curre indigenous territory). The two studies are also important to setup monitoring baselines and to leave the community with needed data about its socio-economic situation (the surveys had more resolution than the current socio-economical data).

In this project, we reviewed the problems that the fish and shrimp face in the territory, the key places to protect, and started drafting a management plan with very broad regulations. The ADI in an assembly meeting of Dec 29th, 2021, declared and agreed in front of more than 140 assembly representatives a "community agreement". The agreement is to give continuity to this project and to pursue with the fisheries administration (INCOPECSA) the establishment of Responsible Fishing Zones within Rey Curre territory. In January, we met with ADI and ITCI representatives and a local project commission to draft an application letter for INCOPECSA and discuss the next steps to fill out their requirements and draft a management plan. We also discussed the need to make a consultation process and obtain funding for implementing it. In February, an application letter will be sent to INCOPECSA for their review and it will include the needed requirements.

This project is drafting with the ADI a fish conservation strategy that will go beyond establishing freshwater protected areas, it will map other key management actions to pursue, environmental education and awareness actions, research gaps and how to tie up this initiative to benefit the local economy. There have been discussions with them on what are to be the needed next steps to pursue after this project funding ends.

The project is also leaving in the territory 3 educational materials: 1) A poster of the fish and shrimp of Rey Curre for the local high school and schools, and the landscape ecology

and life history of some amphidromous organisms such as 2) snook (fish), and 3) Macrobrachium (shrimps/prawn). The snook and shrimp posters contain important information about the dangers of using poison for fishing and the importance of preserving the connectivity of the rivers to the health of the populations of these organisms that move between estuaries, coast and rivers.

In Laos, the project is equipping the Fish Conservation Zones (FCZs) of four villages with various items to improve their FCZs and make them more interesting to visiting tourists. The project is providing sign boards, snorkelling gear, statues among others. Our Costa Rican eco-tourism partners have provided a report with recommendations to setup a nature interpretation trail and guiding questions to design useful information posters for the tourists. Due to COVID-19 limitations, we canceled a face to face exchange between the people of Costa Rica and Laos. But we will be implementing an exchange between Lao local villages to share knowledge of ecotourism among them. Some villages have successfully implemented ecotourism on their FCZ and can share important lessons with those that haven't.

The project also leaves some products that can be useful for a wider freshwater conservation audience and responsible rural ecotourism audience: 1) An english report with 3 case studies of successful communities of Costa Rica where rural ecotourism has been implemented, as well as interviews with key people that provide recommendations to any conservation practitioner or community leader that wants to know how to setup rural ecotourism. We intend that this report be useful for the Lao Villages but also for a wider audience. 2) A spanish translation of the FCZ knowledge product created by FISHBIO in an earlier CEPF project, and 3) a spanish translation of the video on how to establish FCZs with local communities, created by FISHBIO in an earlier CEPF project.

For the India knowledge exchange project, we had conversations with our partners (FERAL and ATREE), to learn about the implementation of FCZ projects in Manipur and Meghalaya, and any challenges that they may have faced. Based on these conversations, FISHBIO produced a report with recommendations for our partners, related to topics about community engagement and FCZ monitoring.

**Results for each deliverable:**

<b>Component</b>		<b>Deliverable</b>		
<b>#</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Results for Deliverable</b>
1.0	The Consultation Phase will lay the groundwork for the project in both Lao PDR and Costa Rica.	1.1	Policy report including information about relevant institutions and existing legal frameworks to identify a pathway for formally approving community participation in Costa Rican freshwater fisheries management and conservation	Completed, refer to the first progress report.
2.0	The Exchange Phase will share lessons and experiences through exchange visits to Lao PDR and Costa Rica.	2.1	Fact sheet of written recommendations for developing community co-managed FCZs in Costa Rica based on experiences in Lao PDR and SE Asia, and perceptions of Costa Ricans on establishing and managing FCZ in Costa Rica	We are still preparing the virtual activity that will lead to the production of the Fact sheet. It was expected to happen in October but we had to re-design the activity and postpone it.
2.0	The Exchange Phase will share lessons and experiences through exchange visits to Lao PDR and Costa Rica.	2.3	Written report of recommendations from Costa Rican partners to integrate or strengthen the role of ecotourism in FCZ management in Lao PDR	Please find recommendations attached in this report.
1.0	The Consultation Phase will lay the groundwork for the project in both Lao PDR and Costa Rica.	1.2	A map of key actors from communities in Costa Rica expressing Free Prior Informed Consent to	The key actors and the letter of consent of Rey Curre to work with FISHBIO were included in earlier reports.

Component		Deliverable		
#	Description	#	Description	Results for Deliverable
			participate in the project to explore the establishing of FCZs	
1.0	The Consultation Phase will lay the groundwork for the project in both Lao PDR and Costa Rica.	1.3	Project report documenting Free Prior Informed Consent obtained from communities in Lao PDR to participate in the project	We have received consent from Sakai and Ang Nyai and Konglor and Nam Et to participate in the project.
2.0	The Exchange Phase will share lessons and experiences through exchange visits to Lao PDR and Costa Rica.	2.2	Study tour report documenting lessons from Konglor and Nam Et experiences in establishing community-based ecotourism that were shared with visiting village leaders from other parts of Lao PDR	Exchange within Lao Villages has been planned, but delayed due to COVID closures. It is expected to happen in February 2022.
2.0	The Exchange Phase will share lessons and experiences through exchange visits to Lao PDR and Costa Rica.	2.4	Costa Rica community-based ecotourism knowledge product. Synthesis of Costa Rican lessons learned translated to Lao, (short film, poster or infographics) about establishing and implementing community-based ecotourism	The consultant and FISHBIO are writing and translating 3 case studies, lessons learned and interviews about successful community-based ecotourism around protected areas in Costa Rica, to share with Lao PDR and a wider audience.
3.0	The Implementation Phase will integrate and apply lessons learned to advance freshwater conservation in Lao PDR and Costa Rica	3.1	Policy roadmap for freshwater conservation in Costa Rica at a national and regional scale	We are still planning the series of meetings that will take place to create together this policy roadmap

Component		Deliverable		
#	Description	#	Description	Results for Deliverable
3.0	The Implementation Phase will integrate and apply lessons learned to advance freshwater conservation in Lao PDR and Costa Rica	3.6	Tool kit for training Costa Rican communities in the establishment of Fish Conservation Zones or other best practices for freshwater fish conservation and fisheries management, as appropriate	In progress
3.0	The Implementation Phase will integrate and apply lessons learned to advance freshwater conservation in Lao PDR and Costa Rica	3.9	Communication products (news stories, blog posts, social media posts, videos, etc.) related to lessons learned about community fisheries co-management and freshwater fish conservation widely distributed in Costa Rica	In progress
3.0	The Implementation Phase will integrate and apply lessons learned to advance freshwater conservation in Lao PDR and Costa Rica	3.8	Ecotourism resources implemented at participating communities in Lao PDR (e.g. signs installed, brochures printed, trainings held, etc.)	In progress
3.0	The Implementation Phase will integrate and apply lessons learned to advance freshwater conservation in Lao PDR and Costa Rica	3.10	Communication products (news stories, blog posts, social media posts, videos, etc.) related to lessons learned about community-based ecotourism widely distributed in Lao PDR	In progress



Component		Deliverable		
#	Description	#	Description	Results for Deliverable
2.0	The Exchange Phase will share lessons and experiences through exchange visits to Lao PDR and Costa Rica.	2.5	Report to CEPF monitoring compliance with CEPF Social Safeguard Policies	in progress
3.0	The Implementation Phase will integrate and apply lessons learned to advance freshwater conservation in Lao PDR and Costa Rica	3.4	Fisheries management committees or leadership group members created in Rey Curre	The indigenous territory of Rey Curre sees the value of creating the fisheries committee. They decided to create a committee of five leaders (not just fishermen) to manage the project decisions, and the decisions about the freshwater protected area.
3.0	The Implementation Phase will integrate and apply lessons learned to advance freshwater conservation in Lao PDR and Costa Rica	3.3	Five year fisheries and biodiversity conservation strategy developed for Rey Curre (plans and rules for FCZs and/or alternative management tools, and complementary action plans to sustain the initiative) (Government-approval will require consultation)	We have mapped all the basic elements of the strategy and discussed with the committee. Currently we are writing the decisions of the strategy.
3.0	The Implementation Phase will integrate and apply lessons learned to advance freshwater conservation in Lao PDR and Costa Rica	3.5	Implementation of fisheries management plans/Fish Conservation Zones in at least two communities, such as boundary markers, regulation signs, and enforcement procedures	In progress, we are working on the regulations and enforcement plans with the community. An official implementation with a Costa Rican government-recognized management strategy will not be possible under this project deadline. But simple implementation activities will be initiated.
3.0	The Implementation Phase will integrate and apply lessons learned to advance	3.7	Establishment of a network of Costa Rican civil society organizations focused on	We are still working on the list of interested parties

Component		Deliverable		
#	Description	#	Description	Results for Deliverable
	freshwater conservation in Lao PDR and Costa Rica		freshwater conservation and natural resources management in the Terraba river basin	
3.0	The Implementation Phase will integrate and apply lessons learned to advance freshwater conservation in Lao PDR and Costa Rica	3.2	Report with the biological and socioeconomic baseline for Rey Curre to inform management plan	The biological study is finished and attached. The Socioeconomic surveys in 60 households have been implemented, and analysis is in process.

### Tools, products or methodologies that resulted from the project or contributed to the results:

- 1- Translation of How to Establish FCZ with communities to Spanish (PDF without the supplementary information)- final design in progress.
- 2- Translation on Video on how to establish FCZ communities to Spanish- already in CEPF youtube channel.
- 2- Ecotourism lessons and case studies from Costa Rica- final design in progress.
- 3- Fish and invertebrates Monitoring plan for Rey Curre- in progress
- 4- Socio economic survey form, that can be later implemented later in more households (it was implemented in 60 households)
- 5- Rey Curre Fish and invertebrate baseline report
- 6- Rey Curre Fish and invertebrate diversity poster
- 7- Snook ecology poster
- 8- Shrimp ecology poster
- 9- Consultation Report on Fish Conservation Zones for FERAL and ATREE (India)

## PORTFOLIO INDICATORS

Portfolio Indicator Number	Portfolio Indicator Description	Expected Numerical Contribution	Expected Contribution Description	Actual Numerical Contribution	Actual Contribution Description
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## GLOBAL INDICATORS

## Protected Areas

Protected areas that have been created and/or expanded as a result of the project. Protected areas may include private or community reserves, municipal or provincial parks, or other designations where biodiversity conservation is an official management goal.

Name of Protected Area	WDPA ID*	Latitude	Longitude	Country	Original Total Size (Hectares)**	New Protected Hectares***	Year of Legal Declaration or Expansion
Protected area not officially created yet. It will be a stretch of the Terraba river within Rey Curre indigenous territory.		8.978499	-83.262484	Costa Rica	0	30	NA

\*World Database of Protected Areas

\*\*If this is a new protected area, 0 should appear in this column

\*\*\* This column excludes the original total size of the protected area.

## Key Biodiversity Area Management

Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) under improved management—where tangible results have been achieved to support conservation—as a result of the project.

KBA Name	KBA Code	Size of KBA	Number of Hectares with Improved Management
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## Production Landscapes

Production landscapes with strengthened management of biodiversity as a result of the project.

A production landscape is defined as a site outside a protected area where commercial agriculture, forestry or natural product exploitation occurs.

Name of Production Landscape	Latitude	Longitude	Hectares Strengthened	Intervention
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## Benefits to Individuals

- **Structured Training:**

Number of Men Trained	Number of Women Trained	Topics of Training
64	56	Biological surveys Socioeconomic surveys How to conduct social cartography

- **Cash Benefits:**

Number of Men – Cash Benefits	Number of Women – Cash Benefits	Description of Benefits
22	8	In Costa Rica: 12 men, 8 women for handicraft production (cloth masks), food services, for conducting socioeconomic surveys, for assisting with workshop logistics, for hosting grantees/consultants, for transporting people, for designing maps. In Laos: 10 men per diems ex. to join meetings. In addition (not counted above) we benefited 6 people for consulting services (in Costa Rica 4 people (social scientist, biologist, 2 ecotourism), in Laos 2 people (film and graphic design)).



## Benefits to Communities

View the <b>characteristics</b> column below with the following corresponding codes:	View the <b>benefits</b> column below with the following corresponding codes:
1- Small Landowners	a. Increased Access to Clean Water
2- Subsistence Economy	b. Increased Food Security
3- Indigenous/ Ethnic Peoples	c. Increased Access to Energy
4- Pastoralists / Nomadic Peoples	d. Increased Access to Public Services
5- Recent Migrants	e. Increased Resilience to Climate Change
6- Urban Communities	f. Improved Land Tenure
7- Other	g. Improved Use of Traditional Knowledge
	h. Improved Decision-Making
	i. Improved Access to Ecosystem Services

Community Name	Community Characteristics							Type of Benefit									Country	Number of Males Benefitting	Number of Females Benefitting
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i			
Curre	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Costa Rica	30	30
Las Vegas	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Costa Rica	30	30

### Characteristics of "Other" Communities:

## Policies, Laws and Regulations

View the <b>topics</b> column below with the following corresponding codes:			
A- Agriculture	E- Energy	I- Planning/Zoning	M- Tourism
B- Climate	F- Fisheries	J- Pollution	N- Transportation
C- Ecosystem Management	G- Forestry	K- Protected Areas	O- Wildlife Trade
D- Education	H- Mining and Quarrying	L- Species Protection	P- Other

No.	Name of Law	Scope	Topics															
			A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P

**“Other” Topics Addressed by the Policy, Law or Regulation:**

No.	Country/ Countries	Date Enacted/ Amended	Expected impact	Action Performed to Achieve the Enactment/ Amendment

### Companies Adopting Biodiversity-friendly Practices

A company is defined as a for-profit business entity. A biodiversity-friendly practice is one that conserves or uses natural resources in a sustainable manner.

Name of Company	Description of Biodiversity-Friendly Practice	Country/Countries where Practice was Adopted

### Networks and Partnerships

Networks/partnerships should have some lasting benefit beyond immediate project implementation. Informal networks/partnerships are acceptable.

Name of Network/Partnership	Year Established	Country/ Countries	Established by Project?	Purpose

## Sustainable Financing

Sustainable financing mechanisms generate funding for the long-term (generally five or more years). These include, but are not limited to, conservation trust funds, debt-for-nature swaps, payment for ecosystem services (PES) schemes, and other revenue, fee or tax schemes that generate long-term funding for conservation.

Name of Mechanism	Purpose	Date Established	Description	Country/Countries	Project Intervention	Delivery of Funds?
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## Globally Threatened Species

Globally threatened species (CR, EN, VU) on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species, benefitting from the project.

Genus	Species	Common Name (English)	Status	Intervention	Population Trend at Site
Amatitlania	sajica	T-Bar Cichlid	VU	preparation of a conservation action plan, habitat protection, species monitoring	Unknown
Hyphessobrycon	savagei	Savage Tetra	VU	preparation of a conservation action plan, habitat protection, species monitoring	Unknown
Lebiasina	boruca		VU	preparation of a conservation action plan, habitat protection, species monitoring	Unknown
Brachyrhamphus	rhabdophora		VU	preparation of a conservation action plan, species habitat protection, species monitoring	Unknown
Poeciliopsis	retopinna		VU	preparation of a conservation action plan, species habitat protection, species monitoring	Unknown



## LESSONS LEARNED

\*The covid pandemic provided us with important lessons about what can be implemented remotely and what is not good to implement remotely. Our project was just starting the first consultations with Rey Curre indigenous territory in January 2020 about participating in the project when the pandemic hit. We were too early in the project and needed to build more relationship with the people. The first lesson is that the process of building relationship needs to happen in person and is absolutely necessary to move forward with conservation initiatives. Second, we tried creating a WhatsApp group to validate some of the workshop information provided in early 2020. However, it was very difficult to "read" the reactions to any messages shared and impossible to know if everyone had comprehended so we can all move forward together as a group. There were also technological limitations and limited access to cellular at times which delayed and cooled down the process. The lack of reactions of the people in the group created an environment difficult to navigate and read. We concluded that it is not advisable to make group decisions or validate key information through virtual processes if the relationship is not well established and/or if the management of technology or access to connectivity is limited. In that case, at least one person related to project implementation needs to be with the communities in person to implement these tools and facilitate taking decisions. The use of WhatsApp groups can be very useful to share project information, share photos, fish catch, and coordinate meetings. This is a useful tool, as long as it is not used for decision making.

\* The virtual processes often lack the context needed for decision making. We learned that lesson again when we canceled the exchange visit between Costa Rica and Laos to share ecotourism lessons. We did desk research and developed a survey to understand better the needs of the villages and "read" the local context. A challenge that was faced was that because activities were held remotely, it was difficult to obtain a deeper representation of the context based only on the desk reviews, survey responses and meetings. We learned that part of the context is only obtained by the invaluable direct observation of the experts in face to face visits. We weren't able to provide very specific recommendations, but the Costa Rican experts adapted the recommendations so that they can be broadly applicable, and less dependent on the knowledge of the local context.

\*The covid pandemic did show us that there are many other processes that can be implemented remotely saving a lot of money, as long as connectivity and management of technology is good. Meetings with conservation practitioners or meetings with government officials generally were successful and more economic than having in-person meetings.

\*We didn't include a participatory biological baseline study as an initial component of our project. We encountered that there was a real need for this baseline study to compare against the local ecological knowledge and make decisions. It was also a crucial component to more widely engage youth and fishermen and to raise awareness of conservation at a deeper level. If we had to do the project again we would start engaging the communities with the biological studies first and then later have the conservation conversations and actions. That way the project will flow with more ease.

## SUSTAINABILITY/REPLICATION

One of the biggest challenges for the sustainability and replicability of our project results is the lack of attention and very limited funding for freshwater fish conservation and

freshwater subsistence fisheries. We recognize that this is a worldwide problem. Costa Rica is no exception. Costa Rica is a world example of conservation, with over 25% of its land protected, and now is working to protect its oceans. However there is not much priority or attention to freshwater conservation issues. In terms of fisheries, the priorities are set in the ocean because of the high economic benefits of our marine extractive and sport fishing activities. But this doesn't mean that the rivers should be left unattended.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL SAFEGUARDS/STANDARDS**

This project had the potential to provide significant social and environmental benefits, and we realized it also had the potential to provide economic benefits to multiple people and organizations.

The project workshop and studies required hiring local people to prepare food for the participants, to craft cloth masks, to carry out surveys and to take workshop notes. We consulted the ADI and the ITCI to decide who to hire on almost every occasion. Once we didn't and the ITCI reached out to us with their concern. We listened to the concern and didn't repeat that mistake again.

We also ensure that the food services rotated between different groups to benefit different organizations. The ADI, the EBAIS, the Recycling group, the Yimba Cajc highschool, the Guatusas women group, Las Vegas sports committee are among the groups that received benefits.

We reviewed workshop participant lists and realized that there were not many fishermen participating, not many elders and not many youth. The youth and fishermen do not like much to attend workshops. So they were invited to be part of the biological study on the rivers and the attendance and interest of youth and fishermen increased. We still have to reach out to the elders more, visiting in their houses, but we are also concerned because of covid exposure.

This project occurred in an indigenous territory, and so the actions were taken respecting their rights

We always tried to lay out clear expectations and we showed transparency

We respected the knowledge and rights of the indigenous people and combined this knowledge with the scientific knowledge to take decisions on the protection actions.

We tried to be always in consultation with ADI and ITCI before taking any project step (ADI is the local government, and ITCI is the entity that does the consultations in indigenous territories)

We discovered conflicts between groups of people and tried to manage these conflicts in an inclusive way, finding opportunities to reach and talk to each party when possible.

The creation and implementation of a protected area can affect the access to resources of vulnerable groups, and it needs to be implemented carefully

We explained the grievance mechanism on the workshops and provided the opportunity to complain

We also explained the grievance mechanism to the ADI and ITCI and asked them how to do it more widely. They decided that the consultation process will be the right mechanism to find out widely about concerns with the proposed protected area.

We decided it was better not to rush decisions and waited for the right moments to reach out the ADI and ITCI and to move forward when they were ready, respecting their time.

## **ADDITIONAL COMMENTS/RECOMMENDATIONS**

## ADDITIONAL FUNDING

<b>Total Amount of Additional Funding Actually Secured (USD)</b>	\$48,195.00
<b>Breakdown of Additional Funding</b>	48,195.00

## INFORMATION SHARING AND CEPF POLICY

CEPF is committed to transparent operations and to helping civil society groups share experiences, lessons learned and results. For more information about this project, you may contact the organization and/or individual listed below.

Organization name: FISHBIO Generic email address: [info@fishbio.com](mailto:info@fishbio.com)