

CEPF FINAL PROJECT COMPLETION REPORT

Organization Legal Name:	Freeland Foundation
Project Title:	Forward Together: Fostering Wildlife Guardians Outside Thap Lan National Park through Grassroots Capacity-Building
Date of Report:	31 October 2015
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CEPF Region: Indo-Burma

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: US\$19,839

Project Dates: August 2014 to September 2015

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

Soeng Sang Conservation Club (SSCC). Main recipient of project support. Identified initially as a group of enthusiastic individuals working to reduce human-elephant conflict (HEC), the project helped them convene their group into a functioning civil society organization (CSO), with structure and a workplan of activities. The role of SSCC during the project was to formalize their operations, designate staff positions with roles and responsibilities, plan activities and implement them. The main two activities were: mitigating HEC and secondly conducting community-led environmental patrols to reduce elephant crop-raiding and monitor for illegal activities along the park boundary

Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation (DNP). As managers of the focal protected area in Northeastern Thailand, Thap Lan National Park, the role of the park superintendent was critical in creating working systems between the CSO, park management and the protected area committee. The role of the DNP was to consider and offer support to CSO activities, offer guidance to address concerns regarding HEC and to conduct investigations relating to CSO reports of illegal activities they observed during environmental patrols.

Conservation Impacts

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

This project fulfilled the investment priorities of the CEPF Indo-Burman Strategic Direction 8, relating to Strengthening capacity of civil society to work on conservation, at a local and national level. Specifically, during the project we brought together a very loose informal group of enthusiastic individuals into a functioning organization. Initially the plan was to facilitate registration of the group into a more formal Non-Government Organization (NGO), however for now, it was decided that at this level of operations - such a formality was probably not necessary. Support and mentoring was given to the group to enable them to clearly define their mandate, role, functions and the administrative processes required for them to independently seek funding, implement their own activities and report on these to a donor. The group developed quickly and was able to network with other groups and shared their experiences with others on several occasions. The CSO is now robust enough to continue their networking with other formal and informal groups after the life of this project. They will continue to play a constructive role in conserving biodiversity, creating conservation awareness in their community and reducing wildlife crime by acting as eyes and ears of Thap Lan National Park.

Please summarize the overall results/impact of your project.

The goal of this one-year project was to empower local communities as a positive, integrated partner in the protection of Thap Lan's fauna and flora. To meet this goal, objectives included:

1. Develop the capacity of community members to formally organize and access resources for community-based conservation activities; and
2. Assist communities in identifying and implementing solutions for common conservation challenges.

The goal of empowering the local community in this area extremely affected by elephant crop-raiding and human-elephant conflict was reached. The situations prior and post project are very different. Previously, high levels of HEC were recorded and local farmers were at odds with the elephants and other wildlife. They were also feeling disenfranchised by the lack of attention the park management were paying to their plight. Conversely, members of the local community group are now trained and empowered to mitigate HEC, record crop damage and voluntarily conduct activities such as environmental patrols working with Thap Lan National Park management. The group members interact with park management at the park level and at the district level frequently and both parties cooperate and work together with respect. This facilitates reporting of HEC and acts conducted by ill-intent parties to damage parkland, poach wildlife or harm the wild elephants.

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

N/A

Actual Progress Toward Long-term Impacts at Completion:

N/A

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

Local communities are empowered to be a positive, integrated partner in the protection of Thap Lan National Park's fauna and flora

Actual Progress Toward Short-term Impacts at Completion:

In previous years, elephants foraging crops in farmland nearly always resulted in retribution, either directly in the form of harming or hurting errant elephants, or indirectly by the farmers laying traps to injure elephants to dissuade them from returning. Since this project was started, not one

trap has been found and no human-caused injuries to elephants have been recorded during Freeland wildlife monitoring surveys in Thap Lan National Park. It is likely that our community awareness and human-elephant conflict mitigation interventions are having a positive effect. This is something the community group, particularly the group's leader Mr. Siho Uthokyota, is very proud about.

Unfortunately, some members of the group are still utilizing fireworks to scare elephants out of fields. This has led to injuries to both elephants and farmers at other sites. Therefore, we are proposing to consider ways to reduce this problem and integrate a pledge not to use fireworks as we work with new groups and develop an elephant NGO network. We feel a strong step forward in this would be awareness building - showing the negative aspects of using fireworks - and to ask groups receiving support, either mentoring or financial, to sign a contract not to engage in any activities that will hurt wildlife.

There is a much better relationship between the Thap Lan NP management and the Soengsang community group regarding HEC and the park Superintendent or his deputies regularly meet with them to discuss developments. However, we have learned from this project that there is still considerable work that needs to be done to reach an agreement on the exact location of the park's boundary. Two, different park boundaries are being presented between park management and the community. This is leading to complications on implementing a semi-permanent boundary demarcation by utilizing thorny bushes to keep elephants in the forest, as the community believes it should be on the inner side of the boundary road, whereas the park believes it should be on the outside, as the road was built inside the park. To date, this problem has still not been resolved.

A further positive change was the engagement of the Soengsang Conservation Club in helping solve the problem of domestic cattle grazing inside Thap Lan National Park. A series of meetings were held to discuss this problem with the cattle owners, as it is an issue UNESCO have highlighted as a serious problem for the World Heritage Site. Problems that stem from this ecological disturbance include displacing wildlife, burning forests to promote grasslands, potential human-predator conflict if predators kill cattle, and potential for disease transfer from cattle to wildlife. The SSCC helped coordinate meetings and offered constructive dialogue towards ways to phase out this grazing, which was agreed to by cattle owners and park management. In 2012, we estimated there were almost 10,000 cattle inside the park in this northeastern area of Thap Lan. In 2015, park authorities now claim this number is zero. We feel some more investigations need to be conducted to confirm this.

Please provide the following information where relevant:

Hectares Protected: Project site lies just outside a formally gazetted category II protected area (Thap Lan National Park). The project has a direct positive impact on the biodiversity along a 28km park perimeter.

Species Conserved: Asian Elephants and other biodiversity that share the immediate area that the project was implemented at.

Corridors Created: N/A

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

During the project we were surprised how quickly word spread to other groups about the initiatives the Soeng San Community Group to reduce Human-Elephant Conflict. This clearly showed that the will to initiate similar activities is there in communities affected by elephant and

other species of wildlife crop-raiding. This shows a clear resolve to implement their own activities, independently of the officials from the national park. This determination to independently solve the problems infers the understanding that with minimum guidance communities can network and solve problems without difficulty. Solutions were often cost effective, as group members initiated and tested their own ideas without a supporting budget. Several of their concepts to keep elephants out of fields have been shared with other groups and are working elsewhere.

The most serious challenge met during the project was the risk posed to group members if they reported logging to the authorities. There were direct threats made to individual members, which required our staff to offer guidance to the group on how to mitigate and avoid violence. The situation regarding rosewood logging by influential criminal gangs is extremely dangerous in the area that the group works in. For almost one-year now the Royal Thai Army has stationed troops in the area to help interdict the logging gangs.

Were there any unexpected impacts (positive or negative)?

One positive unexpected impact from the project was the greater interest in resolving HEC that the group created with the DNP. Previously, officials took little or no notice of reports of crop-raiding by wildlife in this area, which created ill-feeling among the farmers to the park officials. By formalizing the CSO and bringing them together it provided an ideal platform for members to directly engage the park officials, which led to a better understanding of the seriousness of the crop-raiding problem and cooperation in finding ways to reduce it.

Project Components

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

Component 1 Planned:

Community members have the capacity to formally organize and access resources for community-based conservation activities

Activity 1.1: Organize a Community-based NGO Study Tour (in coordination with at least one other small grass-roots NGO working in conservation) in order to generate greater awareness about conservation issues among staff volunteering with the fledgling community NGO.

Activity 1.2: Facilitate the development of concept documents for a Thap Lan National Park Grassroots Conservation NGO, including its name, aims and objectives, management and advisory structure

Component 1 Actual at Completion:

Activity 1.1: Completed. The study tour was conducted in March 2015. Thirteen members of the Soengsang Conservation Club travelled with Freeland field staff to Khao Chamao District, Chanthaburi Province in southeast Thailand to meet with an established Human-elephant Conflict resolution group.

Activity 1.2: Completed. The community group aims, objectives, organizational structure, and committee were all approved by members of the group.

Component 2 Planned:

Communities have identified local conservation challenges, and are implementing suitable conservation solutions

Activity 2.1: Work with the community NGO and Thap Lan park officials to test humane Human-Elephant Conflict (HEC) mitigation techniques (such as use of unpalatable/thorny plant species, bee-fencing, and rapid response systems)

Activity 2.2: Scale-up tested HEC mitigation measures to additional sites within the park

Activity 2.3: Conduct a training course for potential Community-based Environmental Patrol volunteers, and select appropriate participants.

Activity 2.4: Prepare Community-based Environmental Patrol implementation guidelines and processes with Thap Lan NP management

Activity 2.5: Initiate Community-based Environmental Patrols

Component 2 Actual at Completion:

Activity 2.1: Completed. HEC mitigation techniques tested in at least two sites in the park. Completed under the scope of this project. We will continue to mentor and encourage the SSCC to utilize these methods and to expand them where possible, continuing on from this project.

Activity 2.2: Completed. The use of thorny and unpalatable plants as barriers was expanded to one more site in Thap Lan and introduced to one new location at Khao Yai NP. These are ready to be implemented at other sites and at least one community group in Khao Yai are ready to further emulate proven techniques.

Activity 2.3: Completed. Conducted for 26 community members. Further consideration and discussions with other agencies conducting these types of patrols need to be conducted, to find ways to reduce the possibility of retribution from poachers and loggers

Activity 2.4: Conducted. A good working relationship developed between community and park management. Identity cards and communication protocols were developed and introduced, so during patrols or HEC incidents the Thap Lan park management were aware of the SSCC members' presence, so if any activities were conducted at night they were not mistaken for poachers or loggers. Freeland will continue working with and mentoring this group. Our proposed plans to develop a southeast Thailand elephant network and the processes through which a civil society group can work with park management will serve as a model for other sites.

Activity 2.5: Completed. Activities to help mitigate crop damage were implemented every week. In the last three months of the project, elephants regularly left the forest and damaged crops. Data collected did not show any correlation between weather, seasons, crop cycles or other obvious stimuli.

Some slight interruptions in responses, as activity depends on availability of community group members and their willingness to participate.

One further challenge became apparent towards the end of the project and that is the possibility of retribution by loggers if the SSCC report violators to the DNP. Freeland staff provided mentoring and helped explain how to record information on elephants and other wildlife leaving the forest that could be used as evidence for claims of crop damage compensation, or for analysis to provide predictive evidence.

The group maintains accurate records in the project supplied computer and back them up with hard copies kept on file. These are all kept in the project office.

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

All aspects and components of project were fully implemented. Due to the potential danger from illegal loggers, the amount of crime reporting has been constrained and we have warned group members to be conscious of personal security and if any risk exists to be careful, by not becoming too obviously engaged in crime suppression or when informing the park.

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

None

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.

While notable success was achieved within this on-year project period, some activities may take longer to reach maturity than the one-year operational period of CEPF grants. CEPF support was extremely useful for initiating activities, but the timescale is not sufficient to reach a fully successful conclusion, especially on more long-term objectives. Successive grants to extend beyond one project timeframes should be considered by CEPF.

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

Success. In many situations, informal community groups working on such issues such as HEC are already in existence. They need only a little mentoring towards improved positive outcomes. There are several groups we have met during the term of this project; all expressed interest and are willing to join others to network and share best practices

Shortcomings. Time management is very important. When engaging beneficiaries, issues should be introduced to them in advance during one-on-one meetings rather than a public forum. Using this process, we were able to identify problems, consider solutions and later bring them to meetings where buy-in was already assured. Otherwise, even minor problems may take hours to discuss and solve, wasting time and boring volunteers.

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

Success. Engaging the group and understanding their aims and objectives a long time prior to the project ensured we understood what they wanted to achieve and increased the possibility of success. The group we worked with was already convened, albeit in an informal manner, quite a while before our intervention. They were just looking for guidance. This meant it was relatively easy to help them consider what steps needed to be taken to make their hopes a reality. Understanding that such prior introductions are not always possible, other projects should find 'champions' in the local community who already have the motivation or political position to make things happen and then focus on these key individuals.

Shortcomings.. From our perspective, failing to write formal contracts at the start of the project with beneficiaries, to ensure activities were implemented within deadlines, was amiss. Noting that our community partners are all volunteers, it meant project work was not of primary concern, as everyone has regular work and responsibilities. Contractual obligations may improve willingness to work more on the project.

Shortcomings. Primary community stake-holders may be unwilling to relinquish any control over their projects to others in their group, even if they are not available, as they feel the group is solely their responsibility. More time needs to be spent mentoring stake-holders and helping them understand the benefits of diversifying, involving further partners and trusting other members. Also, succession plans need to be put in place at the beginning to ensure proxies are identified, in case primary actors are not available.

Other lessons learned relevant to conservation community:

Such community groups can be a useful interface between the park and the local communities. The more the group is involved in decision making, or activities between the park and the local villages, the more empowered they feel. Having such an interface can be extremely beneficial during times of conflict, as the community group can calm things down with the community and reduce hostility. To further develop the local ownership of the park, a member of the community group should be invited to sit on the Protected Area Committee (PAC), to participate in decision making matters and be aware of activities coming up.

Additional Funding

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

Donor	Type of Funding*	Amount	Notes
USFWS Asian Elephant Conservation Fund	A	\$9,790	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Elephant and HEC Monitoring ○ Sustaining Community Environmental Patrols
Golden Triangle Asian Elephant Conservation Foundation	A	\$13,379	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Elephant and HEC Monitoring ○ Educational awareness

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

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

Sustainability/Replicability

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

When working with volunteer groups such as the SSCC, one has to consider what they are trying to achieve. Often they are not completely certain about their vision, or what their outcomes should be, other than reacting to an immediate problem. In this case, the community group was trying to solve the pressing elephant crop-raiding problem, purely to reduce the financial loss to group members who are local farmers. They were also frustrated that no one was listening to their problems, or taking action. In this situation, as land tenure is not clear in the area, park officials were not too interested in engaging the group, as they largely thought they encroached on the land in the first place. It is true that land ownership in this area is unclear to a certain degree, but since the local government administrations have authorized the installation of electricity, built government buildings such as offices, schools and clinics, the reality is that the disputed land will probably never be returned back into DNP ownership.

This is affecting the way the DNP interacts with the other government departments and the local communities too. Consequently, the DNP presently do not support compensation schemes for farmers losing crops to wildlife. This causes friction between the DNP and local farmers, all of whom feel they legally own the land, as it was distributed to them during land reformation programs and they have ownership documents to prove this. Contrastingly, the DNP has not formally changed or degazetted this land, so as far as they are concerned the land titles are void. The situation at this site is unusual because of this.

To achieve sustainability, the SSCG need to engage the local administration and be supported via grants or other funding processes, but because of this land ownership problem this is a

challenge. The land tenure problem needs to be resolved, otherwise it will continue forever. This will restrict the legal activities of the community group and prevent other government departments funding their activities.

Disregarding this land tenure problem, the activities of the community group are replicable and other groups experiencing HEC are travelling to meet them and learn from their experience. Freeland is ready to work with these other groups to replicate activities, which we now know work. We feel the establishment of such groups along the periphery of protected areas will help mitigate many of the common problems around most protected areas in Thailand, which are exacerbated by the lack of a buffer zone. In almost every situation where forests border directly with farmland, wildlife enters fields to crop raid, this problem then leads to the farmers killing wildlife.

Given the ease and receptiveness of local people looking for solutions to their problems with crop-raiding wildlife, this project may serve as a good model for others to visit and learn from.

Summarize any unplanned sustainability or replicability achieved.

None

Safeguard Policy Assessment

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

The goal of this one-year project was to empower local communities as a positive, integrated partner in the protection of Thap Lan National Park's globally important fauna and flora. Many among local communities are aware of the importance of conservation of local ecology and ecological services. More recently, these communities have sought avenues to participate more in the conservation of their shared natural heritage; however, previously lacking have been the resources and experience available for these individuals to become more involved. In the past two years, Freeland has supported multi-stakeholder meetings with participation from local communities, Thap Lan staff and other NGOs. These meetings have helped guide strategies for local participation in conservation activities and act as a forum for direct contact and problem-solving between communities outside Thap Lan, park officials, and NGOs.

Freeland project staff, who work full-time at the project location, conduct on-going monitoring of project activities and implementation of the process framework and continually monitor to ensure safeguards are observed.

According to the eligibility criteria for affected persons in the Process Framework, there have been no instances where people had been affected negatively by the project. Any adverse impacts on local community members have been outside the scope of eligibility (such as illegal natural resource users apprehended by officials). No offenders have been 'directly' apprehended by the community groups as a result of their patrolling. Information has been passed to officials for further action, but for safety and due to the risk of retaliation, we have supported the group's decision not to directly intervene if crimes are observed. The majority of patrols have focused on human-elephant conflict mitigation, which has had an exclusively positive benefit. At no point in future activities would community patrolling groups directly apprehend or attempt to apprehend local people.

We are not aware of any instances where conflict resolutions and complaint mechanisms were necessary. Existing mechanisms have been established as per the Process Framework. During the project, Freeland staff advised community members and local civil society group members if any disagreements or complaints arose concerning Freeland, as the project implementing agency, they may contact the CEPF National Coordinator for Thailand at the IUCN office in Bangkok to direct specific complaints. Following the departure of the original IUCN focal point (Saroj Srisai), the contact details for Ms. Supranee Kamponsun (supranee.kamponsun@iucn.org) were also provided. A site visit by IUCN-Thailand representatives Dr. Chamniern Vorratchaiphan and Tawatchai Rattanasorn during July 2015 further established communications between the community group and IUCN. The community group is also prepared to act as an intermediary during conflict between affected persons and other stakeholders, such as community members and Thap Lan National Park. However, during this project, no complaints were filed with this organization.

As previously stated in the Process Framework, an Indigenous People's Planning Framework was unnecessary for this project. All measures to mitigate negative impacts to local communities described in this Process Framework apply only to local ethnic Thais, as no indigenous peoples live in the part of Thailand where the project was implemented.

Additional Comments/Recommendations
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None

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.

Please include your full contact details below:

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Performance Tracking Report Addendum

CEPF Global Targets

(Enter Grant Term)

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

Project Results	Is this question relevant?	If yes, provide your numerical response for results achieved during the annual period.	Provide your numerical response for project from inception of CEPF support to date.	Describe the principal results achieved during the grant term (Attach annexes if necessary)
1. Did your project strengthen management of a protected area guided by a sustainable management plan? Please indicate number of hectares improved.	No			Please also include name of the protected area(s). If more than one, please include the number of hectares strengthened for each one.
2. How many hectares of new and/or expanded protected areas did your project help establish through a legal declaration or community agreement?	No			Please also include name of the protected area. If more than one, please include the number of hectares strengthened for each one.
3. Did your project strengthen biodiversity conservation and/or natural resources management inside a key biodiversity area identified in the CEPF ecosystem profile? If so, please indicate how many hectares.	No			
4. Did your project effectively introduce or strengthen biodiversity conservation in management practices outside protected areas? If so, please indicate how many hectares.	No			
5. If your project promotes the sustainable use of natural resources, how many local communities accrued tangible socioeconomic benefits? Please complete Table 1 below.	No			

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

Table 1. Socioeconomic Benefits to Target Communities

Please complete this table if your project provided concrete socioeconomic benefits to local communities. List the name of each community in column one. In the subsequent columns under Community Characteristics and Nature of Socioeconomic Benefit, place an X in all relevant boxes. In the bottom row, provide the totals of the Xs for each column.

Name of Community	Community Characteristics								Nature of Socioeconomic Benefit													
	Small landowners	Subsistence economy	Indigenous/ ethnic peoples	Pastoralists/nomadic peoples	Recent migrants	Urban communities	Communities falling below the poverty rate	Other	Adoption of sustainable natural resources management practices	Ecotourism revenues	Park management activities	Payment for environmental services	Increased food security due to the adoption of sustainable fishing, hunting, or agricultural practices	More secure access to water resources	Improved tenure in land or other natural resource due to titling, reduction of colonization, etc.	Reduced risk of natural disasters (fires, landslides, flooding, etc)	More secure sources of energy	Increased access to public services, such as education, health, or credit	Improved use of traditional knowledge for environmental management	More participatory decision-making due to strengthened civil society and governance.	Other	
n/a																						
Total																						

If you marked "Other", please provide detail on the nature of the Community Characteristic and Socioeconomic Benefit:

