

Management of the Phatam protected forests Complex to promote cooperation for transboundary biodiversity conservation between Thailand, Cambodia and Laos (Phase I) Final Report

PD 15/00 Rev. 2 (F)

I. Introduction

The project was approved during the 28th Session of the Council and fully financed by the Governments of Japan, Switzerland, USA and France during the same Session. The agreement regulating the implementation of the project was signed on 13 September 2001 and the first disbursement of funds was made on 20 September 2001.

II. Project Objective

The project aimed at contributing to the development and demonstration of a model strategy for the management of trans-boundary protected areas with emphasis on cooperation between Thailand and the neighboring countries. Its specific objectives were to: a) start a management planning process for Phatam Protected Forests Complex in a framework of trans-boundary cooperation for biodiversity conservation between Thailand, Cambodia and Laos, and b) initiate cooperation between Thailand, Cambodia and Laos for biodiversity conservation in respective trans-boundary protected forest areas.

III. Project Strategy and Activities

The first phase of the project focused on the establishment of the basis for cooperation between Thailand, Cambodia and Laos. The cooperation between the countries was built mainly through the Tri-partite Commission comprising government officials and protected area superintendents and the Joint Task Force composing protected area field staff which served as the forum for exchanging views and information and for decision making on the implementation of the various cooperative activities of the project. All planned activities of the project had been successfully completed.

IV. Project Achievements and Outputs

The project outputs have been achieved and can be summarized as follows:

- An effective organizational and management system for the PPFC (Phatam Protected Forests Complex) was established. The project headquarters office at the Phatam National Park was constructed at the early stage and fully equipped with the necessary equipment and facilities for data collection, publishing and dissemination;
- A long term management plan and a medium term work plan were developed. The plans were presented and discussed during the third PSC meeting and the second tri-national meeting;
- A framework for trans-boundary cooperation between Thailand, Cambodia and Laos had been elaborated and agreed upon by the countries involved; and
- An information service to reach out the public and to enhance the impacts of the project was established. Meetings, workshops, trainings and public dialogues were organized for awareness raising, tourist information and results of the studies and surveys had been published and distributed to interested and related organizations and government agencies.

V. Target Beneficiaries Involvement

The main beneficiaries of the project were fully involved in the implementation of the project. The PPFC staff gained experience in biodiversity conservation management planning, and interacted with institutions and organizations for the exchange of information and experience. The Royal Forest Department and Department of National Park of Thailand have realized the importance of and put more efforts on trans-boundary biodiversity conservation. Local peoples had acquired skills and experience from the trainings in economic crops/plant propagation and tissue culture techniques, and shared their view and information for the PPFC management planning.

2

VI. Lessons Learnt

Among the many lessons learnt from the implementation of the project it is worthwhile to highlight the following:

- The project was not very well formulated. Significant changes had to be made especially to the budget;
- Some activities were unavoidably delayed due to the reorganization of the Royal Forest Department;
- Lao PDR could not identify any protected forest area to join the project due to its own constraints;
- Differences in bureaucracy systems, laws and regulations between countries may affect project sustainability;
- The long and medium-term management plans prepared by the project were proved very useful for the formulation of the second phase of the project;

- Individual consultants contracted should be accompanied by counterpart from the project to ensure smooth implementation of activities;
- A multi-functional building equipped with basic facilities is required for efficiency in implementation of training, meeting and workshop; and
- The problem of landmines along the border of the countries caused reluctance during data collection, mutual visits and the implementation of trans-boundary activities.

VII. Dissemination of Results

The project results have been disseminated through the various discussions, trainings and workshops conducted during the course of the project. The Completion Report and a series of Technical Reports are available from the ITTO Secretariat upon request.

VIII. Recommendations Related to Future Work

In order to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of similar projects in the future following are some recommendations based on the lessons learnt from the implementation of this project:

- Adequately formulated project with well specified inputs will ease the project implementation;
- It is advisable to employ permanent project staff for data collection, interpretation and analysis to ensure sustainability;
- Meetings with farmers and villagers during rainy season should be avoided as they are usually occupied with farming activities;
- The presence of both Project Director and Project Coordinator to run and supervise project operations may create unnecessary dual leadership and bureaucratic problems. However, it is essential that any designated project leader must have strong leadership and be fluent in English; and
- All PSC members and Executive Officers should be encouraged to visit project site in order to appreciate accomplishment of the project.

IX. Concluding Remarks

The ITTO Secretariat has received a series of Technical Reports, the Completion Report and the Final Financial Audit Report. Therefore, this project can be reported as completed.