

## Completion Report

### **PD 289/04 Rev.1 (F) Management of the Emerald Triangle Protected Forests Complex to Promote Cooperation for Transboundary Biodiversity Conservation between Thailand, Cambodia and Laos (Phase II) (Thailand and Cambodia)**

#### **I. Introduction**

The project was approved by the ITTC during its Thirty-seventh Session in December 2004 in Yokohama and full financing was pledged during the same Session. The agreement regulating the implementation of the project was forwarded to the Governments of Thailand and Cambodia for their respective signatures on 15 February 2005 and signed by all parties on 30 March 2007. The first disbursement of funds was made on 7 March 2008. The implementation of the project activities had been completed in May 2010. An independent evaluation of the project took place from 18 March to 2 April 2010 before the project completion. The purpose of the evaluation was to guide all factors relevant for the efficient and successful completion of the project in accordance with the rules and procedures of ITTO. Attention was also given to draw lessons and key project elements that can be used to improve similar projects in the future.

#### **II. Project Objective**

The project aimed at conserving the trans-boundary biodiversity in the Emerald Triangle Protected Forest Complex situated between Thailand, Cambodia and Lao PDR in a framework of trans-boundary biodiversity conservation area (TBCA). Its specific objectives were:

- i) to strengthen cooperation between Thailand, Cambodia and Laos for biodiversity conservation in respective trans-boundary conservation areas;
- ii) to enhance protection measures and monitoring of the biological resources along tri-national borders; and
- iii) to strengthen the involvement of local communities and stakeholders to ensure sustainable use and management of natural resources both in protected areas and in the buffer zones.

#### **III. Project Achievements and Outputs**

The achievements and outputs produced by the project can be summarized as follows:

##### **Specific objective I: Strengthen cooperation between Thailand, Cambodia and Laos for biodiversity conservation in respective trans-boundary conservation areas**

###### Thailand

- A National Coordinating Committee on TBCA established in Thailand was comprised of authorities from the Royal Forest Department and the National Park, Wildlife and Plant Conservation Department. Four Coordinating Committee Meetings were conducted to follow up and advise the project; and
- Three stakeholder group meetings were held to share information on progress of the project implementation. This group was comprised of NGOs, local forestry administration officers, RFD and DNP staff, community leaders and representatives, and project staff.

## Cambodia

- A National Project Steering Committee (NPSC), National Project Technical Committee (NPTC) and Field Management Unit (FMU) were established to advance the implementation of the project;
- A Joint Task Force meeting was conducted in Siem Reap province on 08 April 2009 in conjunction with the second PSC meeting with the participation of representatives from Cambodia, Thailand and Lao PDR. There was an agreement to organize meetings in each country separately and to share relevant information afterward; and
- Consultations were carried out on a regular basis to ensure effective and efficient implementation of project activities. Main consulting group members are community leaders as well as commune, district and provincial authorities, military officers and Forestry Administration officers at triage, division and cantonment levels. Technical cooperation between Thailand and Cambodia level had been improved considerably through a series of meetings of the Project Steering Committee (PSC) and Joint Task Force Groups. However, the project limitations remained including periodic border conflicts between Thailand and Cambodia setback achievements to some extent as well as non-participation of Lao PDR in the project except the second PSC meeting.

### **Specific objective II: Enhance protection measures and monitoring of the biological resources along tri- national borders**

## Thailand

- Two training courses on domestication of edible wild species and insects, two training courses on plant propagation and one training course on nursery techniques were held with the participation of 125 participants.
- Collaboration with the border patrol police and military had been made through three workshops to prevent wildlife poaching, illegal logging, and the trading and collection of wild plant.
- A technical report on wildlife survey and monitoring of the Bunthrik-Yotmon Wildlife Sanctuary was published. The landscape species of this Sanctuary include Asian Elephant (*Elephas maximus*), Barking deer (*Muntiacus muntjak*), Serow (*Capricornis sumatraensis*), Wild pig (*Sus scrofa*) and Siamese Fireback (*Lophura diardi*). These landscape species will be considered as focal conservation targets to set up Site Conservation Management Plan of the Sanctuary as an example of the management of the Emerald Triangle Protected Forest Complex.
- A technical report on ethnobotanical study in the Pha Taem Protected Forests was published under research programs on medicinal and edible plants to facilitate their domestication.
- All together 109 participants from five protected areas in Thailand and local stakeholders attended training courses on introduction to GIS and map reading, using GIS/MIST for effective controlling and land use allocation and land use change for protected areas; and
- A study on the land use classes of the Emerald Triangle Protected Forest Complex from 2002-2008 was carried out in 2008. It found that forest encroachment was a main threat to Transboundary biodiversity. A study to project land use change based on three land demand scenarios in 2030 was also carried out. Results of the predicted wildlife distribution and wildlife hotspots in 2030 clearly show that long-term survival of biodiversity in this region

depends on cooperation between the three countries to protect intact forests and remaining suitable habitats.

#### Cambodia

- A Preah Vihear Forest and Wildlife Research Station and a ranger control post were constructed in May 2010 to support and strengthen the conservation and management of Preah Vihear Protected Forest.
- Training on GIS was provided to local Forestry Administration staff members in Preah Vihear town in December 2009. The training was focused on GIS mapping and databank management, landscape planning, and habitat suitability analysis.
- A Preah Vihear Protected Forest Management Plan, incorporating zoning uses for the 2010-2014 period was completed and published in both Khmer and English in May 2010. The Management Plan, which is a “road map” for sustainable forest-land use planning, includes five programs: Natural Resource Conservation and Management; Recreation and Ecotourism Management; Integrated Community Livelihood Development and Cooperation; Institutional and Human Resource Development; and Research and Monitoring.
- Awareness raising activities for law enforcement and biodiversity conservation were carried out regularly with Forestry Administration officers and other stakeholders, especially relevant provincial and local authorities; and
- Three sign boards were erected to demarcate main entrances to the Preah Vihear Protected Forest in July 2009. The demarcation of sign boards highlighted the importance of the management of the Preah Vihear Protected Forest and local community awareness of the protected forest boundaries.

#### **Specific objective III: Strengthening of the involvement of local communities and stakeholders to ensure sustainable use and management of natural resources both in protected areas and in the buffer zones**

#### Thailand

- An extensive database on local community groups was established and local community networks and fora were strengthened to provide information to stakeholders and to develop criteria for the selection of communities to be included in an Integrated Community Livelihood Development and Cooperation (ICDP) program. Community networks have been established in the field of “Conservation, Home-stay & Ecotourism, Handicrafts, Wild Orchids Domestication, Herbs and Medicine Plants, Community Revolving fund, Domestic Crab as a food source, Organic Fertilizer, and Bamboo”.
- A series of training courses and workshops for local communities were organized to raise awareness of conservation and to gain experience with biodiversity conservation.
- Training workshops on formulating ICDP project proposals, criteria, regulations and monitoring system were conducted. Pilot activity funds to six local community networks jointly approved by the project and the local community network in accordance with the agreed criteria.
- Additional equipment for the existing tissue culture lab and a new nursery at the project headquarters
- for potential domesticated plant species had been purchased and established.

- A survey along the Mekong River/Thai-Cambodian borders identified potential areas for cultural-, adventure-, and nature-based tourism and produced a nature-based tourism map; and
- Training for staff and local communities in eco-tourism development and nature-based tourism management was conducted. Two communities developed eco-tourism packages and a home-stay project.

#### Cambodia

- Awareness of local people on the existence of the Protected Forest and the new Forestry Law had been increased. Meetings between the Forestry Administration and local communities to facilitate biodiversity conservation were held with the participation of 256 participants in Chaes, Chunh and Robunh villages where activities were promoted for participatory land use planning, community-based ecotourism and bird nest protection.
- Agro-forestry practices in the buffer zones of the Protected Forest with a reward system for outstanding conservation efforts had been promoted. A rice bank was established in Chaes village in December 2008 and had been used as a common facility. More than 2,500 fruit trees seedlings of different species were provided to 140 local families in the three target villages of Chaes, Chunh and Robunh. Chicken ranching was introduced to forty selected families in the three target villages. Cow banks were established in two target villages, Chunh and Robunh, and thirteen families were selected to receive a cow. Each family that received a cow had to pay into an investment fund. A micro-credit program was implemented in Chaes village, with a revolving fund of \$1000 and a community fund of \$130.
- Regulations and criteria on appropriate access to non-timber forest products were drafted through consultative meetings with local communities.
- Summaries of the implementation of the project activities had been regularly featured in the Cambodia Forestry and Wildlife Magazine which has published for every six months. The Phnom Penh Post (National English newspaper) featured an article on transboundary cooperation on 24 April 2009; and
- Potential ecotourism and recreation sites were identified and mapped. Strategies, activities, action plans, work plans and estimated budgets were included in a Management Plan the Preah of the Vihear Protected Forest. Four Forestry Administration project staff and eleven local community committee members from the three target villages were trained in community-based ecotourism through participation in a study tour in January 2010 to Dang Plet village in Chhep district where the Conservation and Landscape Management project provides village support through ecotourism development activities.

#### **IV. Outcomes and Impacts**

The project prepared several technical reports in accordance with project activities. The reports were published and distributed to concerned agencies in the two countries. Apart from those, the project also produced several booklets and guidelines in the local language for distribution to local beneficiaries and communities. The main outcomes of the project were presented by two representatives of the two Executing Agencies at the International Conference on Biodiversity Conservation in Transboundary Tropical Forests held in Quito, Ecuador on 21-24 July 2010 which reviewed the social, economic and political implications and impacts of transboundary biodiversity conservation. Overall, the project has significantly contributed to the foundation for transboundary biodiversity conservation between Thailand and Cambodia although the specific objectives 1 and 2 have not been fully achieved due to failure of Lao PDR to join the project and unclear vision of transboundary cooperation. At the national level, the project has influenced the importance of

transboundary biodiversity conservation. The project was probably a first case in which the two Executing Agencies had a close collaboration to promote biodiversity conservation in the Emerald Triangle Protected Forests Complex. The Preah Vihear Protected Forest Management Plan is an important road map for the Cambodian government to implement recommended actions on the ground in close cooperation with key stakeholders. At the regional and local levels, the capacity of biodiversity management teams has been enhanced very much with more knowledge of GIS and social aspects of local communities. Local communities in the project sites, one of the important beneficiaries of the project, have been motivated with biodiversity conservation with the support of livelihood improvement activities.

## **V. Lessons Learnt and sustainability**

The main lessons learned from the evaluation of the project include the following:

- Good design is very important to the success of the project. The project was with three specific objectives and too many outputs. The Logical Framework – specific objective 1 is not entirely deliverable by the Project Teams alone. It needs a definition of concrete assumptions on external responsibilities. Moreover, the indicators are not measurable and generally not relevant as far as measuring outcomes and impacts are concerned. It did not provide sufficient baseline information (no scoping in Cambodia).
- A trans-boundary coordination enabling vision is needed and should be established as early and clearly as possible. There is encouraging progress in cooperation at the technical level between Thailand and Cambodia. However, Lao PDR not joining the project caused some reluctance to pursue the development objective.
- Good technical capacity building will be an important success factor in the future. Individual consultants contracted should be accompanied by counterparts from the project to ensure smooth operation of activities.
- Community development activities have strengthened the trans-boundary coordination legitimacy and allowed its survival in a context of border disputes. However, good practices in planning and implementing rural development not adequately used. Lower levels of forestry services not adequately empowered to implement grassroots initiatives.
- The roles of Executing Agencies identified in the Project Document and frequent consultations between two Executing Agencies have played an important role for the smooth organization of Project Steering Committee (PSC) meetings as well as the implementation of joint activities; and
- Procurement of necessary equipment took time. Rainy season and occasional flooding affected accessibility to the area and delayed project implementation.

To ensure the sustainability associated with the extent of the achievements of the project to date and to strengthen trans-boundary biodiversity conservation in the Emerald Triangle, efforts will continue to be supported through the following:

- Extended work of management teams in Thailand and Cambodia who have been adequately trained on trans-boundary issues.
- Continued support to strong cooperation demonstrated at the technical level for biodiversity conservation in both countries, which will induce greater cooperation at higher levels of government, including that of Lao PDR.
- More local communities in both countries understood the necessity for transboundary biodiversity conservation will enforce more “social control” in protected areas; and

- The organization of public forums in both countries will continue to encourage active support from local communities and organizations.

Taking into account the challenges of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Phase of the project, a 3<sup>rd</sup> and final Phase proposal [PD 577/10 Rev.1 (F)] has been prepared in order to further strengthen the technical transboundary conservation cooperation with the engagement of Lao PDR in biodiversity assessment and monitoring activities. The proposal was appraised by the 40<sup>th</sup> Expert Panel in August 2010 and received Category 1 (minor amendments).

## **VI. Concluding Remarks**

The ITTO Secretariat has received the completion report, technical reports and the final audited financial statements in accordance with the project agreement signed with ITTO. The Project was declared completed in the CRF Session of December 2011.