Summary & Lessons Learned

of

**Establishing Conservation Areas through Landscape Management**

**(CALM) in the Northern Plains of Cambodia Project, Terminal Evaluation**

I - Executive Summary

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| **Project Summary Table** |
| Project Title: | Establishing Conservation Areas through Landscape Management (CALM) in the Northern Plains of Cambodia |
| GEF Project ID: | 47478 |  | *at endorsement**(US$)* | *at completion (US$)* |
| UNDP Project ID: | 2177 | GEF financing: | 2,300,000 | 2,300,000 |
| Country: | Cambodia | IA/EA own: | 1,600,000 | 2,462,888 |
| Region: | Asia-Pacific | Government: | 105,210 | 105,210 |
| Focal Area: | Biodiversity | UNDP: | 463,407 | 1,081,753 |
| Operational Programme: | OP-3 (Forest Ecosystems) | Total co-financing: | 2,168,617 | 3,649,851 |
| Executing Agency: | Wildlife Conservation Society | Total Project Cost: | 4,468,617 | 5,844,641 |
| Other Partners involved: | Forestry Administration (Ministry of Agriculture Forestry and Fisheries) and General Department for the Administration of Nature Conservation and Protection (Ministry of Environment) | Prodoc Signature (date project began): | 7th Dec. 2005 |  |
|  |  | (Operational) Closing Date: | Proposed: 31st Dec 2012 | Actual: 31st Dec 2012 |

## Project Description

*The Northern Plains of Cambodia are the largest remaining extensive intact block of a unique landscape of exceptional global importance for biodiversity conservation. The area is either a last refuge for, or maintains a key population of over 40 species on the IUCN Red List, including six listed as Critically Endangered. The Project, consistent with the GEF Strategic Priority BD-2 (Mainstreaming Biodiversity in Production Landscapes and Sectors), was designed to address the problem of escalating biodiversity loss across the Northern Plains, caused by increasing human land and resource use. Over seven years (2006-2012) at three sites selected using the Landscape Species Approach, it used a three-pronged approach: (1) the introduction of biodiversity considerations into provincial level land use processes focusing particularly on building the capacity of provincial departments and authorities, and integrating specific project initiatives with established provincial planning processes; (2) the demonstration of specific mainstreaming interventions at three key sites (including community land-use tenure, community contracts and incentives for biodiversity supportive land-use practices, as well as work to mainstream biodiversity into the forestry and tourism productive sectors); and (3) strengthen biodiversity management by government in two categories of protected area, namely Kulen Promtep Wildlife Sanctuary under the remit of the Ministry of Environment and Preah Vihear Protected Forest under the remit of the Forestry Administration.*

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| **Evaluation Rating Table** |  |  |
| **Criterion** | **Comments** | **Rating** |
| **Monitoring and Evaluation** |  |  |
| Overall quality of M&E  | The design of M&E was of a standard much advanced over that normal for the design period, with a fully itemised and costed Plan included in the Project Document covering all the various M&E steps including the allocation of responsibilities. Implementation of M&E has been of a particularly high standard, with excellent progress monitoring, strong internal activity monitoring, and impact monitoring that is particularly noteworthy for its quality and effectiveness.  | Highly Satisfactory |
| M&E design at project start up | As above. | Highly Satisfactory |
| M&E Plan Implementation | M&E implementation has been of a very high standard, with excellent progress monitoring and strong internal activity monitoring. The impact monitoring, normally the weak point of any project’s M&E, is particularly noteworthy for its quality and effectiveness and has been used to influence management decisions. Good responses have also been made to the mid-term review and the risk assessments | Highly Satisfactory |
| **IA & EA Execution:** |  |  |
| Overall Quality of Project Implementation/Execution  | The Project has been well-organised and well-managed throughout providing products of the highest technical quality on time and within budget, while responding effectively to a range of internal and external challenges through good adaptive management  | Highly Satisfactory |
| Implementing Agency Execution | WCS assembled a coherent, well-integrated team of the highest calibre which exhibited a real drive to ensure their targets were met, a demand for high technical quality in all that they did, and a desire to communicate their knowledge to others. | Highly Satisfactory |
| Executing Agency Execution | UNDP have provided an adequate level of supervision and backstopping to the Project, and its performance has benefitted as a direct result. | Satisfactory |
| **Outcomes** |  |  |
| Overall Quality of Project Outcomes | Overall quality is of the highest order. | Highly Satisfactory |
| Relevance | The Project intervenes in a globally important landscape, is congruent with GEF and national priorities, and remains pertinent in the light of the current levels of threat | Relevant |
| Effectiveness | A review of outcomes to impacts (ROtI) shows the overall likelihood of impacts being achieved is two (66%) cases of Highly Likely and one (33%) of Moderately Likely. | Highly Satisfactory |
| Cost-effectiveness (Efficiency) | Project management costs were trimmed to 86% of those originally budgeted, and cost-effectiveness has been a priority of the implementing partner, WCS, throughout, amongst their priorities. This, combined with significant levels of additional co-financing leveraged by the Project’s activities, means the overall cost-effectiveness of the Project has been extremely high | Highly Satisfactory |
| **Sustainability:** |  |  |
| Overall likelihood of risks to Sustainability | Each risk dimension of sustainability is deemed to be critical, the overall rating for sustainability cannot be higher than the rating of the dimension with lowest rating | Unlikely |
| Financial resources  | Good – WCS show long-term commitment to the area and there is evidence of considerable financial commitments from their donors despite no such commitment from the Government. | Likely |
| Socio-economic | Solid – beneficiaries show increased awareness and changed behaviours linked to agreed tenure and usufruct rights, plus economic benefits derived from the three incentive schemes introduced by the Project. | Likely |
| Institutional framework and governance | Institutionally good through strengthened capacity and support from senior staff in the MoE and FA. Poor governance poses serious risks. | Unlikely[[1]](#footnote-1) |
| Environmental | No risks evident. | Likely |
| **Impact:**  |  |  |
| Environmental Status Improvement  | Populations of 11 globally-threatened birds increasing; populations of four species of globally-threatened large ungulates stable. | Significant |
| Environmental Stress Reduction | Number of incidents of illegal hunting and logging declined significantly. Rate of forest loss within protected areas now an order of magnitude below those outside, but threat from poor governance and concessions granted outside of the legal framework remain a significant, and possibly growing, threat. | Minimal |
| Progress towards stress/status change | Generally very good – decreases in logging, hunting, pesticide use, plus improvements in protected area management capacity and economic benefits for local people through incentives rewarded by increasing (or increased stability of) key species’ populations. Awareness-raising and lobbying to counter effects of concessions only partially successful. | Significant[[2]](#footnote-2) |
| **Overall Project Results** |  | Highly Satisfactory |

## Key successes

*Mainstreaming biodiversity considerations into the Preah Vihear Provincial Development and Investment Plans for 2011-2015; mainstreaming biodiversity considerations into 23 Commune Development Plans and the associated District Development Plans; training of over 5,000 government officials and local community members resulting in increased capacity to understand and take part in conservation planning processes and to undertake management activities and strengthen abilities to implement laws and regulations on the ground;* *designation of over 30,000 ha of land as either community use zones or sustainable use zones within KPWS; establishment of 32 CBOs to map, develop rules and regulations for, and manage natural resources and land within the CALM landscape including seven community protected area management committees, seven community protected forest management committees, five indigenous representation committees, four community forestry committees and nine village marketing networks, with an estimated 20,000 community members having benefited from Project activities; development and mentoring of three incentive schemes linking payments directly to conservation actions through: a) community-based and run nature-based tourism at one main site and two subsidiary sites, b) payments for forest protection based on premiums for agricultural products (Ibis Rice), and direct payments for bird nest protection; increased and better targeted law-enforcement operations in two protected areas; increased research and improved monitoring of wildlife within the northern plains to inform management decisions; completion of preparatory activities for an application for REDD+ funds to cover forests within the northern plains; and unquantifiable development of capacity at site and provincial level through training, technical assistance and provision of equipment, considered by some to be the Project’s most important achievement.*

## Key problem areas

*Continuing social, economic, and military concessions made within internationally-recognised protected areas; no funds committed by either the MoE or the FA to cover operational costs to maintain law enforcement operations within KPWS or PVPF; no guaranteed commitment of funds from the donor community to assist with protected area operations or Project-supported initiatives, although preparatory work and submissions made; and the Project Board missed the opportunity to facilitate inter-sectoral interest and cooperation, a key part of mainstreaming.*

*The Terminal Evaluation (TE) of the Project was conducted over a period of 23 days between 26th June and 9th August 2012 by a team comprising one international and one national consultant. It was carried out in accordance with a decision of the Project Board (23rd February 2012), for although still six months ahead of its scheduled closure, most activities had been completed. The Evaluation’s ToR is given in* [*Annex I*](#_Annex_I_:_Mid-Term Evaluation Terms)*, its itinerary in* [*Annex II*](#_Annex_II_:_Itinerary of activities ) *and the list of people interviewed in* [*Annex III*](#_Annex_III_:_Persons Interviewed)*. A list of indicators, their end of Project achievement level, together with performance rating is given in* [*Annex IV*](#_Annex_IV_:)*.* *After receipt of comments on 31st August 2012, which have been added as footnotes to the main text, the report was finalised on 7th September 2012.*

## Key Issues

*The CALM Project has been well designed, and well- managed and implemented throughout, and stands as a testament to what can be achieved through the NGO implementation modality. Despite working in a very remote area, much of which becomes inaccessible during the wet season, and an unfavourable wider political environment, the team has managed to deliver a series of interventions that have significantly reduced the threats to a suite of globally-threatened wildlife which appear to be responding with stable or increasing populations. The Project has been underpinned by good science and a technical approach of the highest calibre throughout. It has incorporated biodiversity issues into the admittedly rudimentary landscape-level planning process in Preah Vihear Province; has formalised land tenure and usufruct rights for 23 villages; demonstrated successfully three innovative incentive schemes that link biodiversity conservation measures directly with economic benefits for the local communities and that could be expanded within the region or be replicated elsewhere in the country; and improved the management of Kulen Promtep Wildlife Sanctuary (KPWS) and Preah Vihear Protected Forest through increased capacity of staff and institutions. In the process, the Project has demonstrated a number of approaches particularly through incentive schemes. One of its biggest strengths has come about through a design-decision to work directly through existing government structures rather than parallel project structures, and this has been repaid by the MoE and the FA working in close cooperation together for the first time for many years, and in both institutions taking full ownership for most of the Project’s ouputs. Excellent work with 23 villages has brought benefits to an estimated 20,000 community members thereby laying a solid foundation for improved understanding of, and cooperation on, biodiversity conservation issues in the future. Evaluation of achievements against indicators (provided in* [*Annex IV*](#_Annex_IV_:)*) show that of the 21 indicator/site combinations, 13 (62%) show successful achievement at the end of the Project and five (24%) show achievement nearly successful.*

*Importantly, the Project was designed within the Wildlife Conservation Society’s longer-term commitment to the area, as evidenced by their operation in the area for over 10 years prior to the design of the CALM Project, and as a result it was preceded by considerable amounts of work that provided a solid platform on which to build its achievements and, perhaps even more importantly, it has structures in place to support those achievements after its end. Consequently, not only has the CALM Project achieved a great deal, those achievements are set to last well into the future and perhaps act as the foundation upon which to set the next building blocks[[3]](#footnote-3). However, while the sustainability of the Project’s achievements themselves appears highly likely, current governance of protected areas and the wider landscape* *within the Northern Plains poses a severe risk to everything that the Project has achieved. The demand for economic and social land concessions in KPWS and the wider landscape, frequently declared apparently without reference to the transparent and accountable legal and formal planning frameworks and often associated with the military or with companies linked to politically-powerful individuals, has the potential to cause substantial damage to the integrity of the landscape, destroying biodiversity and local community livelihoods. The situation has become further complicated by an announcement made at the time of the TE by the Prime Minister that all land disputes were to be solved ahead of the next election. This has launched a new land registration process working outside of existing Government and Ministerial guidelines and legislative framework to reconsider all previously-agreed boundaries and to provide new temporary titles to all landholders. The effects are unknown but the concern of many stakeholders and Project partners is high.*

## Recommendations

The recommendation herewith cannot help with the CALM Project which will end shortly but may help to establish its legacy.

* WCS and the UNDP-CO should help to establish a formal interagency cooperative group between the FA and MoE to increase the levels of interagency cooperation and coordination between protected areas (see paragraph 88).
* WCS alter their business model for Ibis Rice to enable it to become self-sufficient (see paragraph 71).
* WCS should educate villagers involved in producing *Ibis Rice* about why consumers value it (see paragraph 71).

II- Lessons Learned

Lessons learned have been arranged under project-related headings, and cross-referenced back to the paragraph where they appear. Further discussion and key points for future projects have been added in this section. Some of the lessons learned given below have arisen from discussions with persons interviewed during the evaluation and the TET thanks them for their insights.

## Strategic

#1 Results focus attention.

Producing results successfully on-the-ground tends to draw the attention of senior politicians to a project’s aims. While most projects produce a lot of paper, and this one is no exception, paper rarely galvanises the interest in the same way that tangible results do. Results engender trust by proving that changes are possible and proving the efficacy of the methods used.

*Key points for future projects:*

1. *Wherever possible, GEF projects, and mainstreaming projects in particular, should endeavour to produce tangible results to demonstrate key points of change in order to draw political interest and garner political support for their wider aims.*

#2 Direct payments make excellent incentives to achieve conservation goals.

The Project has established three separate incentive schemes in which villagers or communities can participate, exchanging certain agreed behaviours for financial reward. What is remarkable is that in each case, the financial rewards for those involved are linked directly to the conservation outcome, not through some indirect pathway; if the outcome (reduced hunting of endangered species, reduced habitat clearance, etc.) is not achieved, then no payments are made. Too frequently, such schemes are indirect either involving a third party or situation, e.g. promises of increased economic benefits through provision of goods for the tourist trade over which villagers do not have control (e.g. through a protected area), or payments through a water company for watershed protection of which they may see part. In this instance, because those involved have direct control over the service provided (tourism, rice production, nest protection), are rewarded financially directly for provision of that service, and continuing provision is linked directly to a healthy conservation status, the results have been outstanding.

*Key points for future projects:*

1. *Wherever possible, when designing incentive schemes (for mainstreaming projects) or economically beneficial schemes for local people, direct links between the reward and the desired conservation outcome should be as direct as possible. This can best be achieved if local people can be provided with direct control over the continued provision of the good/service under consideration and receive a payment/financial (or other) reward directly for providing it in the way that is desired.*

## Design

**#3 Designing a project to be part of a much longer and wider process generates huge benefits for sustainability, and through the synergies developed provides the intervention with much greater effectiveness than that which can be achieved by stand-alone projects**.

This is possibly the single most important lesson learned from the CALM Project and is applicable to all GEF projects. CALM was designed, and was always seen during its implementation, as being part of a much longer process. It was fitted within a framework of existing Memoranda of Understanding between WCS and the individual ministries and also with the Government as a whole. As a result it was preceded by considerable amounts of other work that provided a solid platform on which to build its achievements and, perhaps even more importantly, it has structures in place to support those achievements after its end. Consequently, not only has CALM achieved a great deal, but those achievements are set to last well into the future and perhaps act as the foundation upon which to set the next building blocks – a reality unfortunately all too rare with GEF projects.

*Key points for future projects:*

1. *Wherever possible, GEF projects should be designed within an existing demonstrable process to promote the chances their accomplishments being sustainable.*
2. *Where this is not possible, sustainability can be improved by the project trying to establish such a process as part of its defined activities. Designing a sustainability plan into the management activities from a project’s mid-point can catalyse this, e.g. on a simplistic scale, see the UNDP-GEF project* Community-based Conservation of Biological Diversity in the Mountain Landscapes of Mongolia’s Altai Sayan Eco-region[[4]](#footnote-4)*.*

**#4 Working directly through existing government structures brings dividends**.

The Project chose to work directly through government counterpart institutions rather than setting up parallel implementation structures as, for example, did the Tonle Sap Conservation Project. This decision has proved very successful not only in empowering government by providing experience and training in a well-funded and well-equipped environment, but also in developing effective government “ownership”, engagement, participation and motivation, thereby promoting long-term sustainability of the Project’s achievements.

*Key points for future projects:*

1. *Projects should seek to work directly through existing structures or embed its management within such structures to promote the sustainability of its achievements.*

## Project Management

**#5 Constant contact with communities is vital to community-based natural resource management projects**.

It may be a truism, but to be successful, community-based projects depend upon the trust and motivation of the local communities targeted. To achieve this, the quality and commitment of those employed as advisors and social mobilisers are key attributes of a project. This Project has been blessed with particularly impressive advisors and mobilisers, but what the TET believes to be the most important factor has been the almost constant contact that they have had with the communities throughout the Project’s lifetime by deploying people on the ground for long periods of time. This frequency of contact has undoubtedly enabled the Project to build high levels of trust, capacity, and motivation which in turn has facilitated the change in people's mindsets and behaviours and brought about the success of the three incentive schemes.

*Key points for future projects:*

1. *Projects working with communities should deploy sufficient human resources with those communities to build trust and capacity in the people sufficient to catalyse the behavioural changes the project seeks.*

**#6 Deployment of specialist NGOs aids implementation**.

The CALM Project’s use of multiple NGOs in the same locality has brought the best technical expertise to bear on local issues even at the slight costs incurred through increased complexity of approach. As a result, technical implementation has gone smoothly and brought about successful results, generally thought to be of a higher standard than had the more pragmatic and more easily managed alternative of using a single organisation to cover all issues in a given locality been applied.

*Key points for future projects:*

1. *Projects should deploy the best technical resources that are available to them, even if this means using multiple organisations in one locality with a concomitant increase in management costs.*
2. *Good communication with the local communities is necessary such that they understand the differing roles of each organisation deployed thereby minimising confusion.*
1. **UNDP comment:** *The combining of good institutional framework and poor governance should be rating as moderately unlikely*. TET response: The TET believes that poor governance overrides good institutional framework.  There is already a fairly good institution in the MoE, yet poor governance of it, and from higher up, is leading to the unsustainable situation that is currently visible.  As such this, and hence the overall sustainability rating, remains as unlikely. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. **UNDP comment:** *There is no identified evaluation approach/methodology on how this rating is come up?* TET response: This is a good point and the TET agrees. No methodology is given in the TE guidelines (UNDP 2011) yet the assessment is given as a requirement - one of the numerous inconsistencies within the Guidelines themselves. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. **Forestry Administration comment:** [We] *support this statement*. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. See footnote # 10. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)