

Stakeholder Engagement Plan

(Approved by CI-GEF Project Agency 2017-10-27; Updated 2018-03-12)

1. Introduction

1.1 The Stakeholder Engagement Plan

The *Stakeholder Engagement Plan* (SEP) includes differentiated measures to allow the effective participation of those identified as disadvantaged or vulnerable. It should: 1) Describe CI-GEF requirements for consultation and disclosure; 2) Identify and prioritize key stakeholder groups; 3) Provide a strategy and timetable for sharing information and consulting with each of these groups; 4) Describe resources and responsibilities for implementing stakeholder engagement activities; 5) Describe how stakeholder engagement activities will be incorporated into a management system; and 6) The scope and level of detail of the plan should be scaled to fit the needs of the project.

1.2 Brief Introduction of the Project

Expanding the coverage and strengthening the management of wetland protected areas in Sichuan Province, China (hereafter shorten as “The project”) aims to expand and strengthen wetland protected areas in Sichuan Province China and also to mainstream biodiversity conservation and sustainable utilization of wetland resources. The project has two main components and focuses on strengthening site level management and raising standards for two wetland parks: Qionghai Wetland Park, and Baihetan Wetland Park. The project will also support the establishment of participatory management frameworks and guidelines for the two new wetland parks. Community conservation agreements will be signed, and communities will be empowered to manage wetland resource for sustainable utilization.

1.3 A Category C Project

According to the CI-GEF Project Agency Safeguard Screening and Analysis, the project is classified as Category C, which means it is likely to have minimal or no adverse environmental and social impacts. Beyond safeguard screening, no further ESIA action is required for Category C projects.

1.4 Map of the Project Site and Surrounding Area



2. Policies and Requirements

The requirements developed by CI-GEF pertaining to stakeholder engagement applicable to the project are summarized below.

- To seek and incorporate the knowledge and contributions of partners and stakeholders to ensure that CI's work and projects result in lasting and fundamental improvements for nature and human well-being.
- To identify the range of stakeholders that may be interested in their actions and to involve key stakeholders in project design and preparation processes;
- To ensure that stakeholders are informed and provided with information regarding project activities, and that stakeholders' views and concerns are taken into account by the project and are known by key decision makers.
- To continue consultations throughout project implementation, monitoring and evaluation, as necessary, to ensure project adaptive management and proper implementation of environmental and social safeguard plans.
- To involve public consultation and disclosure requirements related to the social and environmental assessment process.
- To include the minimum indicators at both PPG and Implementation Phases.

3. Summary of Previous Stakeholder Engagement Activities

The project's GEF Agency, Conservation International, and its Executing Agencies/Partners, Sichuan Department of Finance and Sichuan Forestry Department (Sichuan Forestry and Grassland Bureau) and Conservation International China, have conducted a series of stakeholder engagement activities since 2014, which are summarized below.

- Jointly develop project concept note (Project Identification Form)
- Type and forms of information disclosed, and how it was disseminated

In general, the project Executing Agencies have placed high importance on providing adequate project information to their partners at the local level in both Xichang City and Xinjin City, particularly the Center for Qionghai Wetland Conservation and the Administration of Baihetan Wetland National Park. The relevant government departments such as the forest departments at both city/prefecture level and county levels as well as the Administration of Qionghai Wetland National Park have been provided with project information and some local NGOs and schools also received relevant project information.

Given that the documents generated during the PPG phase, for example the logical framework, are not appropriate for reading by local stakeholders, the Executing Agencies disclosed most project information orally. The project Executing Agencies held several meetings with the heads and representatives of the focus groups from most villages around the two wetlands.

The project information was not uniformly shared among the stakeholders; in general, village heads know more than the normal villagers.

- There were at least 17 formal meetings between stakeholders and the project Executing Agencies, namely:
 - 1) Forestry Bureau of Liangshan Yi nationality Autonomous Prefecture, March. 20th, 2015, Xichang;
 - 2) Administration of Xichang City, Forestry Department of Xichang, Administration of Qionghai Wetland Park, March 21st, 2015, Xichang;
 - 3) Administration of Xinjin County, March 25th, 2015, Xinjin;
 - 4) Forestry Department of Chengdu City, March 27th, 2015, Chengdu City;
 - 5) Administration of Xichang City, Forestry Bureau of Xichang, Administration of Qionghai Wetland Park, August 28th. 2016, Xichang;
 - 6) Forestry Bureau of Xinjin County, September 3rd, 2016, Xinjin;
 - 7) Administration of Xichang City, Administration of Qionghai Wetland Park, November 10th, 2016, Xichang;
 - 8) Administration of Xichang City, Forestry Bureau of Xichang, Tourism Bureau of Xichang City, Administration of Qionghai Wetland Park, Feb. 15th, 2017, Xichang;
 - 9) Focus Groups of 3 selected villages around Qionghai Wetland, Xichang, Feb. 15th, 2017, Xichang;
 - 10) Focus Groups of 2 selected villages around Qionghai Wetland, Feb. 16th, 2017, Xichang;
 - 11) Focus Groups of the villages around Baihetan Wetland, Feb. 18th, 2017, Xinjin;
 - 12) Focus Groups of the villagers around Qionghai Wetland, April 23rd, 2017, Xichang;
 - 13) Focus Groups of 2 selected villages around Qionghai Wetland, April 24th, 2017;
 - 14) Focus Groups of the administrative village around Baihetan Wetland, April 25th, 2017, Xinjin;
 - 15) Migrants for Baihetan Wetland Park construction, April 26th, 2017, Xinjin.Furthermore, there were informal meetings among the governmental organizations in the last 2 years.
- The project consulted the following individuals, groups and organizations.
 - 1) Representatives of 11 villages around Qionghai Wetland, representatives of one village around Baihetan Wetland, representatives of migrants for Baihetan Wetland Park construction, altogether about 170 people visited.
 - 2) Local NGOs like the Birders' Association of Chengdu, the Amateur Photographers' Association of Xichang, altogether about five local NGOs consulted.
 - 3) Two primary schools in Xichang and Xinjin.
 - 4) Governmental organizations at the city and county levels, both in Xichang and Xinjin, such as the Women's Federation, Forestry Association, Wildlife Conservation, etc.
 - 5) Scientific and academic organizations in both Chengdu and Chongqing such as Sichuan University, Chongqing University, Sichuan Academy of Forestry, Sichuan Academy of Social

Science, etc.

- Key issues discussed and critical concerns raised;

The following issues and key concerns were raised from stakeholder consultations.

1. How to seek and incorporate the knowledge and contributions of partners and stakeholders
First, partners and stakeholders should have a full understanding of the project ideas, concepts, and be encouraged to promote their own traditional knowledge and native technologies, especially farmers who have long history of utilizing wetland resources.
Second, equal information should be available to farmers, technicians of local partners and scientists engaged by the projects.
Third, timing; the project should allocate enough time for partners and stakeholders to discuss and go through procedures.
2. How to ensure that stakeholders are informed about project activities, and that stakeholders' views and concerns are taken into account by the project and are known by key decision makers.
First, the project documents generated during PPG Phase are too complicated for local partners to understand, in particular the two administrations of the wetlands.
Second, farmers' views or responses relevant to wetland conservation might not directly address the projects' requirements because the basic knowledge of both sides might be different.
3. How the Executing Entity responds to issues raised, including commitments and follow-up actions.

The Executing Entity recognizes that the issues and concerns of stakeholders are highly relevant to the project preparation and implementation and a higher priority should be given to addressing them. Promoting staff capacity to understand those issues and concerns and then to take initiatives for reformation is critical for the project implementation.

4. Project Stakeholders

The important stakeholders of the project include the wetland park management team, local communities, research institutions, local forestry bureau, local environment protection bureau, the tourism bureau and other local government agencies.

4.1 Wetland Park Management Team

- Center for Qionghai Wetland Conservation
The center is the most important partner of the project. Center for Qionghai Wetland Conservation has a strong interest in learning from external experience and to take initiatives to improve the quality of the wetland ecosystem as well as the aim to be the best demonstration of wetland management among China's national wetland parks. The center has no land tenure in and around the wetland. Comparing the center director's ambitious vision, the level of staffing is not adequate, and the budget is limited.
- Administration of Qionghai and Lushan Mountain Park
This organization has the authority to make decisions about management affairs within the wetland park on behalf of the Xichang City Government. It promotes tourism at both Qionghai and Lushan Mountain, which have both common interests and conflicts with wetland conservation.
- Xichang State-Owned Asset Management Limited

The company was established by the Government of Xichang City and owns all of the land of Qionghai National Wetland Park, most of which was purchased from the farmers. The company is responsible for the day to day operation of tourism in the wetland.

- Park Administration of Baihetan Wetland

The park administration is the corresponding organization of Center for Qionghai Wetland Conservation in Xinjin. However, the administration in Xinjin has the right of law-enforcement and therefore has a bigger influence than the center in Xichang.

4.2 Local Communities

- Farmers living around Qionghai Wetland

Qionghai Wetland is located in a basin which is suitable for farming. The Han-Chinese people have lived there and conducted farming for > 1600 years. After conducting a Rural Rapid Appraisal, we make a judgment that the majority of the 98,000 farmers who live around the wetland are Han-Chinese and they are indigenous people of the lakefront areas adjacent to Xichang-Qinghai Wetland. Due to the ideal agricultural conditions and good access to the markets in Xichang City, these farmers traditionally planted profitable cash crops and are generally thought to be richer than those farmers living in the uplands. Off-farm employment is also common among these households.

Although the construction of the Qionghai Wetland Park has reduced the negative impacts of natural disasters on the Indigenous People, farmers have found their access and links to the wetland seriously deprived or weakened due to loss of land and loss of formal and informal utilization of wetland resources.

- Farmers living in the upper watershed of Qionghai Wetland

These are Yi People who have accumulated abundant knowledge and experience about maintaining subsistence livelihoods upstream of the three rivers feeding the Qionghai Wetland. This area is mountainous with a harsh environment and poor natural condition.

From local chronicles, we found that the Yi People have lived in the upland around Qionghai Wetland for at least as long as the Han-Chinese appeared on the plain. Traditionally, the Yi Peoples' livelihood depends on a mixture of animal husbandry and extensive cultivation. Due to the harsh natural conditions, the Yi People have successfully maintained the boundary between the Yi and their Han-Chinese neighbors.

There are about 30,000 – 40,000 Yi People living in the four mountainous townships around Qionghai Wetland. According to official statistics, the Yi people's annual income from 2013 – 2016 was only 50% - 60% of the average in Xichang City and only 35% - 40% of those farmers living in or around the wetland.

Many local officers, scientists, citizens and farmers blame landslides and erosion on the Yi people's extensive cultivation and animal husbandry, despite the fact that the Yi People suffered more from natural disasters, not only in terms of animals, properties, houses and human life but also from land collapses.

A logging ban began in 1998 and, together with national ecological construction programs like the *Natural Forest Protection Program*, the *Grain for Green Program*, this has greatly improved the vegetation of the upper watershed of Qionghai Wetland. Landslides and erosion have been

reduced or controlled. In the recent 3 – 5 years, the Central Government has invested huge funds and mobilized massive human resource to tackle poverty-reduction. The living conditions of the Yi people have improved significantly.

- **Farmers living in Baihetan Wetland Park**

127 people of 65 households have been resettled due to the establishment of the Baihetan Wetland Park. Baihetan Wetland is adjacent to the government-planned New Xinjin City. Those resettled households have been given the same compensation conditions as those resettled due to urbanization. For background, farmers usually receive more favorable compensation conditions if their resettlement is caused by urbanization, compared with other reasons, such as infrastructure construction, nature reserve establishment, etc.

However, there are still 32 people of 8 households remaining within the planned boundary of the wetland park. These Han-Chinese households have a long history of utilizing the wetland for multiple uses, though the harvest from marginal land is unstable. The municipal government of Xinjin City has begun negotiations with these households but compensation agreements have not yet been reached.

4.3 Research Institutions

- **Sichuan Institute of Forestry Investigation and Planning**
Key partner in project implementation and management of the project, drafting the project framework, coordination with local government agencies, monitoring and evaluation of the project and project promotion at the provincial level
- **Universities and Research institutions**
Partners in providing technical assistance, including carrying out baseline surveys, conservation action plans, and research on species. Currently the universities and research institutions showing interest in participating in the project implementation are listed below, namely: 1) Xichang College; 2) Sichuan Agricultural University; 3) Sichuan Academy of Natural Resources; 4) the Hydro-biological Institute of Wuhan, Chinese Academy of Science; 5) Institute of Mountain Hazards and Environment, CAS; 6) the National Center for Highland Wetland Research; 7) Mianyang Normal School, and 8) Beijing Normal University.

4.4 Forestry and Grassland Bureau

- **Sichuan Forestry and Grassland Bureau**
Responsible for planning and managing the provincial Protected Area system, and conservation of fauna and flora in the province. Also responsible for wetland management. The Provincial Forestry Department will be the main executing agency of the project and will play the lead role in project implementation, management and coordination.
- **Sichuan Center for Wetland Conservation**
Key partner in project implementation, drafting the project framework, project promotion and public communication and awareness raising.
- **Forestry Bureau of Xichang City**
Key partner in project design, formulation and implementation. Also for planning and site management, outreach and work with local communities.
- **Xinjin County Forestry Bureau**
Key partner in project design, formulation and implementation. Also for planning and site management, outreach and work with local communities.

4.5 Local Environment Protection Bureau

- Xichang and Xinjin Environment Protection Bureau
The two XEPB are responsible for the environment quality of the two wetlands in Xichang and Xinjin, including quality of air, water, earth and sewage and garbage treatment and is the project's critical partner to address threats to the wetland.

4.6 NGOs

- The Birders Association
There are more and more birders in Chengdu City and Xichang City. The Birders Association has been established in the two cities for more than 10 years. The birders have an interest and opportunities to monitor the status of birds as well as the overall quality of the two wetlands. They are also potential volunteers for project implementation.
- Local schools
There are 3 – 4 primary schools and 2 middle schools located close to Qionghai Wetland, and 1 primary school close to Baihetan Wetland. According to the curriculum issued by the government at various levels, these schools place an increasing importance on environment education and help their students to understand and appreciate local ecosystems.
- World Wide Fund For Nature (WWF) China Programme
WWF is one of the world's largest and most respected independent organizations dedicated to the conservation of nature. WWF has been active in China since 1980, when it was invited by the Chinese government as the first international NGO to work on nature conservation. The Beijing office opened in 1996, and there are now 8 additional field program offices spread across China. WWF China Programs has shown a strong interest in conducting environment education in Qionghai Wetland.

4.7 Other Local Government Agencies

Besides the forestry bureaus and wetland administrations, there are also some local government agencies which have a stake in project implementation, namely, 1) The local Water Affairs Management Bureau, which is responsible for water control and regulation; 2) The local Land and Resource Bureau, which is in charge of planning and zoning; 3) Township Governments, responsible for the overall development of communities; 4) The local Meteorological Bureau, which can provide weather data and information; 5) The local Tourism Bureaus, which are the authorities for tourism planning and management in the wetland parks; 6) The local Agricultural Bureaus, which are in charge of planting and animal husbandry in and around the wetlands.

5. Stakeholder Engagement Plan

5.1 Stakeholder meetings and Consultants' visit conducted during PPG Phase

In the PPG phase, the project Executing Agencies have held at least 17 stakeholder meetings in the two wetland parks, Xichang and Xinjin respectively. The two main local partners, namely the Center for Qionghai Wetland Conservation and the Administration of Baihetan National Wetland Park, also introduced the project to the heads of the villages, schools, NGOs and local government departments.

5.2 Differentiate stakeholders into groups and take different but relevant approaches

With the identification of stakeholders and follow-up communication during the PPG phase, the project Executing Agencies have classified stakeholders into seven categories, namely: 1) The Wetland Park

Management Team; 2) Local communities; 3) Research Institutions; 4) Forestry Departments; 5) Local Environment Protection Bureaus; 6) NGOs; 7) Other Local Government Agencies.

Each group of stakeholders have their own interests and unique views. Ideally project activities during the implementation phase should involve representatives of the seven groups so as to enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of the project. According to our previous surveys, stakeholders like to work together with other stakeholders in different groups. Therefore, the project shall promote cooperation among stakeholders, in particular among those in the different groups listed above.

The education background and experience of the stakeholders vary greatly, so tailored communication approaches should be employed. Comparatively, communities have a lower literacy and therefore a greater difficulty in understanding formal documents. Focus group meetings should work hard to meet farmers' preferences. While for those with a higher literacy or a greater scientific background, the inclusion of different subjects and views are important.

Stakeholders within one specific group may compete for project resources. They may also have pre-existing conflicts. Due to the limited project resources, the project can only address those areas which may cause new conflicts or sharpen historic conflicts. A transparent information disclosure system and participatory decision-making mechanism shall be established by the project at beginning of implementation.

5.3 Establish a participatory decision-making mechanism

The project Executing Agencies strongly believe that the best way to ensure contributions from, and benefits for, stakeholders is to establish a participatory decision-making mechanism.

All the project procurement procedures, in particularly purchasing communities' services and non-reimbursable assistance, from designing, publicity, decision-making, to implementation, until the final effectiveness assessment, should involve representatives of stakeholders. Transparency will be the most critical principle during the project implementation.

The above participatory mechanism shall be developed in the project management system and then used with the demonstration villages selected by the project.

5.4 Build the Executing Agencies staffs' awareness and capacities

The success of stakeholder engagement will depend on the attitude and capacity of the staff implementing the Stakeholder Engagement Plan. The project gives high importance to enhancing staffs' understanding and appreciation of stakeholder participation and capacity to communicate with the stakeholders. During the implementation phase, timely training and reviews will be conducted to build awareness and capacity of the executing agencies' staff.

5.5 Prioritise gender mainstreaming and disadvantaged groups

It is clear that inequity exists among stakeholders of the project. As per the analysis of the Gender Mainstreaming Plan, women living in or around the two wetlands, in general, have equal rights to men in terms of utilizing wetland natural resources. Because tourism is rapidly developing, women's strengths in cooking, sanitation, cultural performance etc. are increasing their importance and relative positions in the household economy.

There are some households, whose income depends on wetland resource utilization. However, as land around the wetland has been transferred from farmers to the wetland parks, these households have not only lost their traditional livelihoods but also have difficulties transforming to new ways of making a living. The project prioritises those households having difficulty transforming their livelihoods after losing their land. In the implementation stage, the project will focus on supporting these kinds of disadvantaged stakeholders to rehabilitate farming.

6. Methods used to consult with the stakeholder groups

6.1 Combination of Semi-Structured Interviews and Questionnaire Survey

To collect more information and objectively understand stakeholders' views, the project plans to employ both semi-structured interviews and questionnaire surveys at the beginning of project implementation. Experts will design and train the staff of local project partners, in particular the Center for Qionghai Wetland Conservation and the Administration of Xinjin-Haihetan National Wetland Park, to conduct the semi-structured interviews and questionnaire surveys. Furthermore, training on Participatory Rural Appraisal will be introduced.

6.2 Focus Group Discussions

Focus Group Discussion will be applied to collect information from target stakeholders. During the implementation phase, the project will also use Focus Group Discussions to support detailed project design and evaluation. Both the farmers who use the wetland resources and the stakeholders who have potential for cooperation will be invited to discuss specific issues identified.

6.3 Conservation Agreements

The concept of Conservation Agreements is an approach to engage communities to conduct conservation actions together with outside partners. Conservation International introduced Conservation Agreements into China 11 years ago and has accumulated vast experiences on applying this approach. Conservation Agreements might be signed between the two main local project partners, namely the Center for Qionghai Wetland Conservation and the Administration of Baihetan National Wetland Park and communities. A transparent procedure, to select communities and conduct negotiations between project partners and communities, is critical when employing Conservation Agreements.

7. Description of any other engagement activities that will be undertaken

How to organize farmers and to promote their collective actions for sustainably utilizing natural resource is always an issue for projects such as *Expanding the coverage and strengthening the management of wetland protected areas in Sichuan Province, China*.

As per the experience of Conservation International, the project plans to empower the village leaders to encourage villagers to participate in the project's implementation.

In order to engage community leaders to participate actively, the project plans to provide Participatory Rural Surveys in the selected villages around the wetland and to identify community leaders who have an interest and the capacity to lead villagers to utilize wetland resources in sustainable patterns. A study tour will be arranged to build trust and a common understanding between the project's Executing Agencies, their local partners and those community leaders.

8. Timetable, Resources and Responsibilities

8.1 Develop Project Communication Strategy

- Dates: the 2nd month of implementation
- Location: Chengdu
- Responsible Staff: communication officer of the Executing Agencies
- Resources required: RMB 5,000

8.2 Build project staff's awareness and capacities

- Dates: the 2nd- 3rd month of implementation
- Location: Chengdu, Xichang, Xinjin
- Responsible Staff: Community-Based Conservation & Development Expert
- Resources required: RMB 15,000

8.3 Develop and distribute project publicity materials

- Dates: the 3rd- 5th month of implementation
- Location: Chengdu, Xichang, Xinjin
- Responsible Staff: communication officer of the Executing Agencies
- Resources required: RMB 50,000

8.4 Develop wetland resource utilization APP

- Dates: the 3rd- 5th month of implementation
- Location: Chengdu
- Responsible Staff: communication officer of the Executing Agencies
- Resources required: RMB 80,000

8.5 Establish participatory decision-making mechanism

- Dates: the 4th month of implementation
- Location: Xichang, Xinjin
- Responsible Staff: Community-Based Conservation & Development Expert
- Resources required: RMB 20,000

8.6 Conduct PRA training in selected villages including Semi-Structured Interview, questionnaire survey, focused group discussion

- Dates: the 4th- 5th month of implementation
- Location: Xichang, Xinjin
- Responsible Staff: Community-Based Conservation & Development Expert
- Resources required: RMB 50,000

8.7 Conduct Annual Stakeholder Meetings

- Dates: every November of implementation
- Location: Xichang, Xinjin
- Responsible Staff: Community-Based Conservation & Development Expert
- Resources required: RMB 15,000 per year

8.8 Participatory Monitoring

- Dates: every December of implementation
- Location: Xichang, Xinjin
- Responsible Staff: Community-Based Conservation & Development Expert
- Resources required: RMB 15,000 per year

9. Grievance Mechanism

To address the grievances associated with its implementation, the project has appointed key contact people at various levels to receive and investigate stakeholders' grievances. During the project implementation phase, an annual meeting with the participation of representatives of all stakeholders will be conducted and the grievances put forward will be discussed.

10. Monitoring and Reporting

10.1 Participatory Monitoring

The process and methodology to be used by the project is based on the prior experience of the external facilitators and documented approaches used by various organizations. The Core Monitoring Team is the main group responsible for the design and implementation of the process, the analysis of the findings and the development of the recommendations. While the process has been initially designed by the external facilitators engaged by the project, it was discussed and agreed with the Core Monitoring Team so that it would be a collectively owned process. Similarly, all findings were shared with the team and most recommendations were discussed and agreed within the team. The external facilitators managed the process and provided ideas and inputs for discussion at various stages – this included putting forward recommendations for discussion by the group.

10.2 Reporting

The Core Monitoring Team will conduct participatory monitoring every six months. The main findings will be documented and summarised into a monitoring report which will be sent out to all stakeholders of the project.

The following indicators will be monitored and reported to the CI-GEF Agency:

- Number of government agencies, civil society organizations, private sector, indigenous peoples and other stakeholder groups that have been involved in the project implementation phase on an annual basis; target is 7
- Number of persons (disaggregated by sex) that have been involved in the project implementation phase (on an annual basis); target is 600 persons with at least 35% women
- Number of engagements (e.g. meeting, workshops, consultations) with stakeholders during the project implementation phase (Twice a year); target is 10
- Percentage of stakeholders who rate as satisfactory the level at which their views and concerns are taken into account by the project; target is 80%