



<b>Project:</b>	<b>Enhancing biodiversity conservation and reducing climate vulnerability in Central Vietnam for sustainable development utilizing a landscape approach</b>	
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<b>Title:</b>	<b>Annex X: Environmental and Social Management Framework Process Framework Indigenous Peoples (Ethnic Minority) Planning Framework</b>
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<sup>1</sup> Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MONRE) is now merged with Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development into a new Ministry of Agriculture and Environment (MOAE) according to Resolution 176/2025/QH15 on the organizational structure of the Government. The XV National Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, at 9th Extraordinary Session, passed on February 18, 2025.

**WWF GEF Agency**

Environmental and Social Management Framework  
Process Framework  
Ethnic Minority Planning Framework

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## LIST OF ACRONYMS

CSO	Civil Society Organization
EM	Ethnic minority
EMDP	Ethnic minority development plan
ESMF	Environmental and Social Management Framework
ESMP	Environmental and Social Management Plan
ESS	Environmental and Social Safeguards
ESSF	Environmental and Social Safeguards Framework
FPIC	Free Prior and Informed Consent
FMB	Forest Management Board
GAP	Gender Action Plan
GEF	Global Environmental Facility
GM	Gender mainstreaming
GRM	Grievance Redress Mechanism
IPP/EMDP	Indigenous Peoples Plan or Ethnic Minority Development Plan
IPPF/EMPF	Indigenous Peoples Planning Framework or Ethnic Minority Planning Framework
LC	Local Community
LRP	Livelihood Restoration Plan
MoAE	Ministry of Agriculture and Environment
MPA	Marine Protected Area
NGOs	Non Government Organization
NBCA	Nature and Biodiversity Conservation Agency
OECMs	Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures
PA	Protected Area
PAP	Project Affected People
PF	Process Framework
PMU	Project Management Unit
PSC	Project Steering Committee
PWES	The Payment for Wetland Ecosystem Services
SOP & ESSF	Statements of Principles & Environmental and Social Safeguards Framework
SEAH	Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment
SEP	Stakeholder Engagement Plan
SIPP	Safeguards Integrated Policies and Procedures
TG-CH	Tam Giang-Cau Hai
WWF	World Wildlife Fund

# 1. INTRODUCTION

The Project “*Enhancing biodiversity conservation and reducing climate vulnerability in Central Vietnam for sustainable development utilizing a landscape approach*” (the Project) will support development of a multi-stakeholder, long-term vision for the landscape, and bring in public and private sector funding for improved management across the landscape to deliver this vision and generate triple wins for nature, climate, and people. It will take a holistic approach that recognizes the criticality of working with a wide range of national and provincial stakeholders towards shared landscape goals under a single umbrella, ensuring integration with ongoing master and provincial planning, injecting complementarity with ongoing conservation efforts and deep inclusion of the private sector and local community ownership, to achieve lasting and transformational change.

The project will incentivize, leverage, and unlock greater financial flows to financing a common landscape conservation vision. The project is expected to create and improve management across 299,500 hectares of protected areas and biodiversity corridors, restore 10,260 hectares of degraded ecosystems, and improved habitat conditions for endangered populations of Saola, Large-antlered Muntjac, and Annamite Striped Rabbit across at least 273,928 hectares of landscapes outside of the protected area estate through improved management practices. It will also mitigate at least 5.43.9 million tCO<sub>2</sub>e over 20 years and directly benefit over 3,000 people, particularly indigenous communities, through sustainable livelihoods and climate adaptation.

The project area runs along the Viet Nam-Lao PDR border, covering six provinces from Nghệ An, Ha Tinh, Quang Binh, Quang Tri, Thua Thien Hue in the North to Quang Nam in the South. It will take a holistic approach that recognizes the criticality of working with a wide range of national and provincial stakeholders towards shared landscape goals under a single umbrella, ensuring integration with ongoing master and provincial planning, injecting complementarity with ongoing conservation efforts and deep inclusion of the private sector and local community ownership, to achieve lasting and transformational change. The project will incentivize, leverage, and unlock greater financial flows to financing a common landscape conservation vision. Global environmental benefits will accrue through the project.

The overall objective of the Project is to establish a sustainable, replicable and collaborative landscape-scale conservation model to promote biodiversity conservation and reduce climate vulnerability in Central Vietnam for sustainable development. The Project comprises four interlinked components below, utilizing Global Environmental Facility (GEF)-8 levers of transformation:

- Component 1. Enabling environment for biodiversity conservation via collaborative and adaptive landscape conservation/management approach
- Component 2: Sustainable landscape management, biodiversity conservation and application of innovative tools in key globally-important wildlife habitats
- Component 3: Enhanced climate resilience and corridor connectivity
- Component 4: Awareness raising and knowledge management to improve

The Project shall be funded by the GEF with the total amount of US\$10,028,000.

Environmental and Social Safeguards Screening Tool was developed, reviewed and approved. It was rated as medium risk. This Environmental and Social Mitigation Framework, Process Framework and Ethnic

Minority Planning Framework (ESMF/PF/EMPF) shall help to address risks and potential impacts associated with the safeguard issues of: (i) Protection of Natural Habitats; (ii) Ethnic Minority (EM); (iii) Restriction of Access; (iv) Community Health, Safety and Security; (v) Physical and Cultural Resources; and other cross cutting issues of children's rights, and climate change.

This document serves as an umbrella document and also introduces, where relevant, some other safeguards instruments to be applied in this Project. These include Process Framework (PF), Indigenous People Planning Framework (IPPF) or Ethnic Minority Planning Framework (EMPF) (EMPF will be used officially in the document), as included in this ESMF. It also references safeguards instruments that are not risk related but mandatory for all projects and developed as stand-alone documents: Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP) and the project-level Grievance Mechanism. As an umbrella document and to avoid repetition, the ESMF provides background data that is also relevant for all of the safeguards instruments, including context data, legal framework and institutional arrangement / budget allocation.

While the ESMF has been developed during the project design phase and became an integral part of the project proposal (including being reflected in the project budget), it should not be seen as completely set in stone. Instead, it is intended as a 'living document' that will be regularly reviewed and updated by World Wide Fund For Nature (WWF)/ Ministry of Agriculture and Environment (MOAE) in response to changes to the project design, changes in the WWF-Viet Nam/MOAE organisational structure, changes in local context, legislation, other guidelines and practices subscribed to and as potential new risks emerge.

The ESMF shall pay specific attention to meet with the requirements of the WWF 2023 Statements of Principles and Environmental and Social Safeguards Framework (2023 SOP & ESSF) and Viet Nam regulations. ESMF shall focus on Standards on Access Restrictions, Indigenous Peoples, Protection of Natural Habitats, Physical and Cultural Resource and Community Health, Safety and Security. The ESMF includes the best practices and measures taken to avoid and mitigate identified risks, and will specify procedures for safeguards screening, including human rights due diligence, and mitigation planning when activities enter the landscape. The ESMF will help the team to implement, monitor, and evaluate the progress of mitigation actions effectively.

ESMF shall be reviewed and updated on a two year basis or in case of new environmental and social impacts and cross cutting issues.

The ESMF and appended safeguards instruments are publicly disclosed documents and demonstrate WWF/MOAE commitment to being transparent, accountable and accepting responsibility for the potential project impacts.

### 1.1. Objectives of the Environmental and Social Management Framework

The preparation of this ESMF was required in accordance with the WWF 2023 SOP & ESSF, through guidance and procedures described in WWF's Safeguards Integrated Policies and Procedures (SIPP), in order to identify and manage the environmental and social risks and impacts of the Project. The ESMF aims to outline the principles, procedures, and mitigation measures for addressing environmental and social impacts associated with the project in accordance with the laws and regulations of Vietnam of implementation and with the ESSF.

Since the precise scope of activities that will be implemented as part of the project will only be determined during the implementation phase, site-specific social and environmental impacts are uncertain at this

stage. Thus, the development of site-specific Environmental and Social Management Plans (ESMPs) is currently not feasible, and an ESMF is necessary to set out procedures for addressing potential adverse social and environmental impacts that may occur during project activities. Site-specific ESMPs will be developed pursuant to the guidance provided by this ESMF during project implementation.

The specific objectives of the ESMF include the following:

- Carry out a preliminary identification of the positive and negative social and environmental impacts and risks associated with the implementation of the Project, including any Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment (SEAH) risks.
- Outline the legal and regulatory framework that is relevant to the Project implementation.
- Specify appropriate roles and responsibilities of actors/parties involved in ESMF implementation.
- Propose a set of preliminary recommendations and measures to mitigate any negative impacts and enhance positive impacts.
- Develop a screening and assessment methodology for potential activities, that will allow an environmental/social risk classification and identification of appropriate safeguards instruments;
- Set out procedures to establish mechanisms to monitor the implementation and efficacy of the proposed mitigation measures, and
- Outline requirements related to disclosure, grievance redress, capacity building activities, and budget required for the implementation of the ESMF.

## 1.2. Objective of the Process Framework

The Project triggers the WWF's Standard on Access Restriction as it may restrict or otherwise affect access to natural resources and the livelihood activities of project affected people (PAP). This PF describes the process by which affected communities participate in identification, design, implementation and monitoring of relevant project activities and mitigation measures. The purpose of this PF is to ensure participation of PAP while recognizing and protecting their rights and interests and ensuring that they do not become worse off as a result of the project. Specifically, the PF will:

- Describe activities that may involve new or more stringent restrictions on use of natural resources in the project area.
- Establish the mechanism through which the local communities can contribute to the project design, implementation and monitoring.
- Identify potential negative impacts of the restriction on the surrounding communities, including any gendered differences or SEAH risks associated with access restriction or differing uses of natural resources.
- Specify the criteria for eligibility of economically displaced persons to receive compensation benefits and development assistance (no physical displacement will be allowed under this project or any WWF project).
- Describe the mitigation measures required to assist the economically displaced persons in their efforts to improve their livelihoods, or at least to restore them, in real terms, while maintaining the sustainability of the landscape/seascape type, will be identified.
- Describe grievance procedure or process for resolving disputes to natural resource use restrictions.
- Describe the participatory monitoring arrangements with neighboring community members.

As the project intends to enhance the livelihoods and resilience of IPs<sup>2</sup> and local communities, the allocation of project benefits among local community members is particularly important. The intent of the framework is to ensure transparency and equity in the planning and implementation of activities by the project. This framework details the principles and processes for assisting communities to identify and manage any potential negative impacts of the project activities. Since the exact social impacts will only be identified during project implementation, the PF will ensure that mitigation of any negative impacts from project investments occurs through a participatory process involving the affected stakeholders and rights holders. It will also ensure that any desired changes by the communities in the ways in which IPs exercise customary tenure rights in the project sites would not be imposed, but should emerge from a consultative process.

### 1.3. Objective of the Ethnic Minority Planning Framework (EMPF)

The target project areas include more than 50 ethnic minority (EM) groups. Most EM groups reside in rural, mountainous areas. Some key EM groups include Thai, Tho, Kho Mu, Mong, Muong, Tay, Lao, Chut, Nung, Bru-Van Kieu, Ta Oi, Pako, Co Tu, Hoa, Co Tu, Xo Dang, Gie Trieng, Co, Mnong, Co Ho, Ma, Chu Ru. All these EM groups have their own language however the Viet Nam language is the official language and popular for all EM persons. They are considered as Indigenous Peoples (IP) under WWF 2023 SOP & ESSF. Due to their presence, WWF requires additional consideration and support for their rights consistent with both WWF's policies and the recognition afforded to them by the Government of Vietnam (GOV). As such, EMPF thus has to be prepared. Based on WWF's Safeguard Standard on IPs, the people affected by this project would thus be considered Indigenous, ethnic or tribal minorities. An Ethnic Minority Planning Framework (EMPF) thus has to be prepared.

The objective of the EMPF is to clarify the principles, procedures and organizational arrangements to be applied to IPs for the Project. This framework will serve as a guideline to the project team to:

- Enable them to prepare an Ethnic Minority Development Plan (EMDP) for specific activities proposed consistent with SIPP and Procedures.
- Engage affected EMs in a Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) process.
- Enable EMs to benefit equitably from the project.

### 1.4. ESMF/PF/EMPF Preparation Methodology

The ESMF/PF/EMPF was prepared based on the following information:

- Literature review of existing policies and legislation of Vietnam, WWF and GEF Policies and procedures, and other ESMFs on the topics of protected areas (PA) and biodiversity conservation.
- Analysis of relevant national policies and legislation that are likely to have an impact on the implementation of the project.
- Field visits and consultation with EM groups and Local Communities in the project landscape.
- Interviews with stakeholders from relevant Government agencies, local authorities, Municipalities, NGOs, private sector companies. and WWF and MOAE/NBCA staff.

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<sup>2</sup> In the Vietnam context, the IP has been replaced by EM for years and accepted by development donors like WB, ADB, UNDP, GEF... As such, EM term is used in this ESMF.

The ESMF/PF/EMPF draws on consultations results, and on the relevant laws and regulations of Vietnam and the ESSF and SIPP. The relevant laws and regulations of Vietnam related to safeguards apply to the project since it is implemented within the jurisdiction of Vietnam. WWF's SIPP apply since the project is managed by WWF, which is an implementing agency of GEF.

In order to avoid duplications and for ease of reference, the ESMF, PF, and EMPF are combined into a single document.

## 2. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

### 2.1. Project objectives and components

The overall objective of the Project is to establish a sustainable, replicable and collaborative landscape-scale conservation model to promote biodiversity conservation and reduce climate vulnerability in Central Vietnam for sustainable development. The Project comprises four interlinked components utilizing GEF-8 levers of transformation.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES/OUTPUTS	PLANNED ACTIVITIES
<b>Component 1: Enabling environment for biodiversity conservation via collaborative and adaptive landscape conservation/management approach</b>	
<b>Outcome 1.1:</b> Strengthened legal, policy and financial framework enabling a replicable landscape conservation model in Central Vietnam for improved ecosystem functions, climate resilience and biodiversity outcomes	
<i>Output 1.1.1:</i> A collaborative and gender inclusive landscape conservation working group established under the national Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (BES) partnership platform on biodiversity and ecosystem services to advance multi-level planning and coordination in high-value Central Vietnam landscapes	A1.1.1.1 Identify, model and replicate governance structure and operating framework for the BES landscape conservation working group based on the nature-based tourism working group
	A1.1.1.2 Facilitate gender-responsive multi-stakeholder dialogues, ensuring participation from government agencies, local communities, CSOs, and the private sector, and develop national- and provincially-owned strategies to enhance inclusivity in landscape conservation planning. The latter will be aligned to national biodiversity policies, OECM frameworks, and KMGBF 30x30 targets
	A1.1.1.3 Establish a monitoring and evaluation framework to track working group progress and ensure a feedback mechanism is established for landscape-level interventions.
<i>Output 1.1.2</i> Harmonized policies, guidelines and a singular governance framework, inclusive	A1.1.2.1 A gap analysis and recommendations to align existing provincial policies and guidelines with national biodiversity strategies and global conservation targets

EXPECTED OUTCOMES/OUTPUTS	PLANNED ACTIVITIES
<p>of gender considerations, to promote effective landscape management with gender considerations</p>	<p>A.1.1.2.2 Establish a gender-responsive provincial coordination and decision-making mechanism to facilitate multi-sectoral collaboration among provincial governments, civil society, and private sector actors, while ensuring active participation from women, ethnic minority, and marginalized communities</p>
	<p>A.1.1.2.3 Develop standardized guidelines for biodiversity conservation and sustainable land-use management to be implemented across the target provinces</p>
	<p>A.1.1.2.4 Building on the foundations from other projects, existing tools and government IT architecture, develop a digital landscape-scale biodiversity and climate resilience information-sharing platform, supporting data-driven policy adjustments, decision making and real-time monitoring</p>
<p><i>Output 1.1.3</i> Scoping of innovative and gender appropriate financial mechanisms and tools to incentivize investment in effective landscape management and biodiversity conservation, with transparent performance criteria</p>	<p>A1.1.3.1 Assess and conduct feasibility for multi-level financial tools that integrate blended finance, biodiversity credits, and impact investment models to attract private sector and philanthropic contributions</p>
	<p>A1.1.3.2 Develop plans to expand and optimize the PFES, PMES and PWES model(s), ensuring that revenues benefit local communities, particularly ethnic minorities, and women-led enterprises</p>
	<p>A1.1.3.3 Review, adapt, operationalize and document experiences with financial mechanisms as appropriate (such as biodiversity offsets and green bonds among others) as mechanisms for funding landscape conservation, leveraging government climate commitments and compliance against national environmental regulations</p>
	<p>A1.1.3.4 Develop, test and refine a results-based budgeting framework for biodiversity finance, ensuring efficient allocation, transparency, and measurable conservation outcomes</p>
<p><i>Output 1.1.4</i> Guidelines, regulations and other instruments, inclusive of gender considerations, including potential revisions to the Law on Biodiversity recommended for integrated biodiversity and natural resources management</p>	<p>A 1.1.4.1 Assess and recommend revisions to national and provincial guidelines for biodiversity and natural resource management, including OECM identification, restoration, and governance</p>
	<p>A 1.1.4.2 Strengthen institutional mechanisms for biodiversity and land-use governance, ensuring multi-sectoral coordination among MONRE, MARD, and provincial authorities leveraging appropriate mechanisms established through Outputs 1.1.1 and 1.1.2</p>

EXPECTED OUTCOMES/OUTPUTS	PLANNED ACTIVITIES
	A 1.1.4.3 Mainstream biodiversity conservation and ecosystem-based management strategies into provincial land-use and development plans, ensuring alignment with Vietnam’s National Biodiversity Strategy
	A 1.1.4.4 Explore gender-responsive training programs for forest enterprises and community-based user groups to enhance sustainable forest and wetland management. Through facilitated workshops, technical support, and capacity-building efforts, provincial actors, including PPCs, DOAE, and local stakeholders, will be equipped to implement the framework effectively, fostering long-term policy coherence and institutional coordination
	A 1.1.4.5 Conduct a legal gap analysis to identify inconsistencies and ambiguities in biodiversity governance, focusing on OECM implementation, conservation financing, and wildlife protection
	A 1.1.4.6 Draft gender-responsive policy recommendations for streamlining protected area classifications, integrating OECMs into national and provincial planning, and clarifying wildlife conservation mandates
	A 1.1.4.7 Facilitate multi-stakeholder consultations, ensuring broad participation from government agencies, forest enterprises, ethnic minority communities, and private sector actors to identify implications refine the legal amendments
	A 1.1.4.8 Develop use cases and simulations for the implementation of legal reforms in key landscapes, demonstrating and documenting how revised biodiversity laws can improve enforcement, coordination, and conservation financing mechanisms before national adoption.
<b>Component 2: Sustainable landscape management, biodiversity conservation and application of innovative tools in key globally-important wildlife habitats</b>	
<b>Outcome 2.1</b> Law enforcement and criminal justice system capacities to combat wildlife crime are strengthened, and domestic and international cooperation is improved to disrupt poaching and trafficking networks	
<i>Output 2.1.1</i> A comprehensive and gender responsive 5- and 10-year multi-level landscape financing strategy covering priority measures for the Central Vietnam Landscape	A2.1.1.1 Conduct a financial needs assessment to evaluate biodiversity and landscape financing gaps, integrating findings into the multi-level investment strategy
	A2.1.1.2 Develop a multi-tiered landscape investment strategy that aligns with Vietnam’s NBSAP, national climate finance policies, and international biodiversity financing commitments, ensuring integration of public, private, and blended finance mechanisms

EXPECTED OUTCOMES/OUTPUTS	PLANNED ACTIVITIES
	<p>A2.1.1.3 Establish a landscape-scale biodiversity finance platform, bringing together government, financial institutions, private sector investors, and local communities to co-develop public-private partnerships (PPPs) and sustainable investment pipelines for conservation and climate adaptation. This activity will also engage private sector actors and financial institutions to facilitate public-private partnerships (PPPs) for sustainable landscape management investments</p> <p>A2.1.1.4 Establish a multi-stakeholder landscape-level conservation investment fund leveraging WWF’s NbS-OP to finance landscape priorities</p> <p>A2.1.1.5 Establish a performance-based financing model, ensuring transparent and accountable fund allocation linked to conservation outcomes, ecosystem restoration, and climate adaptation benefits.</p>
<p><i>Output 2.1.2</i> A financing plan for the different landscape components with built-in incentives and crowdsourcing model</p>	<p>A2.1.2.1 Scope, assess feasibility and develop tailored financing models for protected areas, OECMs, biodiversity corridors, and ecosystem restoration initiatives, ensuring alignment with national priorities and global biodiversity commitments;</p> <p>A2.1.2.2 Based on Output 1.1.3, operationalize PES and biodiversity offset mechanisms and other innovative tools as appropriate, to attract private sector investment</p> <p>A2.1.2.3 Integrate financial incentives for conservation-compatible livelihoods, ensuring that local communities, particularly women and ethnic minorities, benefit from biodiversity conservation efforts.</p>
<p>Output 2.1.3 Operationalized financial partnerships to mobilize support for landscape and biodiversity management and conservation strategies</p>	<p>A2.1.2.1. Assess feasibility and develop performance-based financial agreements with provincial governments and PA administration units to ensure results-driven investments in biodiversity protection and restoration</p> <p>A2.1.2.2. Facilitate co-financing arrangements with multilateral organizations, climate adaptation funds, and conservation trust funds, ensuring a diversified financial portfolio for sustained conservation efforts</p> <p>A2.1.2.3. Technical assistance to local financial institutions in designing green finance products, such as microloans for biodiversity-friendly enterprises, community forest stewardship programs, and ecotourism investments</p>

EXPECTED OUTCOMES/OUTPUTS	PLANNED ACTIVITIES
	A2.1.2.4 Integrate landscape financing models into provincial and national economic planning, ensuring a cohesive framework that links conservation finance with broader development objectives
<p><i>Output 2.1.4</i> A complimentary fund for community-based and woman-centric pilot initiative(s) under a recently established finance mechanism in Central Vietnam</p>	A2.1.4.1: Assess the potential and feasibility for a gender-responsive revolving grant mechanism to support community-led conservation initiatives, ensuring access to finance for women and marginalized groups involved in biodiversity-friendly livelihoods, and develop if feasible.
	A2.1.4.2: If 2.1.4.1. is feasible, pilot and scale nature-based micro-enterprises for women-led cooperatives and indigenous communities, integrating ecotourism, non-timber forest product (NTFP) value chains, and sustainable agriculture practices.
	A2.1.4.3: Facilitate financial literacy and capacity-building programs for women and local conservation groups, enabling them to access funding, manage enterprises, and participate in decision-making on landscape management.
<p><i>Output 2.1.5</i> Development and implement of PWES guidance in TG-CH Wetland Nature Reserve to unlock financial potential of wetland conservation</p>	A2.1.5.1: Conduct a feasibility study to assess ecosystem service valuation, potential revenue streams, and willingness-to-pay mechanisms from beneficiaries such as aquaculture, tourism, and water supply companies;
	A2.1.5.2: Develop legal and policy recommendations to integrate PWES into national biodiversity finance strategies and provincial development plans, ensuring compliance with Vietnam’s Law on Biodiversity and PES regulations
	A2.1.5.3: Recommend a governance framework, including a multi-stakeholder PWES management board, to oversee revenue collection, fund distribution, and performance monitoring
	A2.1.5.4: Pilot PWES schemes with key user groups in the TG-CH Wetland Nature Reserve, assessing impacts on conservation, local livelihoods, and economic sustainability
	A2.1.5.5: Design and implement capacity-building programs for local authorities, protected area managers, and community-based organizations to manage and monitor PWES effectively
<p><b>Outcome 2.2</b> Increased management effectiveness across 383,564 ha of PAs in Central Vietnam</p>	
<p><i>Output 2.2.1</i> Capacity in management effectiveness, governance, and law enforcement of proposed PA management</p>	<p>A2.2.1.1: Develop and institutionalize a standardized training program for management boards of PAs, BCAs, OECMs, and wetland reserves, focusing on biodiversity conservation, enforcement protocols, and gender-responsive governance</p>

EXPECTED OUTCOMES/OUTPUTS	PLANNED ACTIVITIES
boards, BCAs, OECM sites, and Wetland Nature Reserves collectively improved to reduce threats to flagship species and wildlife through technical assistance and gender equality	A2.2.1.2: Enhance inter-agency collaboration and coordination mechanisms between law enforcement agencies, forest management units, and local communities to improve intelligence-sharing, surveillance, and rapid response to illegal activities
	A2.2.1.3: Integrate SMART (Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool) patrolling systems and wildlife crime monitoring into PA and BCA enforcement strategies, incorporating community-led monitoring programs where feasible
	A2.2.1.4: Provide technical support to strengthen OECM management, ensuring governance structures are equipped to fulfil conservation mandates and align with national biodiversity strategies
	A2.2.1.5: Expand gender-responsive law enforcement training to include wildlife rangers, forest protection officers, and conservation stakeholders, improving capacity for adaptive governance and inclusive decision-making
	A2.2.1.6: procure priority equipment to enable SMART patrols and improve METT scores in each province
<b>Outcome 2.3</b> Connectivity between key protected areas and/or special use forests, covering at least 58,786 50 ha, targeted for improvement through guidance on the creation of ecological corridors/Biosphere Reserves/OECMs	
<i>Output 2.3.1</i> Feasibility studies for enhancing contiguity and establishing transboundary connectivity between landscapes (such as Lao PDR as appropriate), based on integrated landscape management principles approaches and innovative planning tools	A2.3.1.1: Conduct ecological and socio-economic assessments of potential biodiversity corridors to determine feasibility and alignment with national and provincial conservation goals
	A2.3.1.2: Map and assess existing and potential corridors, integrating data from remote sensing, GIS modeling, and local knowledge from protected area managers and communities
	A2.3.1.3: Develop policy and governance recommendations for the formal recognition and management of inter-provincial and transboundary connectivity zones
	A2.3.1.4: Pilot interventions in priority corridors, including habitat restoration, sustainable land-use practices, and co-management approaches with local communities
	A2.3.1.5: Establish multi-stakeholder dialogue platforms under the BES, for cross-sector coordination, linking conservation authorities, provincial governments, and private sector actors to enhance connectivity planning.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES/OUTPUTS	PLANNED ACTIVITIES
<p><i>Output 2.3.2</i> Improvement of effectiveness of corridor management plans</p>	<p>A2.3.2.1: Conduct a detailed assessment of corridor functionality, identifying key gaps in ecological connectivity and governance structures</p>
	<p>A2.3.2.2: Develop and implement monitoring frameworks for target species and habitat conditions to inform adaptive management decisions</p>
	<p>A2.3.2.3: Strengthen cross-provincial cooperation mechanisms for joint corridor management, including standardized regulations and enforcement strategies;</p>
	<p>A2.3.2.4: Support community-led conservation initiatives in corridor areas, integrating sustainable livelihood options to reduce dependency on forest exploitation</p>
<p><b>Outcome 2.4</b> Improved integrated landscape and land-use planning and restoration measures at identified OECM sites to support high-value biodiversity and threatened species, leveraging gender-responsive community-based co-management measures to improve ecological and community benefits</p>	
<p><i>Output 2.4.1</i> Community and women’s engagement and other creative approaches for pilot program establishment and development of an effective OECM management mechanism in Central Vietnam</p>	<p>A2.4.1.1: support an OECM recognition process, ensuring sites recognized as OECMs are integrated into the landscape-level planning</p>
	<p>A2.4.1.2: Integrate OECMs into provincial land-use and conservation planning, ensuring long-term sustainability</p>
	<p>A2.4.1.3: Identify and pilot community-managed OECM models, integrating co-management frameworks with local authorities</p>
	<p>A2.4.1.4: training programs for local communities and women’s groups to manage OECM sites effectively.</p>
<p><i>Output 2.4.2</i> Innovations tested and proliferated for wildlife conservation, landscape management and human wildlife conflict</p>	<p>A2.4.2.1: Pilot smart patrol and real-time wildlife monitoring systems in key conservation areas;</p>
	<p>A2.4.2.2: Develop and implement community-based behavioural change (risk reduction), response and mitigation mechanisms for human-wildlife conflict management</p>
	<p>A2.4.2.3: Promote ecological restoration approaches, including assisted natural regeneration and habitat corridors; and</p>
	<p>A2.4.2.4: Scale up conservation-friendly agricultural practices that minimize human-wildlife conflicts.</p>
<p><i>Output 2.4.3</i> Sustainable livelihoods supported for local</p>	<p>A2.4.3.1: Develop sustainable, biodiversity-friendly value chains for NTFPs, eco-tourism, and fisheries</p>

EXPECTED OUTCOMES/OUTPUTS	PLANNED ACTIVITIES
forest, mangrove and wetland dependent communities, inclusive of gender considerations	A2.4.3.3: Support women-led enterprises focused on forest and wetland-based sustainable livelihoods
	A2.4.3.3: Implement pilot programs for climate-resilient agroforestry and sustainable aquaculture in target provinces.
<b>Component 3: Development of Local Community Well-being in Harmony with Nature</b>	
<b>Outcome 3.1: Enhanced climate resilience in and around high conservation value forested landscapes and wetlands</b>	
<i>Output 3.1.1</i> Assessment of climate vulnerability for Central Vietnam to identify areas significantly impacted by climate change, degraded forests, mangroves and wetlands to underpin restoration efforts	A3.1.1.1 Conduct a spatial analysis of climate-vulnerable ecosystems using remote sensing, GIS, and community-based assessments to determine the most at-risk areas and those most suitable for restoration
	A3.1.1.2 Identify priority restoration areas based on carbon sequestration potential, aligning with Vietnam’s climate mitigation commitments
	A3.1.1.3 Develop an adaptive management framework for integrating climate resilience into landscape restoration efforts, ensuring that interventions respond to future climate uncertainties.
<i>Output 3.1.2</i> Study on feasibility of biodiversity credit for policy support	A3.1.2.1 Conduct a policy and market assessment to determine the viability of biodiversity credits in Vietnam’s conservation finance landscape
	A3.1.2.1 Develop recommendations for integrating biodiversity credits into Vietnam’s biodiversity finance mechanisms, ensuring alignment with PES and carbon market strategies
	A3.1.2.1 Engage private sector actors and financial institutions to explore potential investment models and risk mitigation strategies for biodiversity credit implementation.
<i>Output 3.1.3:</i> Site selection and restoration of degraded forests, mangroves and important wetlands leveraging nature-based solutions, increasing carbon sequestration and realizing carbon benefits to benefit long-term population viability of keystone, and threatened species	A3.1.3.1 Inclusive consultations with communities, and following ESMF, ensure restoration has the buy-in of those consulted
	A3.1.3.2 Develop site-specific restoration plans for degraded forests, mangroves, and wetlands, integrating indigenous species selection, reforestation techniques, and pest/disease management
	A3.1.3.3 Implement riparian and coastal wetland restoration in the TG-CH lagoon system, improving connectivity and ecosystem resilience

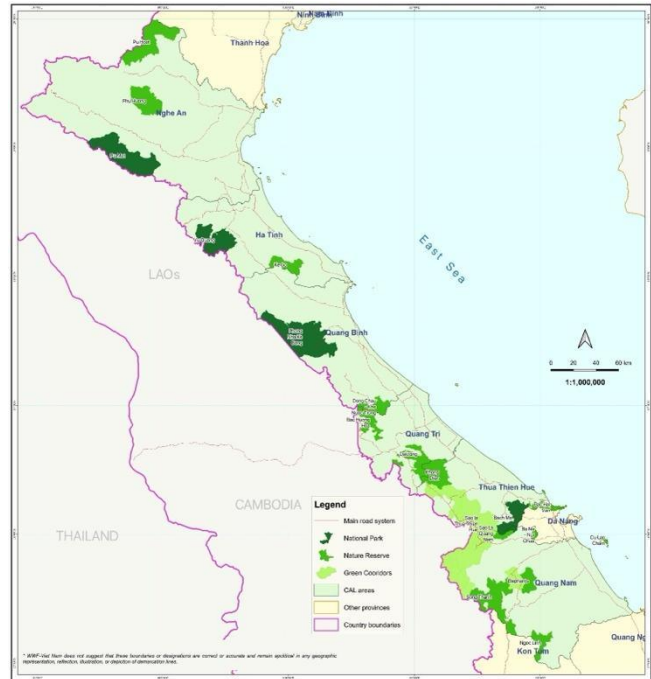
EXPECTED OUTCOMES/OUTPUTS	PLANNED ACTIVITIES
	A3.1.3.4 Monitor carbon sequestration benefits, ensuring alignment with Vietnam’s NDCs and emission reduction targets.
<p><i>Output 3.1.4:</i> Best practice approaches to forest, mangrove and wetland restoration and reforestation/sustainable harvesting documented, and capacities enhanced through training and locally-relevant and gender responsive guidelines</p>	A3.1.4.1 Develop and disseminate best-practice guidelines for forest, mangrove, and wetland restoration, tailored to the ecological and socio-economic conditions of target sites
	A3.1.4.2 Conduct training programs for local communities, government agencies, and private-sector stakeholders, ensuring inclusive participation in restoration planning and implementation
	A3.1.4.3 Establish demonstration sites for sustainable reforestation and wetland management, showcasing innovative restoration techniques that optimize biodiversity and carbon benefits.
<p><i>Output 3.1.5:</i> On-the-ground application of nationally-tailored methodology for measuring carbon stocks applied, demonstrated and validated for the target areas in Central Vietnam</p>	A3.1.5.1 Apply Vietnam’s tailored carbon measurement methodology across forests, mangroves, and wetlands, ensuring accurate quantification of sequestration benefits
	A3.1.5.2 Conduct baseline, mid-term, and end-of-project assessments to validate carbon stock changes in the target provinces
	A3.1.5.3 Integrate carbon measurement findings into Vietnam’s NDCs and link with emerging carbon markets and PES schemes
<p><b>Component 4: Awareness raising and knowledge management to improve landscape management</b></p>	
<p><b>Outcome 4.1:</b> Communication and knowledge management strategies developed and implemented to share and publicize project’s results and advancements</p>	
<p><i>Output 4.1.1</i> Mechanism for impact management and dissemination of both a public-private financing model for climate, nature and people benefits, including women, and OECM model in Central Vietnam</p>	A4.1.1.1 Establish a multi-stakeholder financing governance body to oversee investment alignment with biodiversity and climate goals
	A4.1.1.2 Develop a financial reporting and transparency framework for tracking investment outcomes in landscape management.
<p><i>Output 4.1.2:</i> A gender responsive communication strategy developed and under implementation to share and publicize project’s results and advancements</p>	A4.1.2.1. Develop designated project website, targeted communication materials, including policy briefs, multimedia content, and community-level information sessions
	A4.1.2.2 Organize gender-inclusive knowledge-sharing events, such as workshops and regional dialogues, to disseminate project outcomes

EXPECTED OUTCOMES/OUTPUTS	PLANNED ACTIVITIES
	A4.1.2.3 Implement social media campaigns and community outreach initiatives to enhance public awareness of biodiversity conservation and climate resilience.
<i>Output 4.1.3</i> Replication strategy developed for the Plain of Reeds important wetland and, at larger scale, for the Mekong Delta Landscape, inclusive of gender considerations	A4.1.3.1 Conduct feasibility studies to assess the applicability of Central Vietnam conservation models in the Mekong Delta;
	A4.1.3.2 Develop a roadmap for policy and institutional integration to enable replication at different administrative levels.
<i>Output 4.1.4</i> A gender responsive knowledge management plan developed and implemented, including South-South	A4.1.4.1 Develop a centralized knowledge plan to house research, case studies, and policy recommendations; (ii); and (iii)
	A4.1.4.2 Organize exchange programs and study tours with conservation practitioners from other countries in the region
	A4.1.4.3 Integrate knowledge-sharing activities into existing biodiversity and climate resilience networks to facilitate cross-learning
<b>Monitoring and Evaluation (M&amp;E)</b>	
<b>Outcome</b> Project implemented according to Results-Based Management principles	
<i>Output ME1</i> Project M&E system designed and operational	
<i>Output ME2</i> Project evaluations completed on time to support project delivery and knowledge sharing	
<i>Output ME3</i> Effective M&E contributes to efficient decision making and adaptive project management	
<i>Output ME4</i> Monitoring of Gender and Safeguards Action Plans	

2.2. Project Area Profile

The project area is located in the Central Vietnam Landscape (CVL) which is a natural transboundary biodiversity corridor, covering Nghe An, Ha Tinh, Quang Binh, Quang Tri, Thua Thien Hue, Quang Nam,

and Da Nang city. These areas have been selected based on their global biodiversity significance, urgent conservation needs, and high potential for integrating sustainable land management and climate resilience strategies. During implementation, the exact locations will be determined during the inception and planning phase during the first three months of implementation but expected to cover a portion of the 639,274 hectares within the PA estate and 708,784 hectares outside the PA estate, as well as target a portion of the 78,104 hectares available for restoration. The targeted project area included in Table 1 and project location in Figure 1



**Figure 1- Project area**

**Table 1: Project Area profile**

Provinces	Characteristics
Nghe An	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 16,490 km<sup>2</sup>, is home to Pu Mat National Park, a core biodiversity area within the Western Nghe An Biosphere Reserve.</li> <li>- This province is a stronghold for critically endangered species, including the Saola, Large-antlered Muntjac, and Annamite Striped Rabbit, but faces intense pressure from deforestation, poaching, and land-use change. The project is expected to strengthen protected area management and expand forest landscape restoration initiatives to reconnect fragmented habitats.</li> </ul>
Ha Tinh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 6,026 km<sup>2</sup>, contains several critical biodiversity corridors, linking Pu Mat National Park with Ke Go Nature Reserve and Vu Quang National Park.</li> <li>- These landscapes are essential for large mammal migrations but remain highly vulnerable to illegal hunting and habitat degradation. The project will consider focusing on community-based conservation programs, empowering local stakeholders to manage and protect buffer zones and ecological corridors</li> </ul>
Quang Binh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 8,066 km<sup>2</sup> of diverse terrain, includes Phong Nha-Ke Bang National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage Site renowned for its limestone karst ecosystems and extensive cave systems. While its national parks provide strong conservation frameworks, forest degradation remains a key concern due to unsustainable timber extraction and shifting agriculture.</li> <li>- The project is anticipated to enhance sustainable forest management strategies, reinforcing protection mechanisms through nature-based tourism and conservation finance mechanisms such as PES, including PFES and PWES mechanisms as well.</li> </ul>
Quang Tri	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 4,745 km<sup>2</sup>, contains Huong Hoa Nature Reserve and Bac Huong Hoa Protected Area, essential for the survival of highly endangered primates and bird species. This province has suffered significant forest loss due to agricultural expansion and past wartime impacts.</li> <li>- Here, the project is expected to invest in forest landscape restoration and agroforestry models, promoting biodiversity-friendly land-use practices that balance conservation with economic development</li> </ul>
Thua Thien Hue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 5,033 km<sup>2</sup>, is home to Bach Ma National Park and the Tam Giang-Cau Hai Wetland Nature Reserve, Southeast Asia's largest brackish lagoon system. The wetland and coastal ecosystems in this province are crucial for migratory bird populations and fisheries, yet face increasing threats from pollution, overfishing, and climate-induced salinity intrusion.</li> <li>- The project expects to implement adaptive management strategies, combining coastal ecosystem restoration, sustainable fisheries management, and community-driven conservation programs.</li> </ul>
Quang Nam	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 10,438 km<sup>2</sup>, includes Song Thanh National Park, a priority site for the conservation of endemic and endangered species in the Central Annamites. This province experiences severe fragmentation, with roads and hydropower projects disrupting wildlife corridors.</li> <li>- The project is expected to explore possibilities for enhanced protected area connectivity, ensuring that ecological corridors remain functional for species movement while supporting biodiversity-friendly development initiatives.</li> </ul>
Da Nang	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A centrally governed city covering 1,285 km<sup>2</sup>, plays a strategic role in regional conservation planning and sustainable development. Despite its urban setting, Da Nang contains Son Tra Nature Reserve, a critical habitat for the Red-shanked Douc Langur, one of the world's most endangered primates. The project will integrate urban biodiversity conservation strategies, demonstrating how nature-based solutions can be implemented in growing metropolitan areas.</li> </ul>

The region is home to iconic species, including the Saola (*Pseudoryx nghetinhensis*), Large-antlered Muntjac (*Muntiacus vuquangensis*), and Annamite Striped Rabbit (*Nesolagus timminsi*), among others. This high level of diversity is significant for a relatively small country of 33.12 million hectares (ha)<sup>3,4</sup>. The Central Vietnam Landscape is home to 134 mammal species, more than 500 bird species and 902 species of endemic plants<sup>5,6</sup>.

The CVL also comprises Tam Giang-Cau Hai (TG-CH), the largest brackish lagoon in Southeast Asia and an important wetland nature reserve in Thua Thien Hue. Recent surveys identified total 1,296 species with 41 rare species in this area, included 295 phytoplankton species, 50 vascular plant species, 73 species of seaweeds and aquatic plants, 119 zooplankton species, 215 sea bottom fauna species, 361 species of fish and 137 species of birds. Among these species, there are several species included in the IUCN Red List and Viet Nam Red Book such as the Yellow-breasted bunting (*Emberiza aureola*) and the Asian dowitcher (*Limnodromus semipalmatus*), as well as many species of turtle, snakes, seagrass and many high-value emblematic species and untapped cultural value.

**Key environmental issues in project areas.** Climatic events, droughts or floods. Climatic changes over the past decades are more visible (increased average and heavy rainfall, fewer but severe typhoons, severe droughts, increased average temperatures and heatwaves). The frequency of human induced disasters has also increased sharply and cost significant losses, long-term impacts. 2020 severe typhoons caused an estimated damage of VND 11,000 billion for Quang Nam province only, whereas the total province GDP is VND 61,000 billion. Forest loss, failure of small and medium scale hydropower in regulating flows during heavy rain resulted in flood in low land and landslides in mountainous and hilly areas in provinces of Quang Tri, Thua Thien Hue and Quang Nam.

Droughts have prolonged with most notable evidence of underperformance of hydropower in Quang Nam province due to lack of water. Crop patterns have changed markedly from 3-crops to 2-crops per annum productivity, crop yield and water for crops are facing great challenges in the context of frequent and prolonged droughts. New diseases have appeared in livestock raising.

Land degradations, soil erosion. Acacia and rubber have been promoted as key timber species. Acacia has been effective in improving farmers' income in the short term however most acacia plantation practices are unsustainable. Farmers would burn their forest after each cycle of harvesting. Degradation due to conversion of nature forest, agricultural lands to acacia has been noted. In addition, with low capacity in water retention and regulation, mono plantation of acacia affected the soil quality in nearby fields. This species is also prone to storms and increases the risks of income fluctuation for farmers. The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) has directed provinces to strategically move to large timber species, however this is an ambitious plan as farmers are attracted by the income from acacia mono plantation. In Quang Nam province, in the drought season from Jan to April, salt intrusion is increasingly

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<sup>3</sup> Thuaire B, Allanic Y, Hoang Viet A, Le Khac Q, Luu Hong T, Nguyen The C, Nguyen Thi T (2021). Assessing the biodiversity in Viet Nam – Analysis of the impacts from the economic sectors. WWF-Viet Nam, Ha Noi, Viet Nam

<sup>4</sup> Duwe VK et al. (2022). Contributions to the Biodiversity of Vietnam. Biodiversity Data Journal 10.

<sup>5</sup> Le, X. T., Pham, T. T., Nguyen, T. V., & Nguyen, T. T. (2018). Assessing the status of biodiversity conservation in Central Vietnam. Journal of Environmental Management, 223, 35-44.

<sup>6</sup> <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/44c93664b88742be943c534e8d031728>

affecting agriculture production. Floods, on the other hand, are affecting most Central Provinces from Ha Tinh to Quang Nam.

The potential geographic area within the landscape/seascape of the Project:[1]

**Table 2: Potential Project Location**

Provinces	Potential locations / planning	Area (ha)	Tentative Location
Nghệ An	- Natural forest corridor with high conservation value connecting Puxailaileng area to Pu Mat National Park of Ky Son Protection Forest	62.475,4	07 commune of Kỳ Sơn district
Ha Tinh	- Biodiversity corridor linking Vu Quang National Park and Giang Man forest range	80.290	09 commune of 03 Hương Khê, Vu Quang, Hương Sơn districts
Quang Binh	- high biodiversity area of tropical evergreen closed forests of Quang Binh	100.140	12 communes of 03 Tuyên Hòa, Minh Hoá and Quang Ninh districts
Quang Tri	- two existing nature reserves of Bac Huong Hoa and Dakrong	97.566	12 communes of 2 district in the corridor and within nature reserves
Thua Thien Hue	- biodiversity corridor linking Sao La Species and Habitat Reserve and Phong Điền Nature Reserve - Tam Giang – Cau Hai wetland protected area and surrounding important ecological areas as mangrove forests, Bach Ma – Tam Giang natural ecosystems	77.640 (corridor) 2.071 (TG-CH)	10 communes of 2 districts in corridor
Quang Nam	- biodiversity corridor linking Sao La Species and Habitat Reserve, Sông Thanh National Park, Nong Son Elephant Species and Habitat Reserve and Bac Tra My	122.938 (corridor), 17.838 (Bac Tra My), 18.977 (Elephant reserve)	07 commune of 04 district in corridor (elephant)
Da Nang	- Ba Na - Nui Chua nature reserve.	30.420	Hoa Vang and Dong Giang district

Source: Project Document

### 2.3. Demographic and economic information

There have nearly 10 million people living in project area that runs along Lao border, expansion of field work as well as advocacy level will help us to increase the chance of saving other endangered and iconic species of the region and the diverse ecosystem of nearly 731,446 ha of SUFs, 370,000 ha of water protection forests and community forests throughout Nghe An, Ha Tinh, Quang Binh, Quang Tri, Thua Thien Hue, and Quang Nam where their footprint and ecological impacts are linked to the project area.

**Table 3: Population in the project province**

Province	Average population by province		Average male population by province		Average female population by province	
	2022	Prel. 2023	2022	Prel. 2023	2022	Prel. 2023
<b>WHOLE COUNTRY</b>	<b>99,467.9</b>	<b>100,309.2</b>	<b>49,586.9</b>	<b>50,040.8</b>	<b>49,881.0</b>	<b>50,268.4</b>
Nghe An	3,420.0	3,442.0	1,711.8	1,724.5	1,708.2	1,717.5
Ha Tinh	1,317.3	1,323.7	655.1	658.4	662.2	665.4
Quang Binh	913.9	918.7	460.3	462.7	453.6	455.9
Quang Tri	650.9	654.2	324.0	325.8	326.9	328.4
TT Hue	1,160.2	1,166.5	578.2	581.4	582.0	585.1
Da Nang	1,220.2	1,245.2	604.5	617.1	615.7	628.1
Quang Nam	1,519.4	1,526.1	750.5	753.8	768.9	7,72.2
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>10,201.9</b>	<b>10,276.4</b>	<b>5,084.4</b>	<b>5,123.7</b>	<b>5,117.5</b>	<b>4,380.4</b>

Source: GSO (2023)

The share of the female population is almost the same across seven provinces and accounts for more than 50% of total population.

## 2.4. Ethnic minority people and vulnerable groups

### a) Overview of ethnic minority peoples situation

No definition of indigenous people is mentioned yet, Viet Nam GOV does not apply the term "indigenous peoples" to any of these EM groups. Decree 05/2011/ND-CP specifies "EM groups" are groups with a smaller population than the majority groups (50%) in the territory of Vietnam. There are around 1.42 million EM persons living in provinces in CAL (2019 Viet Nam population and housing census).

EM groups and their rights are recognized by the Government of Viet Nam (GoV), of basic rights and rights "to use their own language and writing, to preserve their ethnic identity and to nurture their fine customs, traditions and cultures". Each person has "the right to self-identify ethnically, use their mother tongue and select language for communication". EM groups in the project use and own land. Summary on EM groups' production land and residential land is in Table 4.

As per Food and Agriculture Organization and MRLG, Viet Nam has 54 officially recognized ethnic groups, of which the Kinh majority accounts for 87% of the population (Ewers, 2011). Most EM groups reside in rural, mountainous areas such as the Central Highlands and the Northern Mountains. These communities only constitute 13% of the total population in Viet Nam, customary tenure issues affect many people due to the country's overall population. For thousands of years, EM communities have created a special relationship with their natural environment through their social structure and systems of customary tenure. They have been self-sufficient through collective land and forest use, which has ensured both daily consumption and spiritual needs. With differing types of organisation, villages traditionally possess or have collective rights to an array of land used for various purposes, such as residential land, burial grounds, lowland rice fields, shifting cultivation land (incl. fallow areas), grazing areas, forest land (incl. sacred

areas), and areas for watershed protection and forest collection. Certain forests and other areas are recognized as being inhabited by spirits.

Especially in mountainous areas, attempts to transform rural resource use and traditional social structures were made because the uplands have increasingly been seen as a source of land for a fast-growing lowland population, a destination for lowland migrants, and as a site for hydropower development (Ironsides, 2017). Large-scale resettlement programs were also carried out, with 1.9 million people being resettled in 1,185 communes over a period of 20 years. Furthermore, upland areas have historically been sites for land-based investments and agricultural expansion, such as large-scale cash crop production of cashew, coffee and rubber.

The pressure on land and land resources has increased substantially, with some natural resources becoming scarce and often inaccessible to EM groups. Therefore, EMs in Viet Nam are economically and socially disadvantaged across a range of dimensions. They represent the largest proportion of impoverished communities, comprising 45% of the poor and 59% of the hungry.

To strengthen forest management and protection, forest and forest land allocation (FLA) policies have been implemented since 1990. FLA regulations have tried to decentralise state management and devolve forest management to non-state entities such as individuals, households and organisations. As of 2015, 26 percent of forest land has been allocated to individual households, but only 2 percent to collective community management (in total, 4.3 million hectares, or ha). However, some community members complain that the land they are allocated is of poor quality, inaccessible from their villages, and/or entirely lacking tree cover, making it almost impossible to earn a sustainable livelihood from forest management alone. SFEs have been able to keep much of the better-quality forest land. Nationwide, 164 SFEs continue to control 2,222,330 ha of forest land (Markussen, 2015).

Despite all these changes, the geographical isolation of many EM communities has meant that customary practices, while severely weakened by law, have persisted in practice. In many communities, these practices continue to play a more significant role in regulating community access to land and resources than state law.

#### b) Ethnic minorities in project sites

The central landscape provinces are the homeland of 50 ethnic minority groups (except Phu La, Lu, Bo Y) with more than 0.8 million people, accounting for 8.2 per cent of the seven provinces' total population. The number of ethnic minority populations and groups varies across provinces. While Nghe An has 46 ethnic minority groups accounting for nearly 15 per cent of its total population, these numbers in Ha Tinh are 35 and 0.2 per cent, and Da Nang – 37 and 0.5 per cent respectively (Table 2).

**Table 4: Summary of EM groups in the project**

Province	Total population	Female	EM groups population				Ratio of EMs/total population (%)
			Total	Male	Female	# and main EM group	
Vietnam	96,484,000	48,466,300	14,119,256	7,073,907	7,045,349	54	14.6%

Nghe An	3,337,200	1,667,700	491,267	248,756	242,511	46 (Thai, Muong, Lao, Tho, Nung)	14.7%
Ha Tinh	1,290,300	648,800	3,102	1,284	1,818	35 (Thai, Muong, Lao, Chut, Tho, Nung)	0.2%
Q. Binh	896,600	446,700	26,296	13,048	13,248	35( Bru-Van Kieu, Chut, Thai, Muong)	2.9%
Quang Tri	633,400	319,400	86,859	43,529	43,330	41 (Ta Oi, Bru Van Kieu, Thai)	13.7%
TT Hue	1,129,500	570,500	55,091	27,515	27,576	40 (PaCo, Co Tu, Ta Oi, Bru Van Kieu, Thai, Muong)	4.9%
Da Nang	1,141,100	578,700	5,993	2,777	3,216	37 (Hoa , Co Tu , Tay, Muong, Nung..)	0.5%
Q. Nam	1,497,500	760,900	140,540	70,383	70,157	46 Co Tu, Xo Dang, Gie Trieng, Co, Mnung, Tay)	8.2%

*Source: National survey on the socio-economic situation of 53 ethnic minority groups*

Ethnic minority and mountainous areas are recognized as significantly important geographic locations in terms of the socio-economic dimensions, national defense, security and ecological environment. However, the ethnic minority and mountainous areas are the most disadvantaged with a poverty rate significantly higher than the national average.

## 2.5. Gender

The section below describes the Gender profile of Vietnam. More details and project-specific information is provided in the Annex O: Assessment on Gender, Livelihood and Community Participation in the Target Landscape and Annex P: Gender Action Plan that has been created for the project.

### a) Laws and Policies on Gender Equality in Vietnam

In Vietnam, the legal system concerning Gender Equality (GE) is comprehensive and robust. The 2013 Constitution is foundational, affirming the right to equality before the law and prohibiting discrimination based on various grounds, including gender, in political, economic, cultural, and social life . It explicitly states the equality of men and women in all aspects and mandates the State to implement policies ensuring GE, creating favorable conditions for women's comprehensive development and their societal contributions, while strictly prohibiting gender discrimination. The Constitution also guarantees GE in marriage and family, including equal rights in marriage and divorce.

The [Law on Gender Equality \(2006\)](#) is a specialized legal document enacted to eliminate gender discrimination and create equal opportunities for men and women in socio-economic and human resource development, aiming for genuine gender equality and cooperative relationships in all areas of life. This law outlines six basic principles of gender equality, including equality in all areas, non-discrimination, the acceptance of affirmative action measures and maternal support policies, the integration of GE in law-

making and enforcement, and the shared responsibility for GE implementation. It also lists prohibited acts such as preventing GE implementation, gender discrimination in all forms, and gender-based violence. The Law details the responsibilities of various entities in implementing and ensuring GE. This includes six tasks for state management agencies, specific responsibilities for ministries, People's Committees at all levels, and the Vietnam Fatherland Front and its member organizations like the Vietnamese Women's Union (VWU) and the Vietnamese Farmers' Union (VFU).

As such, the objectives, principles, and solutions to ensure gender equality and promote the role of women have been stipulated in important Vietnamese legal documents, and guiding views have been specified in a number of specific policies, including the action plan for the natural resources and environment sector. This creates opportunities and favorable conditions to ensure gender equality in all areas of social life. However, the existing regulations on gender equality are generally applied, and there are no specific legal regulations on ensuring gender equality in the field of biodiversity conservation

#### b) Gender mainstreaming in biodiversity laws and policies

Gender mainstreaming (GM) in biodiversity conservation in Vietnam involves integrating gender perspectives into relevant laws, policies, programs, and projects to ensure equitable participation, benefits, and decision-making opportunities for men and women. This approach recognizes the distinct roles, responsibilities, and knowledge that different genders contribute to biodiversity conservation and aims to address existing gender disparities.

From a legal perspective, the Law on Gender Equality (2006) and the Law on Promulgation of Legal Documents (2015) stipulate the requirement for gender mainstreaming in the development of legal documents. This is seen as a measure to achieve gender equality. Key tasks include identifying gender issues and solutions, forecasting the impact of regulations on women and men, and determining responsibilities and resources to address these issues. Agencies drafting legal documents are responsible for integrating gender equality considerations and preparing related reports, while appraisal agencies coordinate with state management on gender equality to assess this integration.

However, a review of specific laws related to biodiversity namely the Law on Biodiversity (2008), The National Strategy on Biodiversity Conservation to 2030 and Vision to 2050, The Forestry Law (2017), The Law on Environmental Protection (2020) and The Fisheries Law (2017) reveals limited explicit integration of gender equality although the requirement to integrate gender equality in the process of developing legal documents has been stipulated in existing legal documents on gender equality. Only a few documents mention the principles of ensuring gender equality but do not clearly describe the solutions, resources, and responsibilities for implementation. The lack of clear regulations on goals and solutions to ensure gender equality in existing documents on biodiversity is not only a challenge but can also lead to being overlooked in the implementation process.

#### c) Key actors for promoting gender equality in biodiversity conservation

In Vietnam, the management of biodiversity is primarily the responsibility of natural resources and environment agencies at all levels. At the central level, the Government provides unified management, with the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MONRE) (now renamed the Ministry of Agriculture and Environment). Locally, People's Committees at provincial, district, and commune levels

are the state management agencies, supported by their respective natural resources and environment agencies.

Simultaneously, gender equality is managed by a separate but interconnected system. The Government unifies state management of gender equality, with the Ministry of Labor, War Invalids and Social Affairs (now replaced by the Ministry of Home Affairs) acting as the central advisory body. At the local level, People's Committees are also responsible for gender equality, advised by the Department/Division of Labor, War Invalids and Social Affairs (now replaced by the Department of Home Affairs). Importantly, ministries, branches, and local departments managing specific fields are also responsible for ensuring gender equality within their respective domains, including biodiversity.

**Integration of Gender Equality in Biodiversity Management:** As the state management agency for biodiversity, MONRE and the DONRE are tasked with ensuring gender equality in biodiversity conservation 3. This includes a range of activities outlined in the Law on Gender Equality, such as developing strategies and policies, issuing legal documents, implementing promotional measures, conducting awareness campaigns, training officials, inspecting implementation, handling violations, managing data, and engaging in international cooperation.

The VWU or WU is a socio-political organization focused on protecting women's rights and interests. It advises on and critiques the implementation of gender equality policies and possesses significant experience in gender equality. However, the Women's Union faces challenges due to a lack of in-depth knowledge in the field of biodiversity and gender mainstreaming techniques within that context. Despite legal requirements to consult the Women's Union in the development of legal documents related to gender mainstreaming, their participation in biodiversity policy-making is often limited due to this knowledge gap and a lack of awareness from environmental agencies regarding their potential contributions.

**Challenges in Effective Integration:** Despite the existing organizational structures and legal frameworks, the effective integration of gender equality into biodiversity conservation faces challenges. These include a lack of deep understanding of each other's fields among relevant actors (environmental agencies and gender equality advocates), limited practical implementation beyond awareness campaigns, and insufficient meaningful consultation with the Vietnam Women's Union in policy development

#### d) Community participation in biodiversity conservation

According to the Law on Biodiversity (2008), the participation of local people is necessary in developing and implementing biodiversity conservation planning. This is further specified through consulting relevant organizations and individuals. Participation occurs through people's representatives (like village heads and socio-political organizations) and direct consultation via community meetings.

However, the mechanism of collecting opinions through people's representatives often reflects the majority's urgent needs without specifically addressing the diverse needs of men and women. Village heads, as important bridges between villagers and authorities, may not capture the specific gendered needs of smaller groups. Similarly, local socio-political organizations, except for the WU, tend to reflect majority issues and do not typically separate the needs of men and women. The WU does represent women's specific problems due to its membership.

Regulations mandate seeking opinions from relevant agencies/organizations through meetings and written comments, involving environmental resources, forestry, and agriculture agencies. The DOLISA and the WU are also required to participate. However, interviews indicate that their in-depth comments on GM in biodiversity planning have not been implemented due to a lack of information and experience on GM. While they participate in meetings, their contributions often focus on general issues like vocational training or poverty reduction without specifically addressing gendered needs. The WU, while invited to contribute, primarily focuses on their own activities related to environmental awareness and livelihood models, with limited attention to the gender aspects of biodiversity implementation.

The Law on Biodiversity also requires ensuring the livelihoods of people displaced from conservation core zones, including resettlement and alternative livelihood solutions. Land is crucial for biodiversity conservation activities, and while Vietnamese law ensures equal land rights and requires both spouses' names on Land Use Right Certificates (LURC) this right is not always guaranteed in practice. Traditional gender stereotypes, lower education, and language barriers for women in ethnic minority communities contribute to women's limited land access and decision-making power, even when their names are on the LURC.

The government has preferential credit policies for the agricultural sector and rural women, with targets set for women in need accessing credit. While access to loans has become easier, a lack of production and business knowledge can deter women from borrowing. The rate of female household heads benefiting from credit policies for the poor is lower than that of male household heads, partly due to limitations in land use rights certificates. Activities supporting women's economic development and poverty reduction are implemented through various channels like the Social Policy Bank and WU's microfinance programs.

Finally, while women participate in crop and livestock farming on allocated land, men often make the crucial decisions regarding investment and borrowing capital. Women can participate in discussions, but men usually have the final say in decisions related to the management and use of biodiversity resources.

### **3. ENVIRONMENT AND SOCIAL POLICY, REGULATIONS AND GUIDELINES**

This chapter first outlines the laws and regulations of Vietnam and the 2023 WWF Statement of Principles and Environmental and Social Safeguards Framework and SIPP that are applicable to the project, and then discusses gaps between Vietnam laws and regulations and the SIPP. For the purposes of the Vietnam Project implementation, the principles and procedures of the ESSF and SIPP shall prevail in all cases of discrepancies.

#### **3.1 Vietnam policies, laws, regulations guidelines**

The strategies, Vietnam regulations that guide the management of environmental and social aspects in the project relate to: (1) biodiversity and environmental management, (2) rural development and social aspects, and (3) the forestry sector.

Three key features of the framework are below:

- The strategies to 2030, with a vision to 2050, are guiding documents for the forestry sector as well as on biodiversity, the environment and climate change. While plans will be renewed at the end of the 2021–2025 period, the strategies provide continuity over a longer period of time.

- Key laws have been recently amended. They have reconfirmed and clarified elements of relevance to the project, that include sustainable development in forestry and agriculture and recognition of EM villages as communities in the forestry sector.

The project activities proposed in the FS are highly consistent with the latest development of forestry and biodiversity strategies

#### a) Laws on Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation

- Law on Biodiversity No. 20/2008/QH12 dated 13 November 2008 provides for the conservation and sustainable development of biodiversity. It defines the rights and obligations of organizations, households and individuals in the conservation and sustainable development of biodiversity.
- The national REDD+ programme (2017) is a cross-sector programme under the Prime Minister and is of high relevance to the project. It defines hotspots of deforestation. Each measure defines a lead agency and cooperating stakeholders. One of its measures is to improve forest governance and livelihoods for people living near and in the forest. Vietnam is a REDD+ pioneer country, having adopted REDD+ in 2009.
- The Law on Environmental Protection, which defined which investment projects require an EIA, was updated in 2020. The 2022 National Strategy on Environment Protection defines goals to 2030 and orientations towards 2050.
- Vietnam has had a full framework of strategies and action plans supporting sustainable development and the climate transition. These include the National Green Growth Strategy (2011–2020 with a vision to 2050), and the 2017 National Action Plan on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Climate change adaptation is under the National climate change adaptation plan for the period 2021–2030, with a vision to 2050. It updates the National Strategy on Climate Change (2011–2020 with a vision to 2050).

#### b) Laws on Biodiversity Conservation

Vietnam has ratified number of key International Convention namely the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity, 1992 (signed in May 1993); the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), 1973 (signed in 1994); the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, especially as Waterfowl Habitat (Ramsar Convention), 1982 (signed in 1989); and the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety to the Convention on Biological Diversity, (The Biosafety Protocol), 2000.

- Vietnam has an extensive framework for biodiversity conservation. Viet Nam's Constitution provides that the State has a policy to stably use natural resources and to protect nature and biodiversity.
- Vietnam defined in 2022 its fourth Biodiversity Strategy to 2030, with a vision to 2050.<sup>7</sup> The strategy requests that each provincial government develop a plan. Before that, the national master plan on biodiversity conservation in 2014 for the whole country through 2020, with orientations toward 2030, had defined one main priority: connecting the single existing PAs in NW Binh Dinh (A Lao District) to the biodiversity corridor extending to the Central Highlands and border with Laos (MoNRE 2022 figure 36).

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<sup>7</sup> The first biodiversity strategy was issued in 1995 (MONRE 2019).

- The fundamental legal foundation is provided for by the Law on Biodiversity. The 2008 Law on Biodiversity requires conservation areas to be established with clearly defined zones: strictly protected, ecological conservation and service administrative areas. This Act elevates the principles and priorities of biodiversity conservation to the level of an independent law, which specifies the principles and priorities of biodiversity conservation at all levels, from national and ministerial to local levels.
- Other laws also deal with biodiversity including the Law on Forestry, the Land Law, the Law on Fisheries, and the Law on Environmental Protection all touch on the issue of biodiversity to some degree. In fact, the diffuse focus on biodiversity in different regulatory instruments has resulted in some uncertainty of interpretation. For example, inconsistent use of terms such as in-situ conservation; ex-situ conservation; conservation zones vs. special-use forests; inland water areas; conservation sea zones; endangered, precious and rare species; buffer zones, etc., make legal interpretation and application problematic. In addition, Vietnam has a number of National Strategies that deal either directly or indirectly with biodiversity. These include the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan; the National Forestry Strategy; the National Strategy for Environmental Protection; and the National Strategy for Management of Special Use Forests, Marine Reserves, and Inland Water Reserves.

#### c) Specific policies related to project forestry sector

- Similarly to other sectors, the legal and strategic framework was recently updated: the Law on Forestry was amended in 2017. Vietnam's Forestry Development Strategy in the 2021–2030 period, with a vision to 2050, defines natural forest management and community forestry development as priorities, and describes specific priorities for each region. It highlights the need for coordination with other sectors on land, biodiversity and environmental protection, and raises attention to relevant international regulations. It lists NTFP with potential.
- Vietnam was an early adopter of community forestry and payments for environmental services. Community forestry was recognized by the 2004 Forest Protection and Development Law. The first decision on payments for forestry environmental services (PFES) was issued in 2008. Community-based protection contracts were defined in 2010 and 2016.
- The legal framework now employs the terms “family households” and “individuals and communities living in or around forests”. These are called forest fringe communities in the FS and scoping study. It employs the concept of residential community from the Civil Code (2015) to describe the villages.
- The current system of contracting of forest within SUFs and PFMBs defined under Decree 168 (2016) remains largely valid. Protection forest and SUF are eligible except in the SUF core zone. The forest owner and community sign a contract using the Decree's template. Short-term community-based contracts are for no more than one year, renewable if the forest owner has the required budget.
- The 2017 Law on Forestry and recent strategies have clarified governance of forestland and forests. They have reconfirmed the role of village communities in these, EM villages being explicitly targeted, and the allocation process. Villages under an allocation contract for natural forest management do not hold formal land use rights (red books). The CPC is not a forest owner.
- Decree 156 on implementation of the 2017 Law on Forestry is a reference document for this project. It defines natural forests. It clarifies the definition of forest reserves with three categories (national parks, nature protection areas and landscape protection areas) and of protection forest in upper watersheds. It defines the internal and external buffer zones of forest reserves and their investment plans. It broadens the environmental services expected from protection forest to also include biodiversity. It confirms that the closing of natural forests must be approved at national level. It explains how the CPC makes decisions for leasing or allocation forest, including allocation to villages.

It defines appraisal for ecotourism, hospitality and entertainment services in forest reserves and protection forest. It provides a detailed process of fire prevention. It describes the operation of the central and provincial Vietnam forest protection and development funds that collect and redistribute PFES.

- Five-year sustainable forestry development programmes define and monitor indicator targets on the reduction of threats and increase of levers such as allocation, the current one being 2021-2025.
- Decree No. 58/2024/ND-CP dated May 24 2024, on a number of investment policies in forestry improves significantly the cost norm for investment in forestry sector of special use forest, protection forest and production forest.

#### d) Laws on Labor and Working Conditions

- Viet Nam has ratified core ILO labour conventions, including on the right to organise, forced labour abolition, child labour abolition and minimum working age, discrimination, and collective bargaining.
- The 2012 Labour Law was revised in 2019 providing detailed guidelines related to working conditions, equality in employment, payment, fair treatment, medical insurance, safety insurance, unemployment pension, harassment and prohibited discrimination against labour. Additional Law on Gender Equality prohibits gender discrimination and requires advancement of women's rights.
- The 2012 Labour Law sets standards for contracts, work hours, outsourcing, internal labour rules, increases minimum wage, defines holidays, and leave.
- The Law on Safety, Labour Sanitation No. 84/2015/QH13 dated June 25, 2015.
- Circular No. 19/2011/TT-BYT of 06 June 2011 of the Ministry of Health guiding labour hygiene, labourers' health, and occupational diseases.
- Circular No. 22/2010/TT-BXD dated 03/12/2010 of the Ministry of Construction providing labour safety in construction.

#### e) Land acquisition

- The Constitution 2013 protects the right to own dwellings and production materials – and takings must be compensated at market rates.
- The Land Law 2024 No. 31/2024/QH15 was approved by the National Assembly of Vietnam ("Land Law 2024"), which took effect from 1 January 2025 to replace Land Law No. 45/2013/QH13 ("Land Law 2013") has improved and perfect the land management system in Vietnam including the land acquisition.
- Clause 6, Article 91 of Land Law 2024 clearly states that the approval of compensation, support, resettlement plans and resettlement arrangements must be completed before a decision on land acquisition is made. Clause 5 of this Article also stipulates that the resettlement area must be completed the conditions of technical infrastructure and synchronous social infrastructure according to the detailed planning approved by the competent authority. This provision aims to ensure the maximum rights of the people, avoiding the situation of having to wait or live temporarily.
- In addition, Land Law 2024 also stipulates support for people whose land is recovered with other support such as support for moving livestock, support for dismantling, demolishing, and moving the land-attached assets that are part of construction works under a certain-term construction permit according to the law on construction, but by the time of land recovery, the permit has expired. These new regulations bring many important benefits, not only ensuring the rights of the people but also creating favorable conditions for the implementation of socio-economic development

projects. This is an important step forward in the development and implementation of policies related to land and resettlement in Vietnam.

- The issue of tenure, and more specifically, forest tenure, in Viet Nam, is complex. The Constitution of Viet Nam 2013 states that all land and natural resources belong to the people “represented and uniformly managed by the State.” Officially, no private ownership of land exists in Viet Nam, only use rights. The Constitution 2013 and the Land Law (2024) recognise the right of organisations and individuals to be assigned or leased land and recognition of the land use right by the State through the grant of a land use right certificate. Land-use right certificates (LURC) are formal State recognition of a user’s rights, and are necessary for secure tenure, to engage in formal land transactions, to access credit (mortgage) and are necessary to support claims to legal protection of land-use rights.
- At present, forest tenure in Viet Nam is governed primarily by two laws: Land Law (2024) and Forestry Law (2017). These laws and associated decrees sanction the management of forests by local people and the private sector and allow legitimate title holders to lease, exchange, inherit, mortgage and transfer titles.
- The process for legally acquiring forest use rights is complicated, with a lack of clear policy and simple guidance on the procedures for households and communities to follow in order to obtain various forest use permits (cultivation, logging etc.) leading to illegal activity.
- Generally, those who officially apply claims for land certificates (and keep their documentation) tend to be wealthier land users, who are more aware of their rights and opportunities and have more capital available for investment in economic activities and therefore go through the registration process. Poorer users (including ethnic minorities) often do not have funds to invest in their land or have tended to sell their allocated land-use rights (land-use certificate or red book) if they encounter difficulties such as illness or crop failure. This sometimes leads to illegal encroachment on state entities’ forests or land (i.e., insecurity of tenure can actually incentivise deforestation).

**Customary tenure.** The Civil Code (2015) mentions that collective ownership within communities is possible, whether based on kinship, ethnicity, tribal or religious affiliation in accordance with customary practices insofar as these multiple owners contribute to the customary practices. Furthermore, it is stated that the members of these communities can jointly manage, use and dispose of such property in accordance with customary practice.

Apart from this general reference Viet Nam does not officially recognise customary or informal tenure. Many communities recognise customary rights over forest areas. These rights generally include rights to subsistence farming, as well as cutting timber, gathering non timber forest products (NTFP) (rights of withdrawal), performing shifting cultivation (rights of management) and swidden agriculture practices (rights of alienation).<sup>8</sup>

Traditional knowledge of ethnic minorities and local communities is respected in the legal framework through the provision that local regulations can be developed to uphold community customs in compliance with State regulations. The practice of villages maintaining traditional conventions or regulations (huong uoc or quy uoc) has existed for centuries in Viet Nam – the term is widely understood and application in practice is widespread. “Huong uoc” have been discussed a lot (and piloted) in the last 10 years or more in terms of community-based forest management, as a means/way of local negotiation.

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<sup>8</sup> Tuan, H., H., Catacutan, D., C., Bac, D., V., Hang, T., T., T., (2014) Narrowing the gap between statutory and customary rights in Viet Nam’s community forest management. World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF). Viet Nam

In line with the Grassroots Democracy Decree, “huong uoc” can thus be considered a form of ‘grassroots democratisation’.

#### f) Indigenous peoples or ethnic minority people

Due to the historical conditions of the country, the term “indigenous peoples” is not used in Viet Nam. Ethnic Minority people are official terms used in Viet Nam replacing the term “indigenous peoples”. Viet Nam is a unified nation of different ethnic groups. An ethnic majority group in Viet Nam is defined as “an ethnic group with a population accounting for over 50% of the country's total population according to national population survey,” while an EM group is defined as “an ethnic group with a population smaller than that of the ethnic majority group within the territory of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam.” These include “very low population” EM groups, defined as “EM groups with a population below 10,000 people.” The ethnic majority group, the Kinh people, account for 86% of the population, while 53 EM groups account for 14% of the population. EM groups are distributed throughout the country, mostly living in the mountainous regions.

Viet Nam’s legal framework explicitly recognises and protects several rights with regard to ‘ethnic minorities’ including the right of non-discrimination, the recognition and promotion of cultural rights and cultural inheritance of ethnic minorities’ cultural rights (implicitly recognising a degree of self-determination). The Constitution (Article 5) states that ‘all ethnicities are equal, unified and respect and assist one another for mutual development; all acts of national discrimination and division are strictly forbidden’, and that ‘every ethnic group has the right to use its own language and system of writing, to preserve its national identity, to promote its fine customs, habits, traditions and culture’. The right to non-discrimination is supported by the Penal Code 2010. The Law on Cultural Heritage recognizes values and needs to protect the culture of the people following their wishes.

EM peoples are recognized as vulnerable groups in Viet Nam and several policies and laws aim to specifically promote economic development and inclusion for ethnic minorities and remote (often forest dependent) local communities:

- Resolution 88/2019/QH14 and Resolution 120/2020/QH14 by the National Congress and Resolution 12/2020/NQ-CP by the GoV on Overall Action Plan and Investment for socio economic development in ethnic minorities and mountainous areas 2021-2030.
- Decision 1719/QĐ-TTg/2021 dated 14/10/2021 National Target Program on Socio-Economic Development in Mountainous Areas
- The National Socio-economic Development Strategy (2021-2030), Forest Development Strategy (2021-2030) and other sector strategies and development plans all place prioritise economic development and poverty reduction for ethnic minorities and the poorest households.
- Decision 809/QĐ-TTg on approving the Programme for Sustainable Forest Development for the 2021-2025 period
- Decision 75/2015/NĐ-CP on the Mechanism and Policy of Forest Development Associated with the Policy on Sustainable and Rapid Poverty Reduction and Assistance to Ethnic Minorities for the period 2015 – 2020.
- Decision 419/2017/TTg mentions the requirement of respecting the EM persons in REDD+ activities

#### g) Gender, gender-based violence, and sexual harassment

Viet Nam has strong commitments on gender equality and promotion of women's rights through not only implementation of international commitments as mentioned above. In addition, Viet Nam enactment of laws that specifically concern women's rights, notable efforts have been made to ensure that gender equality is promoted in all other laws. Viet Nam has developed various policies and strategies to promote women's rights and gender equality.

- Viet Nam Constitution (2013) : The Constitution confirms “Male and female citizens have equal rights in all fields. The State shall adopt policies to guarantee rights to and opportunities for gender equality. The State, society, and families create conditions for women's full development and promotion of their roles in society. Sex discrimination is strictly prohibited”. This spirit was clearly described in previous Constitutions in 1946, 1959, 1992 and has been reinforced in the Constitution 2013. Gender discrimination is strictly prohibited”.
- Law on Gender Equality (2006): The Law is considered a landmark legislation for gender equality in Vietnam as this was the first time that the concept of gender equality was defined under Viet Nam law. It defines gender equality and gender-based discrimination, sets out specific measures for achieving substantive gender equality in all fields of social and family life and gender mainstreaming in legal documents and provides principles of gender equality and responsibilities of agencies, organizations, families, and individuals in exercising gender equality. The definition emphasises the equal status and roles of men and women, to be applied for the development of the community and the family. This framing of formal equality under the law underpins foundational documents and plans on gender equality in Viet Nam.
- Law on Domestic Violence Prevention and Control (2007): This is another significant piece of legislation acknowledging for the first time violence against women by intimate partners as a punishable offence. This law provides measures to prevent and combat domestic violence and specifies behaviors and types of domestic violence. Section 2 of the law provides for reconciliation and mediation of family conflicts and disputes within the family.
- Law on Marriage and Family (revised in 2014): The law recognises the legal age of marriage as 20 years for men and 18 years for women. This law provides for the principle of gender equality on ownership and inheritance in cases of divorce and death (Articles 33 and 59). The law still has some provisions with gender discrimination, such as the different minimum age of marriage for women and men. Although it removes the prohibition on same-sex marriage, it still defines marriage as a union between a man and a woman. The law stipulates that marriage certificates should not be granted to partners of same-sex marriages; hence such marriages cannot be registered officially nor recorded in a household registration booklet. The Law stipulates that settlement of property relations must ensure lawful rights and interests of women and children. It states that housework and other work relating to maintaining shared life shall be regarded as income-generating work.
- Labor Code (2019): The law added new provisions on non-discrimination and women's labor rights such as: prohibition of sexual harassment; extension of maternity leaves to six months; official recognition of the rights of paid domestic workers; and equal pay for work of equal value. The revised Labor Code also raised women's retirement age from 55 to 60 and men's from 60 to 62 by 2035, thereby narrowing, though not removing, the gender gap in retirement age. The 2019 revision addressed several key gender gaps. It narrowed the gender gap in retirement age from 5 to 2 years by 2035, and it removed the list of 77 occupations proscribed for women and/or pregnant and breastfeeding women. It further defined sexual harassment at work, and extended employer obligations for childcare or kindergarten to those with large workforces (not just those with predominantly women workers). Maternity leave (6 months paid), breastfeeding breaks (60 minutes per day) and menstruation breaks (30 minutes per day, during a period) are codified.

- Law on Support for Small- and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) (2017): The law introduced a definition of a woman-owned SME (namely, with one or more women holding 51 per cent of capital, of whom at least one is also manager). Where SMEs qualified for entitlements or support, the law prescribed that woman-owned SMEs should receive preferential treatment.
- The National Action Plan for the Advancement of Women (1997-2000) was the first action plan to promote gender equality in Vietnam. It was followed by a National Strategy for the Advancement of Women for the 2001-2010 period supported by a second and third National Action Plan (2001-2005 and 2006-2010).
- The National Strategy for Gender Equality (NSGE) (2021-2030), approved by the Prime Minister in the Resolution No. 28/NQ-CP dated 03/03/2021, sets out 6 objectives regarding politics, economic - labor, family life and prevention and response to gender-based violence, health, education-training, information-communication and 20 targets. It has a section that specifies responsibilities and essential solutions, by state agencies. In the section on budget for implementation, there is a direction that a state budget for the NSGE will be included in the annual budget estimates of ministries and localities, and would complement the mobilization from international, society and community sources. In terms of the economic - labor aspect, the target is that the percentage of women's directors, women-owned enterprises, and women-owned cooperatives will be at least 27% by 2025 and 30% by 2030.

#### h) Community Engagement

- Vietnam's country system provides room for participatory processes. The Law on the Implementation of Grassroots Democracy 2022 clarified roles and responsibilities. Before that, Decree 15/2014/ND-CP detailed measures for the implementation of the Law on Grassroots Conciliation for conflict mediation at community level. The Civil Code provides general guidance on establishing community-level management boards (including, but not limited to, community forest management boards).
- Vietnam's regulatory framework clearly defines information disclosure, consultation channels, and complaint redress by national and local government in relation to government work at all levels. The law on grassroots democracy clarifies the respective roles of the Commune People's Committee and residential community and describes meeting and public disclosure processes in detail.
- Forestry is one of the sectors that have detailed provisions on public participation. Sacred forests are recognized in the forest law. Customary land tenure is tolerated at district level. Meanwhile, individual allocation of forests is encouraged, which will impact community resource use.
- The 'residential community', recognised early on as a forest owner in the legal framework of the forestry sector, is now defined in the civil code. However it was not recognised as a legal entity in Civil Law as of 2020.

### 3.2 WWF safeguards and procedures applicable to the Project

WWF's safeguards standards require that any potentially adverse environmental and social impacts are identified, and avoided or mitigated. Safeguards policies that are relevant to this Project are as follows.

#### a) Standard on environment and social risk management

This standard is applicable because the project intends to support activities that result in a variety of environmental and social impacts. The Project is expected to support activities that result in a variety of environmental and social impacts.

Key adverse environmental and social impacts are related to potential access restrictions due to the support to improve the forest management and conservation of existing PAs, thus likely affecting the sources of economic income or other types of livelihoods of affected communities. Though, those impacts are expected to be site-specific and can be mitigated using appropriate mechanisms and tools.

The precise location and impact of specific activities cannot be determined at this stage, and will only be known during project implementation. Thus, an ESMF is prepared to set out guidelines and procedures on how to identify, assess and monitor environmental and social impacts, and how to avoid or mitigate adverse impacts. Site-specific ESMPs will be prepared as required, based on principles and guidelines of the ESMF.

#### b) Standard on protection of natural habitats (triggered)

WWF's mission is to protect natural habitats, and it does not undertake any projects that would result in conversion or degradation of critical natural habitats, especially those that are legally protected, officially proposed for protection, or identified as having high conservation value.

Overall, the Project will produce several benefits, including protection and conservation of biodiversity, on which they depend. Particular, environmental benefits include, among others, contribute to providing global environmental benefits for human livelihood sustainability, including:

- Globally significant biodiversity conserved,
- PA areas effectively managed,
- Forests restored and ecological connectivity increased
- Carbon stocks in forest lands enhanced, and
- Improved provision of ecosystem goods & services.

Expected social benefits include, among others:

- Sustainable livelihood options to provide additional income and
- Reduce direct reliance on the forest– particularly targeting women, youth, ethnic groups and other vulnerable groups,
- Improve the mitigation of human/wildlife conflicts
- On top of that, the project will improve the capacity building of Government staff and local communities to conserve the natural resources as well as improve the community awareness of conservation issues, and participation in conservation and restoration activities,

At this point, there are no planned activities that would negatively impact natural habitats. However, this standard has been triggered as a precaution because some of the on-the-ground activities, including implementation of sustainable livelihoods supported for local forest, mangrove and wetland dependent communities, inclusive of gender considerations as well as site selection and restoration of degraded forests, mangroves and important wetlands among others. Consequently, further environmental impact assessments will be needed as the specific activities and locations become better defined to determine which safeguard measures, if any, need to be in place to ensure no lasting damage to natural habitats or the people that rely on them occur.

c) Standard on restriction of access (triggered)

The WWF's Standard seeks to ensure that adverse social or economic impacts on resource-dependent local communities as a result of restrictions on resource access and/or use are avoided or minimized.

This standard has been triggered although the project will not directly establish new PAs, ecological corridors of existing PAs that may result in the displacement of people. Instead, the project will only support the technical document for the establishment of new PAs or ecological corridors of existing PAs. Moreover, the project will strengthen the conservation and landscape management and improve law enforcement of existing PAs and provide technical support to strengthen OECM management by expanding the SMART patrol system of existing PAs that has been successfully applied in previous WWF projects in the Central Annamite Region. The project may also support stronger forest patrolling efforts at PAs to reduce the impacts of illegal activities (poaching, timber extraction, etc.) that create access restrictions to forest products (e.g. fuel wood, NTFPs) that negatively affecting local people's livelihoods, particularly to women who mainly access the PAs for NTFPs collection. Access restriction may be increased by restoration of degraded forests, mangroves and important wetlands. The PPG has conducted the grassroot consultation with local communities during the fieldwork and found that local people are still able to access to the PAs (except the core zone). However, the tendency of forest dependence has been reduced throughout the year given their livelihoods were diversified. The local communities have also expressed participation in the forest patrolling or community forest management in order to access the government programme on forest management and protection or carbon and potential biodiversity credit.

While the proposed project cannot result in the physical displacement of people due to WWF's prohibition on such an activity, the project may result in some access restrictions. As the specific activities and locations of the project's activities are not yet defined, a PF will be prepared as part of the ESMF to be aligned with the WWF's Environment and Social Safeguards Framework to ensure community rights are respected. The purpose of this PF is to ensure the participation of the project Affected People (PAP) while recognizing and protecting their interests and ensuring that they do not end up worse off as a result of the project.

d) Standard on Indigenous Peoples (triggered)

The WWF's standard requires ensuring that indigenous (or EM) people rights are respected, that IPs do not suffer adverse impacts from projects, and that IPs receive culturally appropriate benefits from conservation. The policy mandates that projects respect IPs' rights, including their rights to FPIC processes and to tenure over traditional territories; that culturally appropriate and equitable benefits (including from traditional ecological knowledge) are negotiated and agreed upon with the IPs' communities in question; and that potential adverse impacts are avoided or adequately addressed through a participatory and consultative approach.

This standard has been triggered because it is likely that the sites to be identified by the Project will entail EM persons, as these groups are present in the targeted landscape of this project. The specific activities and locations of the project's activities are not yet defined and more information on EM groups, their physical presence in this geography and their use of natural resources is needed, which is why an EMPF is prepared as part of this ESMF to conform to WWF's Environment and Social Safeguards Framework.

**e) Standard on community health, safety and security (triggered)**

This Standard ensures that the health, safety and security of communities are respected and appropriately protected. The Guidance on Labor and Working Conditions requires employers and supervisors to implement all reasonable precautions to protect the health and safety of workers through the introduction of preventive and protective measures. It also requires that the labor rights of project-employed workers are observed, as indicated in Annex 1: Screening Tool. Since the Project will not support any infrastructure, it will not have any adverse impact on community health. Instead, the project will engage the local communities into the forest protection and biodiversity conservation that may result in potential risks to community safety as previously mentioned possibility of working with forest rangers on patrolling of PAs.

Human-wildlife conflicts are a concern to wildlife populations and the livelihoods of smallholder farmers who are grazing livestock in the PAs (the Nong Son Elephant PA in Quang Nam province) and given the prevalence of tourist disturbance and crop-raiding by different animal species (elephants in Nong Son Elephant PA and monkeys in Ba Na-Nui Chua NR of Da nang city), which can affect both the wildlife and producing negative perceptions towards wildlife. These have become increasingly common in the project landscape as its human population continues to grow, which is why this standard has been triggered. Therefore, the ESMF will identify and list measures for mitigating human wildlife conflict (such as support for innovative green barriers or alternatives for livestock smallholder farmers) as well as measures to avoid and mitigate risks associated with support of conservation law enforcement.

**f) Standard on pest management (not triggered)**

WWF-funded projects are not allowed to procure or use formulated products that are in World Health Organization (WHO) Classes IA and IB, or formulations of products in Class II, unless there are restrictions that are likely to deny use or access by lay personnel and others without training or proper equipment. The project will follow the recommendations and minimum standards as described in the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization International Code of Conduct on the Distribution and Use of Pesticides and its associated technical guidelines, and procure only pesticides, along with suitable protective and application equipment, that will permit pest management actions to be carried out with well-defined and minimal risk to health, environment, and livelihoods.

The project will not fund nor include the promotion or usage of pesticides. Thus, this standard is not triggered by the project.

**g) Standard on cultural resources (triggered)**

This Standard ensures that Cultural Resources are appropriately preserved and their destruction, damage or loss is appropriately avoided. Physical cultural resources (PCR) include archaeological, paleontological, historical, architectural, and sacred sites including graveyards, burial sites, and unique natural values. Intangible cultural resources include traditional ecological knowledge, performing arts, oral traditions and expressions, traditional craftsmanship and social practices, rituals and events. The impacts on cultural resources resulting from project activities, including mitigating measures, may not contravene either the recipient country's national legislation or its obligations under relevant international environmental treaties and agreements.

The law enforcement in PAs and other project activities will have a minimum impact on physical cultural resources, but this standard has been triggered because forests are important for many Ethnic Minorities groups in Vietnam for cultural practices and resources. The field visits and consultations revealed that some PAs contain ancestral villages and ritual sites of invaluable cultural wealth. Moreover, local communities have also detailed ecological knowledge, traditional conservation practices and a strong spiritual and physical link to the rainforest. As the project's specific activities and locations become better defined, further screening will be conducted to ensure there are no negative impacts on physical and cultural resources at the time of implementation.

**h) Standard on grievance mechanisms (triggered)**

Project-affected communities and other interested stakeholders may raise a grievance at any time to the PMU and WWF. The PMU will be responsible for informing project-affected parties about the Accountability and Grievance Mechanism. Contact information of the PMU and WWF will be made publicly available. Relevant details are also provided in the Grievance Redress section of this ESMF/PF/EMPF.

The WWF Standard on Grievance Mechanisms is not intended to replace country-level dispute resolution and redress mechanisms. The project-specific grievance mechanism is designed to: address potential breaches of WWF's policies and procedures in a gender-responsive manner; be independent, transparent, and effective; be survivor-centered and offer protections to those reporting SEAH-related grievances; be accessible to project-affected people; keep complainants abreast of progress of cases brought forward; and maintain records on all cases and issues brought forward for review.

**i) Standard on public consultation and disclosure (triggered)**

This standard requires meaningful consultation with relevant stakeholders, occurring as early as possible and throughout the project cycle. It requires the Project Team to provide relevant information in a timely manner and in a form and language that are understandable and accessible to diverse stakeholders. This standard also requires that information concerning environmental and social issues relevant to the project is disclosed for at least 30 days prior to implementation, and 45 days if the Indigenous Peoples Standard has been triggered.

WWF US and the Ministry of Agriculture and Environment (MoAE) will also disclose safeguards documentation on their respective web pages. The final safeguards documents should be published on national websites of the NBCA and made available locally in specific locations. The project is also required to locally release all final key safeguards documents via hardcopy, translated into the local language and in a culturally appropriate manner, to facilitate awareness by relevant stakeholders that the information is in the public domain for review.

**j) Standard on stakeholder engagement (triggered)**

This standard ensures that projects are committed to meaningful, effective and informed stakeholder engagement in the design and implementation of all GEF and GCF projects. Stakeholder engagement is an overarching term that encompasses a range of activities and interactions with stakeholders throughout the project cycle and is an essential aspect of good project management. The project has also prepared a

Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP) attached in Annex J of the Prodoc, that that identifies the relevant stakeholders and how to engage them into the project implementation during the project.

k) Guidance note on gender-based violence and sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment

All over the world, it is estimated that one in three women and girls experience gender based violence (GBV) during her lifetime. A recent study conducted by IUCN, in collaboration with USAID as part of Advancing Gender in the Environment (AGENT), states that forms of GBV (ranging from sexual, physical and psychological violence, to trafficking, sexual harassment, sexual coercion and in some cases rape) can be linked to environmental issues.

The Project relates to effective management of PAs and the landscapes in which they are located through support to law enforcement, patrolling and better management and restoration of landscapes by restricting access to natural resources. These activities can potentially give rise to GBV/SEAH risks where government-employed law enforcement officials or forest rangers supported by the project may misuse the power of their positions by sexually exploiting women in local communities. This is a particular risk if local women are collecting natural resources in PAs. Additionally, the projects that promote alternative livelihoods, particularly ones that improve women's empowerment and decision making, can often lead to changes in power dynamics within communities and increase the risks of GBV/SEAH toward those empowered women.

GBV and SEAH in the implementation of WWF-funded activities in projects and programs is unacceptable and requires timely, proportional, and appropriate action. WWF recognizes that to achieve biodiversity conservation it is vital to promote gender equality and make every effort to ensure that project activities implemented by WWF or partners respect integrity and human rights and mitigate any risk that gives rise to discriminatory and exploitative gender inequalities. WWF does support projects in areas where there is civil war, ethnic conflict, and insurgencies where there are existing GBV/SEAH risks. It is important to understand these risks in order to avoid exacerbating local conditions that contribute to GBV/SEAH, which would undermine any conservation outcomes the project may seek to achieve.

For WWF projects, including GEF projects, under the Standard on Community Health and Security, the project team should identify any potential GBV/SEAH risks by screening proposed project activities using the following questions:

- Is there a risk that the project could pose a greater burden on women by restricting the use, development, and protection of natural resources by women compared with that of men?
- Is there a risk that persons employed by or engaged directly in the project might engage in gender-based violence (including sexual exploitation, sexual abuse, or sexual harassment)?
- Does the project increase the risk of GBV and/or SEAH for women and girls, for example by changing resource use practices?
- Does any mandated training for any individuals associated with the project (including project staff, government park rangers and guards, other park staff, consultants, partner organizations and contractors) cover GBV/SEAH (along with human rights, etc.)?

The identification of GBV/SEAH risks in a project has been undertaken as part of project preparation and conducted during community/stakeholder consultations together with identifying potential risks and screening impacts on vulnerable groups, community health, safety and security, labor and working

conditions, gender equality issues, and any other social or environmental risks. It could not find any potential GB V/SEAH risk identified during this stage. However, it should be further identified any GBV/SEAH risks during the project implementation.

## l) Guidance Note on Labor and Working Conditions

As a conservation organization, WWF does not typically fund large infrastructure activities in conservation projects implemented by WWF GEF Agency and therefore does not directly adversely impact labor and working conditions. However, WWF GEF Agency projects do implement projects in the forestry, agriculture and fisheries sectors, which may have potential unintended adverse impacts. This is mostly seen in financing activities necessary for strengthening PA management systems, including construction of PA administrative buildings, watch towers, or accommodations for park guards.

In such cases, these activities are usually executed by third party contractors who employ construction workers including sub-contractors. In such cases, WWF will ensure that any funding for such activities complies with SIPP and more specifically international labor and working condition standards such as the International Labour Organization's (ILO) Declaration on the Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and any relevant local labor standards of the project specific countries.

This Guidance Note provides detailed guidance of reasonable precautions to implement in managing principal risks to occupational health and safety. The following is based on the IFC's Environmental, Health, and Safety Guidelines (April 30, 2007), and covers the following general thematic areas:

1. General Facility Design and Operation
  - a) Integrity of Workplace Structures
  - b) Severe Weather and Facility Shutdown
  - c) Workspace and Exit
  - d) Fire Precautions
  - e) Lavatories and Showers
  - f) Potable Water Supply
  - g) Clean Eating Area
  - h) Lighting
  - i) Safe Access
  - j) First Aid
  - k) Air Supply
  - l) Work Environment Temperature
2. Training
  - a. Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Training
3. Physical Hazards
  - a. Rotating and Moving Equipment
  - b. Rotating and Moving Equipment
  - c. Vibration
  - d. Electrical
  - e. Eye Hazards
  - f. Welding / Hot Work
  - g. Industrial Vehicle Driving and Site Traffic
  - h. Working Environment Temperature

- i. Ergonomics, Repetitive Motion, Manual Handling
  - j. Working at Heights
  - k. Illumination
- 4. Standards for Workers Living Conditions
  - a. General living facilities
  - b. Drainage
  - c. Heating, air conditioning, ventilation and light
  - d. Water
  - e. Wastewater and solid waste
  - f. Rooms/dormitories facilities
  - g. Bed arrangements and storage facilities
  - h. Sanitary and toilet facilities
  - i. Toilet facilities
  - j. Showers/bathrooms and other sanitary facilities
  - k. Canteen, cooking and laundry facilities
  - l. Medical facilities
  - m. Leisure, social and telecommunications facilities

m) Guidance Note on Projects Relating to Dams

Not applicable given the project will not be related to any dams.

n) Guidance Note on Ranger Principles

Forest rangers play a key role in protecting wildlife, managing PAs, and resolving human-wildlife conflict. Forest rangers must act within the law and under high ethical standards in order to achieve positive outcomes from both people and nature. WWF only supports legitimate law enforcement activities that are carried out in a way that respects and protects the human rights of local communities and Indigenous Peoples. Certain measures are in place to uphold WWF's high ethical standards, including a risk assessment, mitigation actions, and continuous monitoring throughout implementation.<sup>9</sup> Rangers are expected to adhere to the following principles:

1. Act within the law.
2. Ensure accountability.
3. Build ranger capacity
4. Support the welfare of rangers and their families.
5. Partner with local communities.
6. Identify, monitor and plan for challenges.
7. Maintain impartiality.
8. Communicate regularly.
9. Sanctions for malfeasance.

### 3.3 Gaps between Vietnam regulations and the WWF's SIPP

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<sup>9</sup> See [Ranger Principles document](#) for more details.

The following section compares the applicable elements of WWF’s SIPP and national laws and requirements. There are a few differences between the two systems, as discussed below. In all cases of conflict or discrepancy, the requirements of the WWF SIPP will prevail.

**Table 5:** Overview of potential gaps between country policies and laws and WWF SIPP

Standards triggered of WWF SIPP	WWF SIPP	Viet Nam Legal Framework	Proposed Project Approach
<b>Standard on environment and social risk management</b>	Projects where site specific measures are not yet defined usually required to develop ESMF, integrating all requirements of the Guideline.	Law on Environmental Protection (2020) come in to effective in January 2022 requires that all agencies, organisations, households, and individuals protect the environment. Assessments and site-specific plans are required commensurate with the risk categorisation.	The ESMF is prepared to set out guidelines and procedures on how to identify, assess and monitor environmental and social impacts, and how to avoid or mitigate adverse impacts. Site-specific ESMPs will be prepared as required, based on principles and guidelines of the ESMF during the project implementation.  The project needs to adhere with the international standard and guidance if they are more stringent than the national laws
Risk categorisation	Cat. A (high risk): full or comprehensive ESIA+ESMP Cat. B (moderate risk): partial assessment ESIA+ESMP Cat. C (low risk): no further assessment, standard project approaches should be set out in an SEP	In previous versions of LEP, investment projects were mainly classified by the scale, capacity and type of production, business and service. In the LEP 2020, the environmental criteria for investment project classification are further expanded, adding areas and sensitive environmental factors such as high-density residential areas, water sources, agricultural land, types of forests, natural heritage sites, etc. In details, in LEP 2020, investment projects are classified into 4 groups:  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Group I: investment projects that pose a high risk of adverse environmental impacts</li> </ul>	The project is CAT B, aligns with Group III. The ESMF must align national and international risk categorizations and associated requirements to avoid duplicative procedures and documentation.

Standards triggered of WWF SIPP	WWF SIPP	Viet Nam Legal Framework	Proposed Project Approach
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Group II: investment projects that pose a risk of adverse environmental impacts</li> <li>• Group III: investment projects that pose a low risk of adverse environmental impacts</li> <li>• Group IV: investment projects that do not pose a risk of adverse environmental impacts</li> </ul>	
Safeguards Screening Tool	Environment and Social Safeguards Coordinator will conduct review the relevant documents from the Project Teams once a Project Identification Form (PIF) has been approved and a full Project Document (Prodoc) or a full project proposal development has commenced	Projects are required to self-assess risk based on the scope and impact of activities in accordance with the Annex guidance but may be subject to review by authorities.	Screening structure has been provided in the ESMF to enable site-based assessment and mitigation for each proposed activity.
<b>Protection of Natural Habitats</b>	<p>It requires that projects protect biodiversity and habitats (avoid adverse impacts on biodiversity, and when avoidance is not possible, to implement measures to minimise adverse impacts.).</p> <p>Any project- or program-supported production or harvesting of living natural resources should be carried out consistent with good sustainable management practices.</p> <p>The supported activities should conform with applicable frameworks and measures related to access and benefit sharing of such resources.</p>	<p>Vietnam has an extensive framework for biodiversity conservation. Viet Nam’s Constitution provides that The State has a policy to stably use natural resources; to protect nature and biodiversity.</p> <p>The fundamental legal foundation is provided for by the Law on Biodiversity. Law on Biodiversity (2008) requires conservation areas to be established with clearly defined zones: strictly protected, ecological conservation and service administrative areas. This Act elevates the principles and priorities of biodiversity conservation to the level of an independent law, which specifies the principles and priorities of biodiversity conservation at all levels, from national and ministerial to local levels.</p>	The ESMF will outline a draft structure for site specific environmental and social screening. Depending on the outcome of these assessments, appropriate measures will need to be included in the site-level ESMFs.
<b>Standard on restriction of access</b>	<p>The WWF Network’s policy to ensure that: Adverse social or economic impacts on resource-dependent local communities resulting from conservation-related restrictions on resource access and/or use.</p> <p>Where restrictions on land use or take place, the affected persons must be</p>	<p>Land Law (2024) sets out land use rights, management, and administration with the state as the manager of land.</p> <p>The Constitution protects the right to own dwellings and production materials – and takings must be compensated at market rates. The</p>	The ESMF/PF will summarize the key programmatic risks linked to this issue. Where the Project activities are identified as potentially affecting the rights of ethnic minorities, an FPIC process will be applied.

Standards triggered of WWF SIPP	WWF SIPP	Viet Nam Legal Framework	Proposed Project Approach
	<p>meaningfully consulted and informed and where economic displacement is identified, the project must assist displaced persons in their efforts to improve, or at least restore, their livelihoods and living standards, in real terms, to pre-displacement levels or to levels prevailing prior to the beginning of project implementation.</p> <p>For projects that involve involuntary resettlement or involuntary restrictions of access to natural habitats resulting in adverse impacts on the livelihoods of project communities, the Project Team will have to prepare a Resettlement Action Plan (RAP) or Resettlement Policy Framework (RPF) and/or Process Framework as part of project preparation.</p>	<p>Land Law 2024 require that project proponents prepare a plan for compensation, subject to approval. The Land Law does not provide for compensation where assets were illegally established, or land was not used in accordance with purpose.</p>	<p>Where project activities induce any restrictions on land use, an ESMP will be developed based on the guidance outlined in the ESMF based on the requirement (mapping existing resource use/reliance, identification of impacts, consultation, development of mitigation measures co-designed by the affected stakeholders)</p>
<p><b>Standard on Indigenous Peoples</b></p>	<p>The standard requires the full respect for the human rights of Indigenous Peoples, requires specific attention of projects to obtain FPIC, culturally appropriate and equitable benefits (including from traditional ecological knowledge) are negotiated and agreed upon with the indigenous peoples' communities in question; and potential adverse impacts are avoided or adequately addressed through a participatory and consultative approach.</p>	<p>Due to the historical conditions of the country, the term "indigenous peoples" is not used in Viet Nam. Instead, the Ethnic minority (EM) is official terms used in Viet Nam replacing the term "indigenous peoples". Viet Nam is a unified nation of different ethnic groups.</p> <p>The Constitution of Viet Nam (2013) affirms that "all ethnicities are equal, unified and respect and assist one another for mutual development; all acts of national discrimination and division are strictly forbidden," and that "every ethnic group has the right to use its own language and system of writing, to preserve its national identity, to promote its fine customs, habits, traditions and culture."</p>	<p>The Project will implement an FPIC process, based on international best practices and guidance. The process should be timely (leaving enough time to reach an agreement on acceptable mode of decision-making, for discussions to influence/modify project activities based on the views of local EM communities and ensure on-going communication to ensure feedback and collaboration during implementation. The project should also establish a grievance and redress mechanism to serve as an accessible platform for airing and resolving project-related complaints. This ESMF/EMPF and later the EMDP will clarify the stakeholder engagement</p>

Standards triggered of WWF SIPP	WWF SIPP	Viet Nam Legal Framework	Proposed Project Approach
			process to ensure the respect for the self-determination of ethnic minorities in the Project activities.
<b>Standard on community health, safety and security</b>	Projects and programs should avoid, where feasible, or minimize the risk of community exposure to disease and other relevant health risks, taking into account differentiated levels of exposure, and the needs and exposure of Disadvantaged or Vulnerable Groups or Individuals.	<p>The Law on Safety, Labour Sanitation No. 84/2015/QH13 dated June 25, 2015.</p> <p>Circular No. 19/2011/TT - BYT of 06 June 2011 of the Ministry of Health guiding labour hygiene, labourers' health, and occupational diseases.</p> <p>Circular No. 22/2010/TT-BXD dated 03/12/2010 of Ministry of Construction providing labour safety in construction.</p>	The ESMF should identify the specific guidelines applicable for workers in the Project to ensure a progressive realisation of safe workplaces, reflecting the standards set out in national and international guidelines. In addition, the Project must track any incidents at work (patrolling) and ensure that underlying causes of accidents are investigated promptly to avoid any repeater cases. ESMF will identify and list measures for mitigating human wildlife conflict as well as measures to avoid and mitigate risks associated with support of conservation law enforcement
<b>Standard on grievance mechanisms</b>	Any project affected or interested party should have access to a accountability and grievance mechanism, which, in a timely manner, will receive and facilitate resolutions.	<p>Law on Complaints (2011) provides the procedures for citizens to complain and receive settlements related to administrative decisions or implementation, which is seen as unlawful.</p> <p>Law on Grassroots Mediation (2013) seeks to settle disputes, conflicts or violations at local level through use of mediators. The Law encourages prominent community members to participate in the conciliation process.</p>	The ESMF should establish a Project specific grievance mechanism, which serves as a platform to resolve potential issues at the lowest possible levels and respecting and integrating customary regulations available in ethnic communities. This may utilise the Vietnamese mediation approach, where local procedures are in place. The Project should monitor issues and reflect lessons learned into the subsequent Project

Standards triggered of WWF SIPP	WWF SIPP	Viet Nam Legal Framework	Proposed Project Approach
			management.
<b>Standard on Public Consultation and Disclosure</b>	This standard requires meaningful consultation with relevant stakeholders, occurring as early as possible and throughout the project cycle. It also requires disclosure of Safeguards-related documents and information in a culturally-relevant way in a language and format that the stakeholders can understand.	During the EIA process (under the Law on Environment (2020), the project owner shall consult with the potential project affected people and relevant stakeholders about the project development, The project owner shall consult with the People’s Committee of communes, wards and towns where the project is carried out, with organizations or community under the direct impact of the project; research and receive objective opinions and reasonable requests of relevant entities in order to minimize the negative effects of the project on the natural environment, biodiversity and community health.	The disclosure and consultant procedure is included in the ESMF. Where indigenous peoples are present and/or may be affected by the project, Project Teams should also consult implementation guidance for WWF’s Indigenous Peoples and associated guidance on FPIC procedures.
<b>Standard on stakeholder engagement</b>	Stakeholder engagement should be an integral part of the Project design. Requires information disclosure and meaningful consultation. It also requires the development of a project-specific Stakeholder Engagement Plan outlining relevant stakeholders and rightsholders, and how engagement will happen over the life of the project.	The community under the direct impact of the project shall be engaged in the form of community meeting co-chaired by project owner and the People’s Committee of the commune where the project is carried out together with the participation of representatives of Vietnamese Fatherland Front of communes, socio-political organizations, socio-professional organizations, neighbourhoods, villages convened by the People’s Committee of the commune. All opinions of delegates attending the meeting must be sufficiently and honestly stated in the meeting minutes.	The Project rests on a participatory approach. The ESMF will contain the framework for stakeholder mapping, analysis and engagement. A separate project-specific Stakeholder Engagement Plan has been developed, with special provisions for vulnerable groups, including ethnic minorities.

## 4. ANTICIPATED ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

This section outlines potential adverse environmental and social impacts that may result from project activities. As already mentioned, not all potential impacts of this project are known at this stage because the scope and nature of the activities to be supported by the Project are still being defined. As such, the

identified environmental and social risks and mitigation measures are referred to the ESMF of Central Annamites Landscape developed by the WWF in 2024.

Component 1 is not expected to have any noticeable environmental impacts, the nature of activities being primarily strengthening the institutional and policy framework, as well as financing mechanisms with no direct impact on the ground.

Component 2 and 3, however, involves a range of activities with the potential for environmental and social impact. In particular,

- Under Component 2 (Sustainable landscape management, biodiversity conservation and application of innovative tools in key globally-important wildlife habitats), Outcome 2.2 with Output 2.2.1, Outcome 2.3 with Output 2.3.1, Output 2.3.2
- Under Component 3 (Enhanced climate resilience and corridor connectivity), Outcome 3.1 with Output 3.1.1 and Output 3.1.4

Key adverse environmental and social impacts are related to potential access restrictions due to the support to improve the forest management and conservation of existing PAs, thus likely affecting the sources of economic income or other types of livelihoods of affected communities. Though, those impacts are expected to be site-specific and can be mitigated using appropriate mechanisms and tools.

Environmental and Social Safeguards Screening Tool was developed, reviewed and approved. It was rated as medium risk. This Environmental and Social Mitigation Framework, Process Framework and Ethnic Minority Planning Framework (ESMF/PF/EMPF) shall help to address risks and potential impacts associated with the safeguard issues of: (i) Protection of Natural Habitats; (ii) Ethnic Minority (EM); (iii) Restriction of Access; (iv) Community Health, Safety and Security; (v) Physical and Cultural Resources; and other cross cutting issues of children's rights, and climate change

The precise location and impact of specific activities cannot be determined at this stage, and will only be known during project implementation. Thus, an ESMF is prepared to set out guidelines and procedures on how to identify, assess and monitor environmental and social impacts, and how to avoid or mitigate adverse impacts. This ESMF contains an EMPF, which indicates the process that should be followed to develop site- and activity specific EMDPs; lays out the process for establishing future ESMPs as needed;

#### 4.1 Adverse Environmental Impacts

The project will bring about the positive impact on biodiversity conservation. The negative environmental impacts associated with this undertaking are considered to be minimal.

Certain environmental impacts to be considered:

- Invasive Alien Species (IAS): It is possible to introduce the invasive alien species during the activities of promoting the ecological restoration approaches, including assisted natural regeneration as well as implementation of pilot program for climate-resilient agroforestry or other sustainable livelihoods supported for local forest, mangrove and wetland dependent communities. Particularly, the high potential of introduction of IAS under the activities of

establishing demonstration sites for sustainable reforestation and wetland management. IAS is a threat to biodiversity, potentially resulting in a decline or elimination of native species.

- Potential livelihoods support interventions can have adverse environmental impacts like waste generation, water source pollution. Livestock management and aquaculture models are all issues that need to be carefully considered in the context of the habitat and natural resources in an area.
- Development of NTFP models could enhance illegal and unsustainable extraction or deleterious impacts on forest understorey. Human development aspirations are not always directly compatible with wildlife management goals and human-wildlife conflict needs to be carefully addressed.
- Community Health Safety and Security: The project will engage the local communities into the mentioned possibility of patrolling, biodiversity conservation/forest protection co-management or/and forest restoration that may result in potential risks to community safety and health.
- Unsustainable tourism development in sensitive areas will increase the overutilization of water, poor waste and sanitation management.

## 4.2 Environmental mitigation measures

**Table 6. Anticipated Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures**

Project Activity	Potential impact	Proposed mitigation measures	Responsible party
<b>Component 1: No Environmental Impact</b>			
<b>Component 2: Sustainable landscape management, biodiversity conservation and application of innovative tools in key globally-important wildlife habitats</b>			
Outcome 2.4 Improved integrated landscape and land-use planning and restoration measures at identified OECM sites to support high-value biodiversity and threatened species, leveraging gender-responsive community-based co-management measures to improve ecological and community benefits			
Output 2.4.3 Sustainable livelihoods supported for local forest, mangrove and wetland dependent communities, inclusive of gender considerations			
A2.4.3.1: Develop sustainable, biodiversity-friendly value chains for NTFPs, eco-tourism, and fisheries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Development of NTFP models could enhance illegal and unsustainable extraction/ overharvesting of NTFPs or deleterious impacts on forest understorey without carefully design and monitoring. Human development aspirations are not always directly compatible with wildlife management goals and human-wildlife conflict needs to be carefully addressed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To support communities to develop a plan on harvesting planted native NTFPs plants or NTFP plantation (e.g. rattan, ginseng or other medicinal herbs) shall be prepared and accepted by Forest Management Board (FMB) of the PAs and with Local Communities (LCs). Plan shall indicate how and when and how much and where planted indigenous plants to be harvested.</li> <li>Harvest of planted native plants shall be monitored and supervised by LCs and FMB</li> <li>Training on sustainable management and exploitation, low impact harvesting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PMU</li> <li>Safeguards Specialist</li> <li>Forest Management Boards (FMBs)</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The promotion of community-based ecotourism, if not well managed, may negatively affect biodiversity in special-use forests. Problems such as land use changes causing forest loss, and environmental pollution can all occur due to over tourism or ineffective management.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provides technical assistance to communities to select community-based ecotourism models that minimise negative impact and enhance positive impact.</li> <li>Environmental impact assessments as the specific activities and locations become better defined and site specific ESMP could be developed to avoid and mitigate any environmental impacts.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PMU</li> <li>Safeguards Specialist</li> </ul>
A2.4.2.3: Promote ecological restoration approaches, including assisted natural regeneration and habitat corridors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Invasive Alien Species (IAS) could inadvertently be introduced during restoration activities and agroforestry</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All wildlife introductions need to follow national conservation best practice and need to be undertaken after relevant</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PMU,</li> <li>Safeguards Specialist</li> </ul>

<p>A2.4.3.3: Implement pilot programs for climate-resilient agroforestry and sustainable aquaculture in target provinces.</p>	<p>that will result in a decline or elimination of native species and adverse impacts on biodiversity and ecological habitat.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Ecological restoration approaches, including assisted natural regeneration and habitat corridors via engagement of LCs may result in potential risks to their health and safety without prevention measures</li> </ul>	<p>feasibility studies and assessments should be undertaken.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Project activities to use native species and/or locally developed varieties that are registered and well-known in restoration and agroforestry and aquaculture activities.</li> <li>● Provide personal protected tools and equipment and ensure it's using during the course of actions by those involved in restoration</li> <li>● Provide first aid kit for all working in forest</li> <li>● Provide training on Health Safety and Security for involved persons.</li> </ul>	
<p>A2.4.3.3: Implement pilot programs for climate-resilient agroforestry and sustainable aquaculture in target provinces.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Potential livelihoods support interventions can have adverse environmental impacts.</li> <li>● Agroforestry practices, livestock management and aquaculture models are all issues that need to be carefully considered in the context of the habitat and natural resources in an area.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● To support FMBs/MPAs to assess potential ES impacts and identify the conservation/ climate-resilient livelihood models that should be designed not to affect natural forest of PAs and wetland area or Marine Protected Area (MPAs)</li> <li>● To support the LCs to access to the agriculture extension service to receive the training on environmentally-friendly/ sustainable production techniques following good practices.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● PMU,</li> <li>● Safeguards Specialist</li> </ul>
<p>A2.4.1.3: Identify and pilot community-managed OECM models, integrating co-management frameworks with local authorities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Pilot community-managed OECM models may result in potential risks to community safety and health.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Provide personal protected tools and equipment and ensure it's using during the course of actions by those involve in OECM models</li> <li>● Provide first aid kit for all working in OECM models</li> <li>● Provide training on Health Safety and Security for involved persons.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● PMU,</li> <li>● Safeguards Specialist</li> </ul>
<p><b>Component 3</b> Enhanced climate resilience and corridor connectivity</p>			
<p>Outcome 3.1: Enhanced climate resilience and corridor connectivity in and around high conservation value forested landscapes and wetlands Output 3.1.4: Best practice approaches to forest, mangrove and wetland restoration and reforestation/sustainable harvesting documented, and capacities enhanced through training and locally-relevant and gender responsive guidelines</p>			
<p>A3.1.4.3 Establish demonstration sites for sustainable reforestation and wetland</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Invasive Alien Species (IAS) could inadvertently be introduced during</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Project activities to use native species and/or locally developed varieties that are</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● PMU,</li> </ul>

<p>management, showcasing innovative restoration techniques that optimize biodiversity and carbon benefits.</p>	<p>restoration activities that will result in a decline or elimination of native species and adverse impacts on biodiversity and ecological habitat.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reforestation might result in the further natural forest loss without detail verification</li> </ul>	<p>registered and well-known in restoration activities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All wildlife introductions need to follow national conservation best practice and need to be undertaken after relevant feasibility studies and assessments have been undertaken. Particularly, site selection for the forest restoration should be screened and verified by site visit and consultation with the LCs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safeguards Specialist</li> <li>• Reforestation and/or wildlife technical expert as needed</li> </ul>
<p><b>Component 4:</b> Awareness raising and knowledge management to improve landscape management</p>			
<p>Outcome 4.1: Communication and knowledge management strategies developed and implemented to share and publicize project's results and advancements</p>			
<p>Output 4.1.1 Mechanism for impact management and dissemination of both a public-private financing model for climate, nature and people benefits, including women, and OECM model in Central Vietnam</p> <p>Output 4.1.2: A gender responsive communication strategy developed and under implementation to share and publicize project's results and advancements</p> <p>Output 4.1.3 Replication strategy developed for the Plain of Reeds important wetland and, at larger scale, for the Mekong Delta Landscape, inclusive of gender considerations</p> <p>Output 4.1.4 A gender responsive knowledge management plan developed and implemented, including South-South</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No adverse impacts expected</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No adverse impacts expected</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>
<p><b>Monitoring and Evaluation (M&amp;E)</b></p>			
<p>Project implemented according to Results-Based Management principles</p>			
<p>ME4 Monitoring of Gender and Safeguards Action Plans</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No adverse impacts expected</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No adverse impacts expected</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>

### 4.3 Adverse Social Impacts

Similarly to the anticipated environmental impacts of the intervention, the social impacts are considered to be positive overall. However, social considerations are of greater concern than environmental issues. As shown in the section 2, the mountainous CLV project area is inhabited by a diverse variety of ethnic minority communities and groups who comprise the majority of project affected households. Although the project will not expect any resettlement or land acquisition that result in loss of land or productive land, there are a range of potentially significant social safeguard issues linked to their forest tenure rights and impacts on the livelihoods of such peoples, many of whom are amongst the poorest and most vulnerable in Vietnam and dependent on forest lands and resources:

- Restricted access to protected areas resulting in adverse impacts on incomes and livelihoods: The project does include a number of protected area sites. At these sites there are local ethnic minority populations residing within and/or on the periphery of the protected area. Although the project will not directly establish new PAs that may result in the displacement of people. Instead, the project will only support the technical document for the establishment of new PAs or ecological corridors of existing PAs which may exacerbate the limited access to forest resources. Moreover, the project will strengthen the conservation and landscape management and improve law enforcement of existing PAs and by expanding the SMART patrol system of existing PAs that has been successfully applied in previous WWW projects in the Central Annamite Region. The project may also support stronger forest patrolling efforts that may increase access restrictions to forest products (e.g. fuel wood, NTFPs) that negatively affecting local people's livelihoods, particularly to women who mainly access the PAs for NTFPs collection. Access restriction may be increased by restoration of degraded forests, mangroves and important wetlands and technical support to strengthen OECM management.
- Exclusion from and/or or inequitable distribution of project benefits: There is the danger that the same communes and villages are selected for reasons of convenience or ease of implementation and/or that project benefits are skewed towards those households that are already better off, leaving behind those poorer or more vulnerable households or groups such as more vulnerable ethnic minority groups, ethnic minority women or female headed households. During stakeholder consultations in several sites, participants raised the issue of how particular sites, communities and households are selected as beneficiaries, noting that the project must select certain communes and villages to participate in the project and exclude others. Participants stressed the need for this process to be open, accountable and transparent.
- Lack of Full and Effective Consultation and Participation: With the project focusing primarily on biodiversity conservation and livelihood activities through FMBs, there are concerns that the project could be implemented in a top-down manner by the FMBs with local communities merely providing labour. Whilst initial stakeholder consultation was conducted as part of the scoping study, consultation following FPIC needs to be maintained throughout the project, and there is also a need for greater consultation at grassroots level among local communities (LCs), particular those are EMs. It will be especially important during the initial planning stages of site-level implementation as a means towards verifying community support for interventions, particularly regarding the location of forest and coastal wetland restoration
- Project-affected people (PAP), including Indigenous Peoples, might not be able to effectively claim their rights, raise their concerns or file grievances, due to limiting factors and barriers. Such barriers include, but are not limited to, awareness, logistics, language, culture, literacy, and technology. Moreover, the grievances that were effectively filed by the Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities. For example, human-wildlife conflict (the Nong Son Elephant PA in Quang

Nam province mostly related to damages to crop field by elephants), financial access, livelihood activities are not being timely and appropriately addressed. If the concerns, grievances and/or objections raised by the PAPs are not properly addressed, the achievement of the Project's objectives could be jeopardized.

- *Gender/Social Exclusion:* The project could result negatively on women in terms of: access to NTFP, access to the fund, participation in livelihood activities and other conservation activities, lack of consultations. Women are disadvantaged on access to and use of forest land and their land rights are less secure than those of men's. In particular ethnic minority women have greater need for common property resources, especially related to forests. Their access to information is less than men's and are less likely to be actively involved in consultations. Poor persons irrespective of gender or ethnicity are less likely to receive adequate information. (Please see the Annex O: Assessment on Gender, Livelihood and Community Participation in the Target Landscape and Annex P: Gender Action Plan)
- *Cultural heritage:* activities proposed could indirectly affect areas containing sites with physical cultural resources. Ethnic minority (EM) people often have close connection with forest areas, including spiritual connections. The field visits and consultations revealed that some PAs contain ancestral villages and ritual sites of invaluable cultural wealth. Moreover, local communities have also detailed ecological knowledge, traditional conservation practices and a strong spiritual and physical link to the rainforest.

## 4.4 Social Mitigation Measures

Table 7. Anticipated Social Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Project Activity	Potential impact	Proposed mitigation measures	Responsible party
<b>Component 1.</b>	No adverse impacts expected		
<b>Component 2</b> Sustainable landscape management, biodiversity conservation and application of innovative tools in key globally-important wildlife habitats			
Outcome 2.2 Increased management effectiveness across 383,564 ha of PAs in Central Vietnam			
Output 2.2.1 Capacity in management effectiveness, governance, and law enforcement of proposed management boards of PAs, BCAs, OECM sites, and Wetland Nature Reserves improved to reduce threats to flagship species and wildlife through technical assistance and gender equality			
Output 2.3.2 Improvement of effectiveness of corridor management plans			
<p>A2.2.1.1: Develop and institutionalize a standardized training program for management boards of PAs, BCAs, OECMs, and wetland reserves, focusing on biodiversity conservation, enforcement protocols, and gender-responsive governance</p> <p>A2.2.1.4: Provide technical support to strengthen OECM management, ensuring governance structures are equipped to fulfill conservation mandates and align with national biodiversity strategies</p> <p>A2.3.2.3: Strengthen cross-provincial cooperation mechanisms for joint corridor management, including standardized regulations and enforcement strategies;</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● EM's cultural and spiritual practices (e.g. worshipping the forest god, burying the dead, etc.) at the proposed regeneration and restoration of degraded forest with indigenous species may be restricted.</li> <li>● Local communities (LCs), including local EMs who are relying on forest may be restricted from access to NTFPs, fuel wood, honey, medicinal plants, etc.</li> <li>● LCs's resource access and use may be affected through: (i) loss of income; (ii) spend extra time and travel extra distances to other forest locations for obtaining NTFP: (iii) having less time for taking care of their family, incl. children and elderly; (iv) Change of living conditions and livelihood.</li> <li>● Increase conflict between PA staff and LCs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Undertake consultation, using FPIC procedures with EMs to ensure that the institutionation and biodiversity conseration enforcement and strengthening of PAs, BCAs, OECMs management is mutually acceptable that recognizes EM cultural, social and related practices that enable EM persons to conduct their traditional practice of worshipping the forest god and burying the dead, etc at agreed time frame and selected locations.</li> <li>● In case of inadvertent loss of access to resource use prepare an alternative livelihood plan that is acceptable to those affected or agree on establishing community managed participatory forestry in buffer zones with defined resource sharing agreements</li> <li>● Stakeholder Engagement Plan has been developed that defines the clear role and responsibilities of each stakeholder, including local communities in the project implementation</li> <li>● Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM) for the project, based on the existing government and WWF grievance redressal mechanisms is disclosed to stakeholder and potential PAPs and LCs for receiving and handling grievance.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● PMU,</li> <li>● Safeguards Specialist</li> </ul>
Outcome 2.4 Improved integrated landscape and land-use planning and restoration measures at identified OECM sites to support high-value biodiversity and threatened species, leveraging gender-responsive community-based co-management measures to improve ecological and community benefits			

Output 2.4.2 Innovations tested and proliferated for wildlife conservation, landscape management and human wildlife conflict			
<p>A2.4.2.3: Promote ecological restoration approaches, including assisted natural regeneration and habitat corridors</p> <p>A3.1.3.2 Develop site-specific restoration plans for degraded forests, mangroves, and wetlands, integrating indigenous species selection, reforestation techniques, and pest/disease management</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● LCs, including local EM persons who are relying on the degraded forests, mangroves, and wetlands may be restricted from access to nature resources (NFTP, fish..)</li> <li>● LC may be affected through: (i) loss of income; (ii) spend extra time and travel extra distances to other forest locations for obtaining NFTPs or other wetland for fishing/aquaculture: (iii) having less time for taking care of their family, incl. child and elderly; (iv) Change of living conditions and livelihood.</li> <li>● Increase conflict between Project and LCs those are practicing in the existing forestland/wetland area</li> <li>● Gender/Social Exclusion in livelihood activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● To ensure that FMB considers alternative options for the selection of best possible forest areas for regeneration and restoration of degraded forest with indigenous species. The selected option shall optimise conservation purpose and minimise adverse impact to local communities.</li> <li>● Implementation of the forest areas for regeneration and restoration will be designed into phases making favourable conditions for APs to gradually overcome difficulties and minimise access restriction impacts. Additionally, the project team shall ensure that FMB works with local authorities to identify current support programs (revolving fund, vocational training, etc) to provide support for affected persons.</li> <li>● To support, if required, MPAs/Wetland area in identification of alternative fishing area</li> <li>● To ensure that FMB/MPAs/Wetland area conducts meaningful consultation with PAPs and LC. FPIC is applied in case of affected EMs.</li> <li>● Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM) for the project, based on the existing government and WWF grievance redressal mechanisms is disclosed to stakeholder and potential PAPs and LCs for receiving and handling grievance.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● PMU</li> <li>● Safeguards Specialist</li> </ul>
<p>A2.4.2.4: Scale up conservation-friendly agricultural practices that minimize human-wildlife conflicts.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● LCs (PAPs), particular the EMs will not be allowed to carry out cattle grazing (e.g. buffalo) inside PAs thus affecting their livelihood, income, etc will be negatively affected</li> <li>●</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● To support, if required, FMB in the preparation and implementation of mitigation measures, including: (i) identification of potential land plots outside of PAs for cattle grazing; (ii) provision of technical assistance (e.g. building of animal lodging, grass growing techniques and veterinary services, opportunities to join livelihood improvement models, etc.) and (iv) explore projects or programs that are currently executed by local authorities that may provide support (vocational training, engage in agricultural supporting fund, etc) to affected households to help them improve their income and livelihood.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● PMU</li> <li>● Safeguards Specialist</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Undertake meaningful consultation with all AHs and with LC, CSO, NGO, using FPIC procedures with EMs to ensure that the institutionation and biodiversity conseration enforcement and</li> <li>● Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM) for the project, based on the existing government and WWF grievance redressal mechanisms is disclosed to stakeholder and potential PAHs and LCs for receiving and handling grievance.</li> </ul>	
<b>Output 2.4.3 Sustainable livelihoods supported for local forest, mangrove and wetland dependent communities, inclusive of gender considerations</b>			
A2.4.3.3: Implement pilot programs for climate-resilient agroforestry and sustainable aquaculture in target provinces.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Inequitable selection of beneficiaries</li> <li>● Lack of Full and Effective Consultation and Participation</li> <li>● Exclusion of vulnerable groups from project activities and benefits</li> <li>● Gender/Social Exclusion in livelihood activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Site level plans to identify specific activities for marginalized groups such as landless, poor households, female headed households, women and on the top of that EMs should be prioritized etc. Specify minimum quotas for the selection of women as beneficiaries (e.g. 50% poor/near poor and 30% women) of livelihood development activities.</li> <li>● Stakeholder Engagement Plan has been developed that defines the clear role and responsibilities of each stakeholder, including local communities in the project implementation</li> <li>● Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM) for the project, based on the existing government and WWF grievance redressal mechanisms is disclosed to stakeholder and potential PAPs and LCs for receiving and handling grievance. If a partner's GRM applied an agreement with that party to quickly and securely pass reports to WWF-Viet Nam for handling if relevant.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● PMU</li> <li>● Safeguards Specialist</li> </ul>
<b>Component 3 Enhanced climate resilience and corridor connectivity</b>			
Outcome 3.1: Enhanced climate resilience and corridor connectivity in and around high conservation value forested landscapes and wetlands			
3.1.3: Site selection and restoration of degraded forests, mangroves and important wetlands leveraging nature-based solutions, increasing carbon sequestration, realizing carbon benefits, and improving connectivity to benefit long-term population viability of keystone, and threatened species			
A3.1.3.2 Develop site-specific restoration plans for degraded forests, mangroves, and wetlands, integrating indigenous species selection, reforestation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● LCs, including local EM persons who are relying on the degraded forests, mangroves, and wetlands may be restricted from access to nature resources (NFTP, fish..)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● To ensure that FMB considers alternative options for the selection of best possible forest areas for regeneration and restoration of degraded forest with indigenous species. The selected option</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● PMU</li> <li>● Safeguards Specialist</li> </ul>

<p>techniques, and pest/disease management</p> <p>A3.1.3.3 Implement riparian and coastal wetland restoration in the TG-CH lagoon system, improving connectivity and ecosystem resilience</p> <p>A3.1.4.3 Establish demonstration sites for sustainable reforestation and wetland management, showcasing innovative restoration techniques that optimize biodiversity and carbon benefits.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● LC may be affected through: (i) loss of income; (ii) spend extra time and travel extra distances to other forest locations for obtaining NTFPs or other wetland for fishing/aquaculture: (iii) having less time for taking care of their family, incl. child and elderly; (iv) Change of living conditions and livelihood.</li> <li>● Increase conflict between Project and LCs those are practicing in the existing forestland/wetland area</li> </ul>	<p>shall optimise conservation purpose and minimise adverse impact to local communities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Implementation of the forest areas for riparian and coastal wetland restoration will be designed into phases making favourable conditions for PAPs to gradually overcome difficulties and minimise access restriction impacts. Additionally, the project team shall ensure that MPAs/Wetland area works with local authorities to identify current support programs (revolving fund, vocational training, etc) to provide support for affected persons.</li> <li>● To support, if required, MPAs/Wetland area in identification of alternative fishing area</li> <li>● To ensure that FMB/MPAs/Wetland area conducts meaningful consultation with PAPs and LC. FPIC is applied in case of affected EMs.</li> <li>● Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM) for the project, based on the existing government and WWF grievance redressal mechanisms is disclosed to stakeholder and potential PAPs and LCs for receiving and handling grievance</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Component 4:</b> Awareness raising and knowledge management to improve landscape management</p> <p><b>Outcome 4.1:</b> Communication and knowledge management strategies developed and implemented to share and publicize project's results and advancements</p>			
<p><i>Output 4.1.1</i> Mechanism for impact management and dissemination of both a public-private financing model for climate, nature and people benefits, including women, and OECM model in Central Vietnam</p> <p><i>Output 4.1.2:</i> A gender responsive communication strategy developed and under implementation to share and publicize project's results and advancements</p> <p><i>Output 4.1.3</i> Replication strategy developed for the Plain of Reeds important wetland and, at larger scale, for the</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● No adverse impacts expected</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● No adverse impacts expected</li> </ul>	

Mekong Delta Landscape, inclusive of gender considerations <i>Output 4.1.4</i> A gender responsive knowledge management plan developed and implemented, including South-South			
<b>Monitoring and Evaluation (M&amp;E)</b>			
<b>Outcome</b> Project implemented according to Results-Based Management principles			
<i>Output ME4</i> Monitoring of Gender and Safeguards Action Plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● No adverse impacts expected</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● No adverse impacts expected</li> </ul>	

## 4.5 Process Framework: Livelihood Restoration Measures

The development of site-specific management plans as part of the project may result in restrictions of access to livelihoods and natural resources for local communities.

Activities under the Output 2.2.1 Capacity in management effectiveness, governance, and law enforcement of proposed management boards of PAs, BCAs, OECM sites, and Wetland Nature Reserves improved to reduce threats to flagship species and wildlife through technical assistance and gender equality, Output 2.3.2 Improvement of effectiveness of corridor management plans, Output 3.1.3: Site selection and restoration of degraded forests, mangroves and important wetlands leveraging nature-based solutions, increasing carbon sequestration, realizing carbon benefits, and improving connectivity to benefit long-term population viability of keystone, and threatened species may result in restrictions of access to livelihoods and natural resources for local communities.

These activities should be based on free and prior informed consultations of the affected communities and relevant authorities before any action would be conducted on the ground. If the site survey find any negative impacts sources of economic income or other types of livelihoods of affected communities, full and timely compensation shall be provided to all affected individuals, irrespective of their formal land title. All affected communities and households around the project-supported areas will be provided with opportunities to restore their livelihoods to at least pre-project levels. Particularly, livelihoods activities and financial source proposed by the support during project implementation will be unlocked and provided to the households (HH) of all communities impacted by project-induced restrictions of access to natural and community resources within the targeted areas. This process will be organized in the following manner:

- Screening

The Safeguards Specialist at PMU will undertake screening of all planned activities for likely restrictions of access and use for local communities (See Appendix 1). This will include both communities that reside in project-affected areas as well as seasonal users who have traditional and historical ties to the project landscape.

- Social assessment

If the screening confirms and identifies households affected due to access restriction to natural resources, a social assessment (SA) process based on participatory consultations with affected peoples will be carried out. The SA will generate the necessary baseline information on demographics, social, cultural, and economic characteristics of affected communities, as well as the land and territories that they have traditionally used and the natural resources on which they depend. The SA will assess potential impacts and the extent of restriction of access to resources along with suitable mitigation and enhancement measures including options for alternative access to similar resources.

- Livelihood Restoration Plans

Based on the findings of the screening and social assessment, Livelihood Restoration Plans (LRP) will be prepared in consultation with affected peoples and stakeholders which will provide tailored livelihood support and benefit sharing for affected persons, groups and communities.

The LRPs will be site-specific and include the following issues: (i) identifying and ranking of site-specific impacts; (ii) setting out criteria and eligibility for livelihood assistance; (iii) outlining the rights of persons

who have been either customarily or legally/illegally using forest, water or land resources for subsistence to be respected; (iv) identifying and describing available mitigation measures alternatives, taking into account the provisions of applicable local legislation, the available measures for mitigation promoted via project activities and any additional sound alternatives proposed by the affected persons; (v) outlining specific procedures on how compensation can be obtained.

- Mitigation measures as part of the LRPs

Participatory and inclusive consultations should be carried out with affected communities, individuals, and stakeholders to agree on the allocation of alternative livelihood. Eligibility criteria should be established according to guidelines provided in Section 4.5 Process Framework. Alternative livelihood schemes should be discussed, agreed upon and provided for affected persons/ groups. The livelihood options to be built on and be based upon the traditional skills, knowledge, practices and the culture/world view of the affected peoples/groups and persons. Affected persons should be provided project-related livelihood support and other opportunities as part of the planned project activities.

These may include activities implemented as part of Output 2.4.3 Sustainable livelihoods supported for local forest, mangrove and wetland dependent communities, inclusive of gender considerations. An accessible and efficient grievance redress mechanism should be established and made functional (see Chapter 5.9 of this ESMF/PF/IPPF).

Special attention should be made to tailoring these mitigation measures to the needs of IP groups, in line with the guidelines provided in Chapter 4.6 of this ESMF/PF/IPPF. While some of them may be interested in the mitigation measures outlined above, others may necessitate an alternative approach (e.g., allocation of alternative agricultural areas or preserving access to wood collection, fishing, hunting, etc.). Any proposed measures should be closely coordinated with PAPs to ensure that they fully reflect their needs and priorities

- Compensation

In case that compensation is awarded, it shall be agreed upon as part of a FPIC process. In cases where monetary compensation is awarded, it shall be calculated based on the replacement value of these livelihoods (economic market value plus any replacement costs) in a participatory manner and following FPIC, by community representatives and the Safeguards Specialist, in collaboration with relevant Government Officials and Local Authorities. In cases where compensation will consist of the allocation of alternative resources (e.g., alternative agricultural areas), measures will include identification of these resources with the active involvement of the affected persons/communities and assistance to access these resources. This should also be determined as part of an FPIC process. Detailed procedures on how compensation should be calculated and awarded should be provided in each site-specific LRP based on local conditions.

#### 4.6 Ethnic Minority Planning Framework

##### (a) EM Population of Project Sites

The central landscape provinces are the homeland of 50/53 ethnic minority groups with more than 0.8 million people, accounting for 8.2 per cent of the seven provinces' total population. The number of ethnic minority populations and groups varies across provinces. While Nghe An has 46 ethnic minority groups accounting for nearly 15 per cent of its total population, these numbers in Ha Tinh are 35 and 0.2 per cent,

and Da Nang – 37 and 0.5 per cent respectively (Table 2). The exact population of IP in each PAs have not been identified at this stage but will be surveyed in detail before proposal of any activities at site level.

Ethnic minority and mountainous areas are recognized as significantly important geographic locations in terms of the socio-economic dimensions, national defense, security and ecological environment. However, the ethnic minority and mountainous areas are the most disadvantaged with a poverty rate significantly higher than the national average

The project landscape as a whole encompasses the entire CLV. As such, more information on IPs and the sites where they can be found will become available as the project advances into its implementation phase.

(b) Project Impacts on EMs Groups

The potential impacts on EMs include:

- EMs may be inadequately represented in multi-stakeholder forums / decision-making bodies
- The project interventions might perpetuate existing or lead to new discriminations against women, including Indigenous Women.
- Interventions may run counter to EM traditional practices and customary laws.
- Trainings and awareness sessions may run counter to EM traditional practices
- Use of lands for conservation purposes might impede on use.
- Interventions may not be appropriately designed for the EM community.
- Interventions may utilized and deny access to resources traditionally utilized by the EM community
- There may be low participation by the EM community
- Inequitable distribution of benefits
- Language: consultation and dissemination within the project with all local communities should take into account language barriers, and utilise translation as required, with increased attention given to minority languages such as those spoken by San communities, especially where secondary language use is limited.

Preliminary FPIC consultations have been carried out as part of the PPG fieldwork. Further comprehensive consultations during implementation should be conducted by WWF and NBCA to mitigate potential risk and engage indigenous peoples in the Project.

(c) Mitigation Planning

At this point in time, the exact impacts of the project activities cannot be determined. Much will depend on the detail design of key outputs and location. Furthermore, given that only a subset of potential project intervention sites was visited during the field consultations, further verification will be required throughout all the project landscapes to provide a definitive conclusion with regards to the presence of Ethnic Minority

During the project implementation, a detailed of Ethnic Minority Development Plan should be prepared as guided by the EMPF laid out here.

Additionally, the Project's Stakeholder Engagement Plan takes account of factors noted above, including the use of appropriate language, engagement of youth and use of consultation. FPIC consultations must be carried out for certain activities in the future on a case-by-case basis, depending on the application of the funding in areas and community conservancies where EMs are present.

At this stage, therefore, mitigation planning would generally need to consider the following:

- Regular consultation will be held with the EMs, including the women, to seek their informed participation both in assessing potential impacts and in designing mitigation measures and project intervention at all stages of project preparation and implementation. To achieve this information exchange, focus group discussions, awareness raising events, workshops, and distribution of pamphlets in local language will be carried out.
- Where potential negative impacts are expected, the scope and impact of these impacts should be assessed, and appropriate mitigation measures designed.
- Where EM groups may be affected, site specific EMDP (see below) should be prepared considering best options and approaches that are in accordance with the needs and interests of affected individuals and communities. Specifically, the social and cultural context of affected IPs and their traditional skill and knowledge in natural resource management should be considered in this regard.
- Community organizations, NGOs, and other stakeholders experienced in executing EM development plans or projects will be engaged to prepare these EMDP's.
- The EMDP's should provide a set of indicators for periodic monitoring of the progress of planned activities incorporated in the plans in order to confirm their effectiveness, and to plan and undertake alternative measures as appropriate.
- The project will allocate sufficient budget for the implementation of the EMDP's as well as develop a financing plan to ensure smooth transitioning after project closure

#### (d) Steps for Formulating an EMDP

WWF's Standard on Indigenous People requires that, regardless of whether Project affected EMs are affected adversely or positively, an EMDP needs to be prepared with care and with the full and effective participation of affected communities.

The requirements include screening to confirm and identify affected EM groups in the project areas, social analysis to improve the understanding of the local context and affected communities; a process of free, prior, and informed consent with the affected EMs' communities in order to fully identify their views and to obtain their broad community support to the project; and development of project-specific measures to avoid adverse impacts and enhance culturally appropriate benefits.

Minimum requirements for projects working in areas with EMs are:

- Identification of EM groups through screening;
- Assessment of project impacts;
- Consultations with affected EM communities following FPIC principles and obtain their broad community support;
- Development of sites specific EMs plan (EMDP) to avoid adverse impacts and provide culturally appropriate benefits; and
- In activities with no impact, the requirements could be limited to consultations during implementation to keep local communities informed about project activities and documentation of all consultations held.

(e) Social Assessments

WWF's Standard on Indigenous People requires screening for IPs (EM) to assess risks and opportunities and to improve the understanding of the local context and affected communities. The Project level ESS Screening – the *Safeguards Eligibility and Impacts Screening Form* (Annex 1 of this ESMF) - is completed yearly during the Annual Workplan development to screen for and assess these risks and opportunities.

A description of activities that may result in adverse social impacts on EMs is presented in section 4.6 b, but will be revisited during project implementation during this annual screening.

(f) Development of Ethnic Minority Development Plans

Based on the results of the social assessments, an Ethnic Minority Development Plan (EMDP) shall be developed for each project site. The contents of the EMP will depend on the specific project activities identified and the impacts these activities may have on EMs in the project area. As a minimum, the EMDP should include the followings:

- Description of the EMs affected by the proposed activity
- Summary of the proposed activity
- Detailed description of EMs' participation and consultation process during implementation.
- Description of how the project will ensure culturally appropriate benefits and avoid or mitigate adverse impacts
- Budget
- Mechanism for complaints and conflict resolution; and
- Monitoring and evaluation system that includes monitoring of particular issues and measures concerning EM communities.

For project activities that may result in changes in EMs' access to livelihoods , the provisions of the PF ([Section 4.5](#)) should be followed.

(g) Free, Prior and Informed Consent Framework

FPIC is an approach for ensuring that the rights of EMs are guaranteed in any decision that may affect their lands, territories or livelihoods. It ensures that they have the right to give or withhold their consent to these activities without fear of reprisal or coercion, in a timeframe suited to their own culture, and with the resources to make informed decisions. FPIC is composed of four separate components below:

- **Free** - Without coercion, intimidation, manipulation, threat or bribery.
- **Prior** - Indicates that consent has been sought sufficiently in advance, before any project activities have been authorized or commenced, and that the time requirements of the indigenous community's consultation/consensus processes have been respected.
- **Informed** - Information is provided in a language and form that are easily understood by the community, covering the nature, scope, purpose, duration and locality of the project or activity as well as information about areas that will be affected; economic, social, cultural and environmental impacts, all involved actors, and the procedures that the project or activity may entail.
- **Consent** - The right of EMs to give or withhold their consent to any decision that will impact their lands, territories, resources, and livelihoods.

The processes of consultation and obtaining FPIC will be applied to all the aspects of the Project that may negatively affect the rights of the EMs. FPIC will be required on any matters that may negatively affect the rights and interests, water areas, lands, resources, territories (whether titled or entitled to the people in question) and traditional livelihoods of the EMs concerned.

Thus, FPIC is integral to the execution of the proposed project, as the project areas include diverse EM communities. WWF recognizes the strong cultural and spiritual ties many EM groups have to their lands and territories and committed to strengthen these ties in all WWF/GEF/GCF funded projects. FPIC gives EMs the freedom to determine their own development path to promote conservation sustainably. The following checklist (Box 1) may assist in helping to determine whether some Project activities may require an FPIC process

### **Box 1. Checklist for appraising whether an activity may require an FPIC Process**

1. Will the activity involve the use, taking or damage of cultural, intellectual, religious and/or spiritual property from EMs?
2. Will the activity adopt or implement any legislative or administrative measures that will affect the rights, lands, territories and/or resources of EMs (e.g. in connection with the development, utilization or exploitation of mineral, water or other resources; land reform; legal reforms that may discriminate de jure or de facto against EMs, etc.)?
3. Will the activity involve natural resource extraction such as logging or mining or agricultural development on the lands/territories of EMs?
4. Will the activity involve any decisions that will affect the status of EMs' rights to their lands/territories/water resources, resources or livelihoods?
5. Will the activity involve the accessing of traditional knowledge, innovations and practices of EM persons and local communities?
6. Will the activity affect EMs' political, legal, economic, social, or cultural institutions and/or practices?
7. Will the activity involve making commercial use of natural and/or cultural resources on lands subject to traditional ownership and/or under customary use by EMs?
8. Will the activity involve decisions regarding benefit-sharing arrangements, when benefits are derived from the lands/territories/resources of EMs (e.g. natural resource management or extractive industries)?
9. Will the activity have an impact on the continuance of the relationship of the EMs with their land or their culture?
10. Will the interventions/activities restrict access to NTFPs, timber, lands, etc. and other sources of livelihoods and community resources?

If the answer is 'Yes' to any of these questions in Box 1, it is likely that FPIC will be required of the potentially affected EM people for the activity that may result in the impacts identified in the questions. When an FPIC process is required, a stakeholder consultation process will need to be initiated to define and agree on an FPIC process with the community or communities. The EMs who may be affected by the Project will have a central role in defining the FPIC process, based on their own cultural and governance practices. The consultation process should be launched as early as possible to ensure full, effective and meaningful participation of EMs.

All consultations with EMs should be carried out in good faith with the objective of seeking agreement or consent. Consultation and consent is about EMs' right to meaningfully and effectively participate in decision-making on matters that may affect them. Consultations and information disclosure are integral parts of the FPIC process and any development support planning for EMs to ensure that the priorities, preferences, and needs of the EM groups are taken into consideration adequately. With that objective in view, a strategy for consultation with EMs has been proposed so that all consultations are conducted in a manner to ensure full and effective participation. The approach of full and effective participation is primarily based upon transparent, good faith interactions, so that everyone in the community is empowered to join fully in the decision-making process. It includes providing information in a language and manner the community understands and, in a timeframe, compatible with the community's cultural norms.

The affected EMs will be actively engaged in all stages of the project cycle, including project preparation, and feedback of consultations with the EMs will be reflected in the project design, followed by disclosure. Their participation in Project preparation and planning has informed project design and will continue to actively participate in the project execution. Once the EMDP or LRP is prepared, it will be translated into local languages (as applicable) and made available to them before implementation, including in formats other than written documents if and when requested by the communities.

MOAE shall ensure adequate flow of funds for consultation and facilitation of planned activities within the EMDP. Project brochures and pamphlets with infographics containing basic information such as sub-project location, impact estimates, and mitigation measures proposed, and implementation schedule will be prepared, translated into a language understandable to the EMs, and distributed among them. If literacy is low in the communities, other means of communication must also be agreed upon with them, especially targeting community members who may have lower literacy levels.

A range of consultative methods will be adopted to carry out consultation including, but not limited to: focus group discussions (FGDs), public meetings, community discussions, and in-depth and key informant interviews; in addition to the censuses and socioeconomic surveys.

The key stakeholders to be consulted during screening, impact assessment; design and implementation of EMDP, LRP and PF include:

- All affected persons belonging to EMs/marginalized groups;
- Appropriate government Departments/Ministries
- Provincial and municipal government representatives;
- Insert relevant community cooperatives, management structures, umbrella bodies, etc;
- The private sector:
- Academia representatives.

The project will ensure adequate representation of each group of stakeholders mentioned above while conducting consultations using various tools and approaches.

The views of EMs communities are to be considered during execution of project activities, while respecting their practices, beliefs and cultural preferences. The outcome of the consultations will be documented into the periodical reports and included in the project's trimester progress reports. The Project Manager with support of the Safeguards Specialist will also ensure that affected persons are involved in the decision-making process.

**Procedures to seek FPIC.** Project interventions and activities adversely affecting the EMs, therefore, need to follow a process of free, prior, and informed consent, with the affected EMs in order to fully identify their views and to seek their broad community support to the project; and development of project-specific measures to avoid adverse impacts and enhance culturally appropriate benefits.

Community involvement is a critical component of FPIC, as FPIC is a collective process, rather than an individual decision. In practice, FPIC is implemented through a participatory process involving all affected groups that is carried out prior to the finalization or implementation of any project activities, decisions or development plans. FPIC is established through good faith negotiation between the project and affected EMs. A facilitator should support this process, a person who will be available throughout the Project, who speaks the necessary languages and is aware of the project context. This person may or may not be part of the PMU, but should be agreeable to all parties involved.

Box 2 below outlines some generic steps to be followed for FPIC with the affected EMs in order to seek their broad community support.

#### **Box 2. Steps for seeking FPIC from project affected ethnic minority**

1. Identify communities, sub-groups within communities, and other stakeholders with potential interests/rights (both customary and legal) on the land or other natural resources that are proposed to be developed, managed, utilized, or impacted by the proposed project activity.
2. Identify any rights (customary and legal) or claims of these communities to land or resources (e.g., water rights, water access points, or rights to hunt or extract forest products) that overlap or are adjacent to the site(s) or area(s) of the proposed project activity;
3. Identify whether the proposed project activity may diminish the rights, claims, or interests identified in Step 2 above and also identify natural resources that may be impacted by this project and the legal and customary laws that govern these resources;
4. Provide the details of proposed project activities to be implemented along with their likely impacts on EMs either positively or negatively, as well as the corresponding proposed mitigation measures in a language or means of communication understandable by the affected EMs;
5. All project information provided to EMs should be in a form appropriate to local needs. Local languages should usually be used and efforts should be made to include all community members, including women and members of different generations and social groups (e.g. clans and socioeconomic background);
6. Selection of a facilitator, who will be available throughout the Project, who speaks the necessary languages and is aware of the project context, and is culturally and gender-sensitive. The facilitator should be trustworthy to affected EMs. It will also be helpful to involve any actors which are likely to be involved in implementing the FPIC process, such as local or national authorities
7. If the EM communities are organized in community associations or umbrella organizations, these should usually be consulted.
8. Provide sufficient time for EMs' decision-making processes (it means allocate sufficient time for internal decision-making processes to reach conclusions that are considered legitimate by the majority of the concerned participants)
9. Support a process to create a mutually respected decision-making structure in cases where two or more communities claim rights over a project site.

10. If FPIC is not familiar to the community, engage in a dialogue to identify existing decision-making structures that support the principles underlying FPIC.
11. Identify the community-selected representative(s) or “focal people” for decision making purposes - identification of the decisionmakers and parties to the negotiation.
12. Agree on the decisionmakers or signatory parties and/or customary binding practice that will be used to conclude the agreement, introducing the chosen representatives, their role in the community, how they were chosen, their responsibility and role as representatives;
13. If consent is reached, document agreed upon outcomes/activities that are to be included into the project, and agree on a feedback and a project grievance redress mechanism. Agreements reached must be mutual and recognized by all parties, taking into consideration customary modes of decision-making and consensus-seeking. These may include votes, a show of hands, the signing of a document witnessed by a third party, performing a ritual ceremony that makes the agreement binding, and so forth;
14. When seeking “broad community consent/support” for the project, it should be ensured that all relevant social groups of the community have been adequately consulted. This may mean the project staff have to seek out marginalized members, or those who don’t have decision-making power, such as women. When this is the case and the “broad” majority is overall positive about the project, it would be appropriate to conclude that broad community support/consent has been achieved. Consensus building approaches are often the norm, but “broad community consent/support” does not mean that everyone has to agree to a given project;
15. When the community agrees on the project, document the agreement process and outcomes including benefits, compensation, or mitigation to the community, commensurate with the loss of use of land or resources in forms and languages accessible and made publicly available to all members of the community, providing for stakeholder review and authentication;
16. The agreements or special design features providing the basis for broad community support should be described in the IPs Plan; any disagreements should also be documented; and
17. Agree on jointly defined modes of monitoring and verifying agreements as well as their related procedures: how these tasks will be carried out during project implementation, and the commission of independent periodic reviews (if considered) at intervals satisfactory to all interest groups.

(h) Disclosure

The final EMPF and PF and any site specific EMPs and LRPs will be disclosed on the website of the executing agency and the website of WWF and made available to affected EMs; information dissemination and consultation will continue throughout project execution. Summaries of EMDPs and mitigation measures proposed in EMDPs will be translated into Vietnamese and paper copies will be made available to the affected persons in the office of relevant local authorities.

(i) Institutional and monitoring arrangements

The Safeguards Specialist will be responsible for the development and implementation of the EMPF and any EMDP, with support from the PMU Project Manager on logistical matters (e.g., conducting field visits, reaching out to EM communities, convening meetings, etc.).

The Safeguards Specialist will periodically report on the implementation of the EMPF/EMDP to the Project Manager of PMU, NBCA and WWF US. Monitoring and reporting will be undertaken together with reporting on the other ESMF commitments (as indicated in Section 5.4). The Safeguard Specialist will

meet once a month with the WWF US GEF Agency Safeguard Lead to ensure effective communication and oversight of project safeguards.

## 5. IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

### 5.1. Procedures for the identification and management of environmental and social impacts

The following is an exclusion list of activities that will not be financed by the Project. The list includes activities that:

1. Lead to land management practices that cause degradation (biological or physical) of the soil and water. Examples include, but are not limited to: the felling of trees in core zones and critical watersheds; activities involving quarrying and mining; commercial logging; or dredge fishing.
2. Negatively affect areas of critical natural habitats or breeding ground of known rare/endangered species.
3. Significantly increase GHG emissions.
4. Use genetically modified organisms or modern biotechnologies or their products.
5. Involve the procurement and/or use of pesticides and other chemicals specified as persistent organic pollutants under the Stockholm Convention or within categories IA, IB, or II by the World Health Organization.
6. Develop forest plantations.
7. Result in the loss of biodiversity, alteration of the functioning of ecosystems, and introduction of new invasive alien species.
8. Involve the procurement or use of weapons and munitions or fund military activities.
9. lead to private land acquisition and/or physical displacement and voluntary or involuntary relocation of people, including non-titled and migrant people.
10. Contribute to exacerbating any inequality or gender gap that may exist.
11. Involve illegal child labor, forced labor, sexual exploitation or other forms of exploitation.
12. Adversely affect EM people' rights, lands, natural resources, territories, livelihoods, knowledge, social fabric, traditions, governance systems, and culture or heritage (physical and non-physical or intangible) inside and/or outside the project area.
13. Negatively impact areas with cultural, historical or transcendent values for individuals and communities.

In advance of the initiation of any project activity, the Safeguards Specialist should fill in detailed information regarding the nature of the activity and its specific location in the Safeguards Eligibility and Impacts Screening form (Screening Form) (see Annex 1). Part 1 comprises basic information regarding the activity; Part 2 contains basic “pre-screening” questions. If the response to any of the questions in these two parts is “Yes”, the activity will be deemed ineligible for funding under the Project. The executing partners will thus be required to change the nature or location of the proposed activity so that it complies with all safeguards requirements and all responses at the Screening form are negative.

If the activity is deemed eligible according to Part 2, an environmental and social screening procedure will be carried out in accordance with Part 3 of the Screening Form, which is based on the WWF's SIPP and applicable Vietnam regulations. The executing partners shall respond to the specific questions in Part 3,

provide general conclusions regarding the main environmental and social impacts of each proposed activity, outline the required permits or clearances, and specify whether any additional assessments or safeguard documents should be prepared. Issues that are considered as part of the screening include the following:

- a. Environmental impacts (e.g., dust, noise, smoke, ground vibration, pollution, flooding, etc.) and loss or damage to natural habitat;
- b. Social impacts: identification of vulnerable groups or EM, impacts on community resources, impacts on livelihoods and socio-economic opportunities, restrictions of access to natural resources, land usage conflicts, impacts on tangible or intangible cultural heritage, etc.; and
- c. Health and safety issues (both for workers and for local communities).

The screening of each activity should be undertaken by the Safeguards Specialist. If the screening process indicates that additional assessments or safeguards documents shall be prepared, these should be carried out by the executing partners prior to the start of activities.

If the screening reveals adverse environmental or social impacts that may arise from the planned activity, an ESMP should be prepared. The ESMP should be prepared by the Safeguards Specialist, in collaboration with the Project Manager(s). The ESMPs must be shared with the WWF US GEF Agency Safeguards Lead for review and approval prior to implementation of any related activities.

## 5.2. Guidelines for ESMP development

In case that the environmental and social screening process identifies any adverse environmental or social impacts as a result of specific project activities, the Safeguards Specialist in collaboration with the Project Manager should develop a site- and activity-specific ESMP. The ESMP should be prepared before the initiation of the Project activity and closely follow the guidance provided in this ESMF.

The ESMP should describe adverse environmental and social impacts that are expected to occur as a result of the specific project activity, outline concrete measures that should be undertaken to avoid or mitigate these impacts, and specify the implementation arrangements for administering these measures (including institutional structures, roles, communication, consultations, and reporting procedures). The structure of the ESMP should be as follows:

- (i)** A concise introduction: explaining the context and objectives of the ESMP, the connection of the proposed activity to the project, and the findings of the screening process.
- (ii)** Project description: Objective and description of activities, nature and scope of the project (location with map, construction and/or operation processes, equipment to be used, site facilities and workers and their camps; bill of quantities if civil works are involved, activity schedule).
- (iii)** Baseline environmental and social data: Key environmental information or measurements such as topography, land use and water uses, soil types, and water quality/pollution; and data on socioeconomic conditions of the local population. Photos showing the existing conditions of the project sites should also be included.
- (iv)** Expected impacts and mitigation measures: Description of specific environmental and social impacts of the activity and corresponding mitigation measures.

- (v) ESMP implementation arrangements: Responsibilities for design, bidding and contracts where relevant, monitoring, reporting, recording and auditing.
- (vi) Capacity Need and Budget: Capacity needed for the implementation of the ESMP and cost estimates for implementation of the ESMP.
- (vii) Consultation and Disclosure Mechanisms: Timeline and format of disclosure.
- (viii) Monitoring: Environmental and social compliance monitoring with responsibilities.
- (ix) Grievance Mechanism: Provide information about the grievance mechanism, how PAPs can access it, and the grievance redress process.
- (x) A site-specific community and stakeholder engagement plan: In order to ensure that local communities and other relevant stakeholders are fully involved in the implementation of the ESMP, a stakeholder engagement plan should be included in the ESMP. Specific guidelines on community engagement are provided in Section 5.3 below.

### 5.3. Stakeholders' role & responsibilities in ESMF implementation

#### a) General

WWF is the GEF Agency and the Nature and Biodiversity Conservation Agency (NBCA) under the management of the Ministry of Agriculture and Environment (MoAE) is the Implementing Partner and a Project Steering Committee (Figure 2)

**GEF Agency.** WWF-US, through its WWF GEF Agency will: (i) provide consistent and regular project oversight to ensure the achievement of project objectives; (ii) liaise between the project and the GEF Secretariat; (iii) report on project progress to GEF Secretariat ; (iv) ensure that both GEF and WWF policy requirements and standards are applied and met; (v) approve annual work plan and budget; (vi) approve budget revisions, certify fund availability and transfer funds; (vii) organize the terminal evaluation and review project audits; (viii) certify project operational and financial completion, and (ix) provide no-objection to key terms of reference for project management unit.

**Project Steering Committee (PSC)** provides strategic guidance to implementation of the Project including oversight for safeguards and the implementation of this ESMF/PF/EMPF. It is also responsible for taking corrective action as needed to ensure the project achieves the desired results. In order to ensure WWF's ultimate accountability, PSC decisions should be made in accordance with standards that shall ensure management for development results, best value money, fairness, integrity, transparency and effective international competition.

PSC shall (i) provide overall guidance and direction to the project, ensuring it remains within any specified constraints; (ii) address project issues as raised by the project manager; (iii) provide guidance on new project risks, and agree on possible mitigation and management actions to address specific risks; (iv) ensure coordination with various government agencies and their participation in project activities; (vii) review combined delivery reports prior to certification by the implementing partner; (viii) address project-level grievances; (ix) review the final project report package during an end-of-project review meeting to discuss lessons learned and opportunities for scaling up; (x) monitor implementation of this ESMF/PF/EMPF and compliance with national and international regulations, and WWF's; (xi) decision making for the adoption of necessary measures including full integration of management measures within Project outputs and annual work plans; (xii) establish and support GRM mechanism to address any grievances.

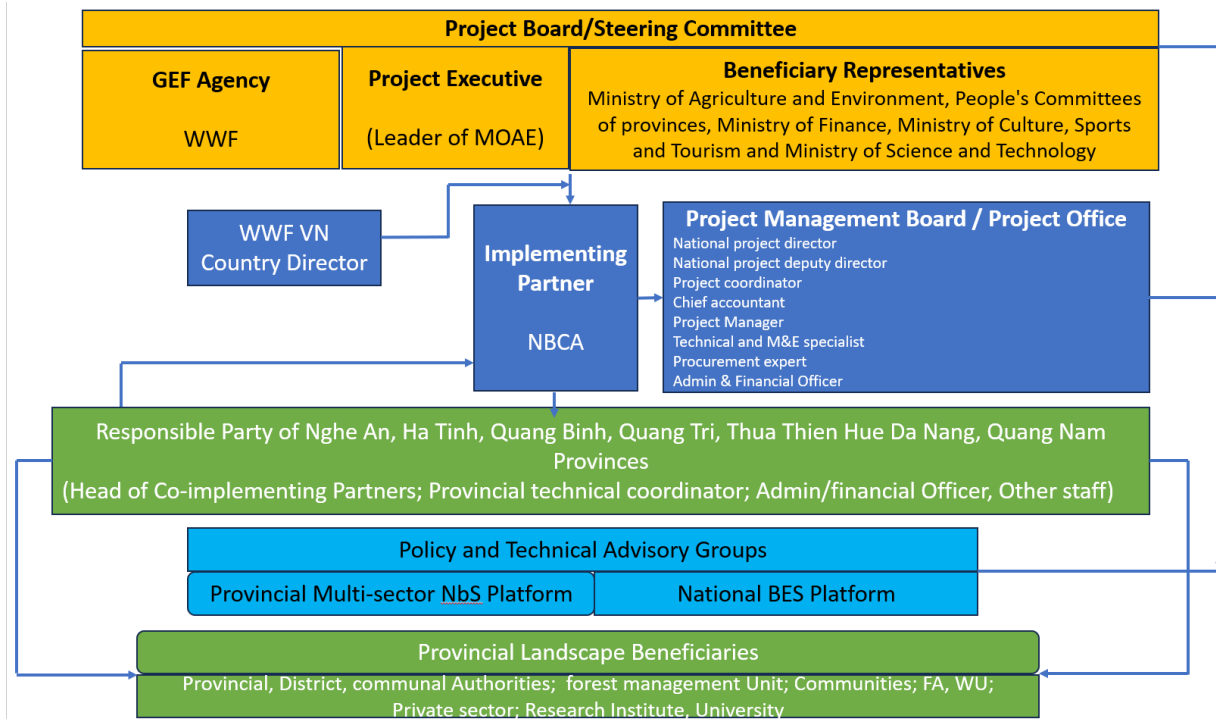


Figure 2. Project Institutional Arrangement (Source: Project Document)

**Implementing Agency: Ministry of Agriculture and Environment (MoAE), through the Nature and Biodiversity Conservation Agency (NBCA)** is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the Project activities and is also the entity to which the WWF US Administrator has entrusted the implementation of WWF US assistance specified in the signed project document along with the assumption of full responsibility and accountability for the effective use of WWF US resources and the output delivery. NBCA's tasks include:

- Project planning, coordination, activity implementation and management, monitoring, evaluation and reporting.
- Overseeing the management of project risks as included in this project document and new risks that may emerge during project implementation;
- Procurement of goods and services, including human resources;
- Financial management, including overseeing financial expenditures against project budgets;
- Approving and signing the multi-year work plan;
- Approving and signing the combined delivery report at the end of the year;
- Signing the financial report or the funding authorization and certificate of expenditures;
- Reporting, fairly and accurately, on project progress against agreed work plans in accordance with the reporting schedule and required formats;
- Ensuring that the required management plan(s) (an ESMP and/or stand-alone management plan) are developed, disclosed for public consultation and approved, and management measures are adopted and integrated during project implementation;
- Maintaining documentation and evidence that describes the proper and prudent use of project resources in conformity to the signed Project Document and in accordance with applicable regulations and procedures (e.g. ESSF);
- Ensuring all requirements of WWF's ESSF and Viet Nam regulations and relevant applicable standards have been addressed.

- Procurement of goods and services, including human resources required to ensure the compliance with this ESMF.

**Project Management Unit (PMU).** NBCA will host a PMU which will be responsible for the day-to-day management of the project. The PMU will comprise Project Director, Deputy Project Director, Project Coordinator, Chief Accountant, Project Manager, Technical and M&E Specialist, Procurement and a Safeguards and Gender Specialist.

The PMU ensures smooth execution of project activities while maintaining alignment with the Project Board's strategic guidance and governance requirements. It will be led by the National Project Manager (PM) appointed by the MOAE. The PM is responsible for mobilizing inputs, supervising project staff and consultants, and presenting key deliverables, such as progress reports, annual work plans, and risk registers, to the Project Board for review and approval.

The PM is supported by an Admin and Finance Officer based in Hanoi, a Project Coordinator, an M&E Specialist, a Safeguards and Gender Specialist, and an International Project Advisor. The PMU also serves as the Secretariat to the Project Board, ensuring effective preparation and participation in all board meetings, where the PM acts as the primary representative

#### b) Safeguards implementation

Specific arrangements and responsibilities related to the implementation of environmental and social safeguards requirements, as stated in this ESMF/PF/EMPF are as follows:

##### **WWF GEF Agency**

- Overall oversight and monitoring of compliance with safeguards commitments.
- Support and specific recommendations on specific safeguard issues if needed.
- ESS Specialists in the WWF GEF Agency participate in monthly calls with Safeguards Specialists within PMU and provide safeguard advice to ensure safeguard compliance during the project implementation.

##### **Project Steering Committee**

- Overall oversight and monitoring of compliance with safeguards commitments.
- Support and specific recommendations on specific safeguard issues if needed

##### **Implementing Partner**

- The NBCA has the overall responsibility for ensuring environmental safeguards are implemented and ensures coordination with relevant Government authorities.
- Monitor implementation of this ESMF/PF/EMPF and compliance with national and international regulations, and WWF ESSF standards; including keeping track that all ESS requirements are effectively and timely met by the PMU including oversight for safeguards and the implementation of this ESMF.
- Collect grievances from the country/project-level GRMs
- Provide strategic guidance to project implementation, including oversight for safeguards and the implementation of this ESMF/PF/EMPF.
- Provide any other coordination support to the PMU, as needed.

##### **Project Management Unit**

- Ensuring that bidding documents and contracts include relevant clauses or conditions relevant to environmental and social safeguards as set out in this ESMF/PF/EMPF. It is particularly important to include in bidding documents requirements related to occupational health and safety.
- Supervise and manage implementation of measures defined in this ESMF/PF/EMPF
- Assign specific responsibilities for implementation of this ESMF/PF/EMPF, including monitoring, and community consultations on the draft management plans to a staff member(s) of the PMU
- Maintain relevant records associated with management of environmental and social risks, including updated the Safeguard Eligibility and Impact Screening (Annex 1) , impact assessments, a log of grievances together with documentation of management measures implemented
- Reporting on safeguards implementation and compliance to the PSC and WWF GEF Agency
- Ensure that all service providers are informed of their responsibilities for the day-to-day compliance with the ESMF/PF/EMPF.
- Implementation of Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM) and
- Disclosure of safeguards documents.

#### **Safeguards and Gender Specialist under the PMU**

- Provide inputs to the Project Coordinator to ensure safeguards compliance with reference to ESMF/PF/EMPF during project planning and implementation
- Monitor implementation of the ESMF/PF/EMPF including inputs and recommendations from related consultants
- Conduct ESS Screening on newly planned/ revised project activities, as outlined in ESMF
- Ensure the project team's understanding of environmental and social safeguards and how to support implementation of the ESMF/PF/EMPF
- Provide training on safeguards requirements to provincial staffs and relevant partners as required;
- Regularly review the above-mentioned frameworks and make amendments as necessary;
- Set up, lead the socialization of and ensure implementation of the grievance redress mechanism including being a point of contact to receive grievances. Oversee the addressing of grievances with assistance from other provincial staff;
- Ensure full disclosure of existing and newly developed Plans with concerned stakeholders;
- Carry out regular monitoring and capacity building visits to the project sites;
- Provide inputs to project reports on the status of safeguards compliance and GRM implementation with the ESMF/PF/EMPF during implementation and any issues arising;
- Coordinate with the other PMU staff to ensure alignment in implementation of the ESMF/PF/EMPF and the Gender Action Plan and Stakeholder Engagement Plan;
- Participate in monthly calls with the ESS Specialist in the WWF GEF Agency; and undertake any other tasks assigned by the project manager to support the project with respect to environmental and social safeguard issues.

#### 5.4. [Monitoring](#)

The compliance of Project activities with the ESMF will be thoroughly monitored by various entities at different stages of preparation and implementation. Details are below:

**Monitoring at the project level.** The overall responsibility for implementing the ESMF/PF/EMPF and for monitoring compliance with the Project's environmental safeguard activities lies with the PMU. The Safeguards and Gender Specialist procured by the PMU shall oversee the implementation of all field activities and ensure their compliance with the ESMF. The Specialist shall also provide the executing

agency and partners with technical support in carrying out environmental and social screenings and preparing ESMPs and any other necessary documentation. The Safeguards and Gender Specialist shall also monitor the project's GRM and assess its effectiveness (i.e., to what extent grievances are resolved in an expeditious and satisfactory manner).

Finally, the Safeguards and Gender Specialist will also be responsible for reporting on overall safeguards compliance to the Project Coordinator, the Project Steering Committee, and WWF GEF Agency.

**Monitoring at the field activity level.** The PMU and provincial implementing partners and, specifically, the Safeguards and Gender Specialist shall closely monitor all field activities and ensure that they fully comply with the ESMF/PF/EMPF and with the terms and conditions included in the environment clearances issued by Vietnam's national authorities. The PMU is also fully responsible for the compliance of all external contractors and service providers employed as part of the project with the safeguards requirements outlined in the ESMF/PF/IPPF and ESMP (as applicable).

Disbursement of project funds will be contingent upon their full compliance with the safeguards requirements.

**Monitoring at the agency level.** MOAE as the executing agency and NBCA are the project's implementing agency responsible to oversee compliance with the ESMF.

In order to facilitate compliance monitoring, MOAE/NBCA will include information on the status of ESMF implementation in the six-monthly Project Progress Reports and the annual Project Implementation Review Reports.

## 5.5. Community Engagement

Community consultation has been an integral part of these assessments as well as the proposed project design and will be carried out as a continuous process through the project cycle. This section describes the community engagement during project preparation and implementation.

Discussions with project stakeholders, including local communities at the provincial and site level, commenced during the overall WWF ESSF screening and included the GEF project's PPG phase. As such, while the screening was primarily intended for all relevant WWF operations in Vietnam, this project was specifically mentioned. The Project Document has an annexed Stakeholder Engagement Plan (see Annex J) which will be followed to ensure that stakeholders are appropriately engaged both during the implementation phase. Particular attention is paid to the further assessment of environmental and social impacts and the development of appropriate management measures during the execution of project intervention. The Stakeholder Engagement Plan will be updated during project implementation based on the ESMPs conducted in line with this ESMF, as needed.

a) Community engagement during Project Preparation and ESMF/PF/EMPF Preparation

During the development of the project there were discussions with a wide range of stakeholders including relevant government departments, NGOs, provincial and individual community members.

A participatory consultation approach was used to verify local conditions, needs, assumptions, risks and enabling environment conditions. Meetings with government stakeholders, site visits and face-to-face discussions with local communities were conducted to understand existing vulnerabilities to climate change and disaster risks, co-management models in forest protection, biodiversity conservation, current livelihood activities, and capacity of community organizations in managing and monitoring the conservation and forest protection and management effort.

The fieldwork and consultation were undertaken from 03-20 December of 2024 in 6 provinces (Nghe An: 3-4/12; Ha Tinh: 5-6/12; Quang Binh: 10-11/12; Quang Tri: 12-13/12; TT Hue: 17-18/12 và Quang Nam: 19-20/12) with more than 202 participants (55 female ones). The key results of consultation have been introduced in the SEP in Annex J.

b) Community engagement during project implementation

The communities residing in and around the project area are the ultimate recipient of project impacts and benefits, and therefore constitute a key stakeholder. Because the interventions need community support or participation in order to succeed, a participatory process and community consultations approach engaging government authorities, right holders and stakeholders at different levels will provide substantial information on the patterns of resource use of local affected communities/groups and persons, which will provide accurate information about which groups/individuals will be affected most by project activities. Measures and approaches for continued community engagement during the project implementation phase are documented in the SEP.

## 5.6. Guidance for SEAH risk mitigation

According to the results of the screening provided in Annex 1 of this ESMF, a detailed plan to address SEAH risks will be developed within the first six months of the Project start-up, using both information already included in the GAP and updated procedures for SEAH-specific grievances outlined below and in line with the national law. This will include:

- Inclusion of any identified SEAH-related risk mitigation measures into the Project's annual workplan and budget and annual reporting requirements.
  - o This will require the participation of the entire PMU in reviewing any identified risks and mitigation measures to ensure that all staff understand their responsibilities and the responsibilities of EEs, project partners, contractors, and any other entities who will receive GEF funding for this project.
- Development of a communication mechanism between the local project partners and the PMU's Safeguards Specialist in order to address in a timely manner any SEAH situation that may arise at the territorial level. This early warning system will be included in the project's security protocol, and will require:

- Reporting any such grievances or challenges within a defined time period of no less than 5 business days. This shall hold true even if grievances are informally submitted (i.e. not through an official GRM)
  - The confidentiality of anyone who has received a complaint or become aware of a SEAH-related situation, including protecting the personal identifiable information of all parties- both the potential victim(s) and potential perpetrators(s).
- Strengthen the capacities of the project's implementing partners on prevention of GBV and SEAH as well as WWF policies and codes of conduct to address SEAH risk. These trainings will be done in partnership by the project's Safeguard Specialist and ESS Specialists and should include:
    - Training within the first 3 months of project implementation that have been prepared with oversight and final approval from the WWF GCF AE Safeguards and Gender Leads.
    - Be mandatory for all implementing partner staff who will be involved in the GEF-financed activities.
  - Strengthen the project technical members so that they can establish rapid response mechanisms to address issues associated with threats to environmental leaders and gender-based violence. This includes, but is not limited to:
    - In cases of such threats, provide them with additional resources to ensure a timely response that is focused on the well-being of anyone who is threatened.
    - Provide the same GBV and SEAH training to these technical members that the implementing partners will receive.
  - Strengthen the capacities of the entities that participate in the multi-stakeholder bodies by the project, so that specific prevention and rapid response measures are included to address GBV and SEAH-specific threats, including to social and environmental leaders they may work with.
    - Provide the same GBV and SEAH training to these multi-stakeholder bodies that the implementing partners will receive.

## 5.7. Communications and disclosure

All affected communities and relevant stakeholders shall be informed about the ESMF requirements and commitments. The executive summary of the ESMF will be translated into Vietnamese and made available along with the ESMF and SEP on the websites of MOAE/NBCA, as well as the websites of the WWF GEF Agency. Hard copies of the ESMF will be placed in appropriate public locations and Project Managers and the Safeguards Specialist at PMU under MOAE/NBCA will be responsible to raise community awareness regarding the requirements of the ESMF, and will also ensure that all external contractors and service providers are fully familiar and comply with the ESMF and other safeguards documents.

During the implementation of the project, activity-specific ESMPs shall be prepared in consultation with affected communities and disclosed to all stakeholders prior to project concept finalization. All draft ESMPs shall be reviewed and approved by the PMU of MOAE/NBCA in consultation with the PSC and WWF GEF Agency in advance of their public disclosure. The PMU must also disclose to all affected parties any action plans prepared during project implementation, including gender mainstreaming.

Disclosure should be carried out in a manner that is meaningful and understandable to the affected people. For this purpose, the executive summary of ESMPs or the terms and conditions in environment clearances should be disclosed on MOAE/NBCA and WWF websites. The disclosure requirements are summarized in Table 8 below.

**Table 8: Disclosure framework for ESMF related documents**

<b>Documents to be disclosed</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Where</b>
Environment and Social Management Framework	Once in the entire project cycle. Must remain on the website and other public locations throughout the project period.	On the website of MOAE/NBCA and WWF. Copies should be available at PMU office, and in local municipal offices in project areas
Environmental and Social Management Plan/s	Once in the entire project cycle for every activity that requires ESMP. Must remain on the website and other disclosure locations throughout the project period.	On the website of MOAE/NBCA and WWF. Copies should be available at PMU and local implementing partners offices in project areas
Safeguards Monthly Progress Report	Monthly	Copies should be available at PMU and local implementing partners offices in project areas
Grievance redress process	Continuously throughout the project cycle whenever engaging any project stakeholder	On the website of MOAE/NBCA. Copies should be available at the PMU office

## 5.8. Capacity building and technical assistance

Capacity building activities will be provided as needed by WWF-US GEF Agency to PMU under the MOAE/NBCA to provide the latter with ESMF/PF/EMPF implementation requirements and good practices. These will focus in particular on issues related to the preparation of ESMP, EMDP, organization of consultations, operationalization of the GRM, and monitoring and reporting of ESMF implementation. Particularly the training should be focused on FPIC implementation that is supposed to be conducted by the provincial implementing partners. The Safeguard Specialist of PMU will be responsible for making the survey of capacity building need and gap before designing and implementing the training in close collaboration with the ESS Specialist of WWF-US GEF Agency.

The budget for capacity building shall be included in Component 4.

## 5.9. Grievance mechanisms

The Project will have a direct and tangible effect on local communities and individuals residing within or in the vicinity of Project sites. There is thus a need for an efficient and effective Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM) that collects and responds to stakeholders' inquiries, suggestions, concerns, and complaints. This section will describe the details of the GRM based on the following principles:

1. **Fairness:** Grievances are assessed impartially, and handled transparently.
2. **Objectiveness and independence:** The GRM operates independently of all interested parties in order to guarantee fair, objective, and impartial treatment to each case.
3. **Simplicity and accessibility:** Procedures to file grievances and seek action are simple enough that project beneficiaries can easily understand them and in a language that is accessible to everyone within a given community, especially those who are most vulnerable.

4. **Responsiveness and efficiency:** The GRM is designed to be responsive to the needs of all complainants. Accordingly, officials handling grievances must be trained to take effective action upon, and respond quickly to, grievances and suggestions.
5. **Speed and proportionality:** All grievances, simple or complex, are addressed and resolved as quickly as possible. The action taken on the grievance or suggestion is swift, decisive, and constructive.
6. **Participation and inclusiveness:** A wide range of affected people—communities and vulnerable groups are encouraged to bring grievances and comments to the attention of the project implementers. Special attention is given to ensure that poor people and marginalized groups, including those with special needs, are able to access the GRM.
7. **Accountability and closing the feedback loop:** All grievances are recorded and monitored, and no grievance remains unresolved. Complainants are always notified and get explanations regarding the results of their complaint. An appeal option shall always be available.

Complaints may include, but not be limited to, the following issues:

- (i) Allegations of fraud, malpractices or corruption by staff or other stakeholders as part of any project or activity financed or implemented by the project, including allegations of gender-based violence or sexual exploitation, abuse, or harassment;
- (ii) Environmental and/or social damages/harms caused by projects financed or implemented (including those in progress) by the project;
- (iii) Complaints and grievances by permanent or temporary workers engaged in project activities.

Complaints could relate to pollution prevention and resource efficiency; negative impacts on public health, environment or culture; destruction of natural habitats; disproportionate impact on marginalized and vulnerable groups; discrimination or physical or sexual harassment; violation of applicable laws and regulations; destruction of physical and cultural heritage; or any other issues which adversely impact communities or individuals in project areas. The grievance redress mechanism will be implemented in a culturally sensitive manner and facilitate access to vulnerable populations. The details of the GRM must be finalized within the first three months of the hiring of the PMU, and shared with the WWF US GEF Agency Safeguards Lead for approval prior to implementation. Special training will be provided to the ESS Specialist within the first 6 months of project implementation, or before the GRM is finalized, whichever is sooner. This will help to ensure they have the capacity to address SEAH-related grievances in a culturally sensitive and victim-centered way.

The GRM seeks to complement, rather than substitute, the judicial system and other dispute resolution mechanisms. All complainants may therefore file their grievance in local courts or approach mediators or arbitrators, in accordance with the legislation of Vietnam

In addition to the Project-specific GRM, a complainant can submit a grievance to the WWF GEF Agency. A grievance can also be filed with the Project Complaints Officer (PCO), a WWF staff member fully independent from the Project Team, who is responsible for the WWF Accountability and Grievance Mechanism and who can be reached at:

- Email: [SafeguardsComplaint@wwfus.org](mailto:SafeguardsComplaint@wwfus.org)
- Mailing address:  
Project Complaints Officer  
Safeguards Complaints,

World Wildlife Fund  
1250 24th Street NW  
Washington, DC 20037

Stakeholder may also submit a complaint online through an independent third-party platform at [Ethicspoint](#)

Stakeholders may also submit a complaint directly to the GEF Secretariat Conflict Resolution Commissioner: Parties wishing to learn more about the service, raise an issue, file a complaint, or ask for facilitation are encouraged to send an email or write a letter to:

Mr. Peter Lallas  
GEF Conflict Resolution Commissioner  
E-mail: [plallas@thegef.org](mailto:plallas@thegef.org)

Mailing Address:  
Mr. Peter Lallas  
Global Environment Facility  
The World Bank Group, MSN N8-800  
1818 H Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20433-002

## 5.10. Budget

The ESMF implementation costs, including all costs related to compensation to project affected people, will be fully covered from the project budget. It will be the responsibility of the Safeguards Specialist to ensure that sufficient budget is available for all activity-specific mitigation measures that may be required in compliance with the ESMF.

A full time Safeguards Specialist will be employed and 100% of their time will be dedicated to ensuring the ESMF implementation. The Project Manager in PMU will oversee the ESMF implementation.

Budget for capacity building on ESMF/PF/EMPF implementation, travel costs and workshops and meetings for safeguards monitoring (including travel, workshops and meetings) will be included in the overall monitoring and evaluation budget under Component 4 of the Project.

## ANNEX 1: SAFEGUARD ELIGIBILITY AND IMPACT SCREENING

This screening tool needs to be filled out for each activity or category of activities included in the annual work plan and budget. In addition, the screening tool needs to be completed whenever management measures or management plans are developed and/or when project intervention areas are determined.

The tool will be filled out by the Safeguards Specialist and reviewed by the M&E Officer. The decision on whether a Site-Specific Environmental and Social Management Plan (ESMP) or Livelihood Restoration Plan (LRP) are required shall be made by the Safeguards Specialist in consultation with the WWF GEF Agency Safeguards Specialist and MOAE/NBCA, based on the information provided in this screening form, as well as interviews with the PMU staff, local communities, and any other relevant stakeholders.

### Part 1: Basic information

	<b>Activity Name</b>	
	<b>Description of Activity</b>	
2	Type of Activity	New activity <input type="checkbox"/> Continuation of activity <input type="checkbox"/>
3	Activity location	
4	Total size of site area	
5	Activity implementation dates	
6	Total cost	

(Move to Part 2 after filling in all information in the table above)

### part 2: Eligibility Screening

No.	Screening Questions: Would the project activity	Yes	No	Comments/ Explanation
1	Lead to land management practices that cause degradation (biological or physical) of the soil and water? Examples include, but are not limited to the felling of trees in core zones and critical watersheds; activities involving quarrying and mining; commercial logging; or dredge fishing.			
2	Negatively affect areas of critical natural habitats or breeding ground of known rare/ endangered species?			
3	Significantly increase GHG emissions?			
4	Use genetically modified organisms or modern biotechnologies or their products?			
5	Involve the procurement and/or use of pesticides and other chemicals specified as persistent organic pollutants under the Stockholm Convention or within categories IA, IB, or II by the World Health Organization?			
6	Develop forest plantations?			
7	Result in the loss of biodiversity, alteration of the functioning of ecosystems, and introduction of new invasive alien species?			

8	Involve the procurement or use of weapons and munitions or fund military activities?			
9	Lead to private land acquisition and/or the physical displacement and voluntary or involuntary relocation of people, including non-titled and migrant people?			
10	Contribute to exacerbating any inequality or gender gap that may exist?			
11	Involve illegal child labor, forced labor, sexual exploitation or other forms of exploitation?			
12	Adversely affect indigenous peoples' rights, lands, natural resources, territories, livelihoods, knowledge, social fabric, traditions, governance systems, and culture or heritage (physical and non-physical or intangible) inside and/or outside the project area?			
13	Negatively impact areas with cultural, historical or transcendent values for individuals and communities?			
Please provide any further information that can be relevant:				

If all answers are “No”, project activity is eligible and move to Part 3

If at least one question answered as “Yes”, the project activity is ineligible and the proponent can reselect the site of project activity and do screening again.

### Part 3: Impacts screening

Answer the questions below and follow the guidance to provide basic information regarding the suggested activity and describe its potential impacts.

No	Would the project activity	Yes/No	Provide explanation and supporting documents if needed
<b>Environmental Impacts</b>			
1	Result in permanent or temporary change in land use, land cover or topography.		
2	Involve clearance of existing land vegetation		If yes, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Number of trees to be cut down:</li> <li>● Species of trees:</li> <li>● Are the trees protected:</li> <li>● Total land area of vegetation cover removed:</li> <li>● Estimated economic value of the trees, crops and vegetation to be cut down / removed and any replacement costs (e.g., fees, registration, taxes):</li> <li>● Provide additional details:</li> </ul>

3	Does the activity involve reforestation or modification of natural habitat? If yes, will it involve use or introduction of non-native species into the project area?		
4	Will pesticides be used? If so, are they on the list of those excluded by the Stockholm Convention?		
5	Result in environmental pollution? This may include air pollution, liquid waste, solid waste, or waste as the result of earth moving or excavation for example		
6	Trigger land disturbance, erosion, subsidence, or instability?		
7	Result in significant use of water, such as for construction?		
8	Produce dust during construction and operation?		
9	Generate significant ambient noise?		
10	Increase the sediment load in the local water bodies?		
11	Change on-site or downstream water flows?		
12	Negatively affect water dynamics, river connectivity or the hydrological cycle in ways other than direct changes of water flows (e.g. water filtration and aquifer recharge, sedimentation)?		
13	Result in negative impacts to any endemic, rare or threatened species; species that have been identified as significant through global, regional, national, or local laws?		
14	Could the activity potentially increase the vulnerability of local communities to climate variability and changes (e.g., through risks and events such as landslides, erosion, flooding, or droughts)?		
<b>Socio-Economic Impacts</b>			
15	Negatively impact existing tenure rights (formal and informal) of individuals, communities or others to land, fishery and forest resources?		
16	Operate where there are indigenous peoples and their lands/territories/waters are located? OR Operate where any indigenous communities have close cultural/spiritual or land use relationships? If yes to either, answer questions below:		
	Has an FPIC process been started? Will any restrictions on their use of land/territories/water/ natural resources be restricted?		
17	Restrict access to natural resources (e.g., watersheds or rivers, grazing areas, forestry, non-timber forest products) or restrict the way natural resources are used, in ways that will impact livelihoods?		
18	Restrict access to sacred sites of local communities (including ethnic minorities) and/or places relevant for women's or men's religious or cultural practices?		
19	Operate where there are any cultural heritage or religious or sacred sites that may be impacted by the project?		

20	Undermine the customary rights of local communities to participate in consultations in a free, prior, and informed manner to address interventions directly affecting their lands, territories or resources?		
<b>Labor and Working Conditions</b>			
21	Involve hiring of workers or contracting with labor agencies to provide labor? If yes, answer questions a-b below. a) Are labor management issues prevalent in the landscape? b) Are illegal child labor issues prevalent in the landscape?		
22	Involve working in hazardous environments such as steep, rocky slopes, areas infested with poisonous animals and/or disease vectors?		
<b>Minorities and Vulnerable Groups</b>			
23	Negatively affect vulnerable groups (such as ethnic minorities, women, poorer households, migrants, and assistant herders) in terms of impact on their economic or social life conditions or contribute to their discrimination or marginalization?		
24	Stir or exacerbate conflicts among communities, groups or individuals? Also considering dynamics of recent or expected migration including displaced people, as well as those who are most vulnerable to threats of sexual exploitation, abuse or harassment.		
<b>Occupational and Community Health and Safety</b>			
25	Involve any risks related to the usage of construction materials, working high above the ground or in canals where slopes are unstable?		
26	Expose local community to risks related to construction works or use of machinery (e.g., loading and unloading of construction materials, excavated areas, fuel storage and usage, electrical use, machinery operations)		
27	Generate societal conflicts, increased risk of sexual exploitation, abuse or harassment or pressure on local resources between temporary workers and local communities?		
28	Work in areas where forest fires are a threat? If yes, how recently was the last one?		
29	Work in areas where there the presence or history of vector-borne diseases (some examples include malaria, yellow fever, encephalitis)		
<b>GBV/SEAH Risks</b>			
30	Is there a risk that the project could pose a greater burden on women by restricting the use, development, and protection of natural resources by women compared with that of men?		
31	Is there a risk that persons employed by or engaged directly in the project might engage in gender-based violence (including sexual exploitation, sexual abuse, or sexual harassment)? The response must consider risks not only at the beneficiary level, but also to workers within all the organizations receiving GCF/GEF funding.		
32	Does the project increase the risk of GBV and/or SEAH for women and girls, for example by changing resource use practices or singling out women and girls for training without complimentary		

	training/education for men? The response must consider all workers within the organizations receiving GCF/GEF funding.		
33	Does any mandated training for any individuals associated with the project (including project staff, government officials, park rangers and guards, other park staff, consultants, partner organizations and contractors) cover GBV/SEAH (along with human rights, etc.)?		
<b>Conflict Sensitivity and Risks</b>			
34	Are there any major underlying tensions or open conflicts in the landscape/seascape or in the country where the landscape/seascape is situated? If yes, answer a-d below a) Is there a risk that the activities interact with or exacerbate existing tensions and conflicts in the landscape/seascape? b) Do stakeholders (e.g. implementing partners, rights holders, other stakeholder groups) take a specific position in relation to the conflicts or tensions in the landscape/seascape or are they perceived as taking a position? c) How do stakeholders perceive WWF Country Office and IA and its partners in relation to existing conflicts or tensions? d) Could the conflicts or tensions in the landscape/seascape have a negative impact on the activities?		
35	Could the activities create conflicts among communities, groups or individuals?		
36	Are some groups (stakeholders, rights holders) benefiting more than others from the activities? And if so, how is that affecting power dynamics and mutual dependencies?		
37	Do the activities provide opportunities to bring different groups with diverging interests positively together?		

List of documents to be attached with the Screening Form:

1	Layout plan of the activity and photos
2	Summary of the activity proposal
3	No objection certificate from various departments and others relevant stakeholders

**Screening Tool Completed by:**

Signed:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Screening Conclusions [TO BE COMPLETED BY Safeguards Specialist]**

- i. Main environmental issues are:

ii. Permits/ clearance needed are:

iii. Main social issues are:

iv. Further assessment/ investigation needed and next step.

- a. Need for any special study:.....
- b. Preparation of ESMP (main issue to be addressed by the ESMP):.....
- c. Preparation of LRP (main issue to be addressed by the LRP):.....
- d. Any other requirements/ need/ issue etc:

**Screening Tool Reviewed by:**

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_