

Terms of Reference

Assessment of provincial planning processes, Dak Lak Province

Background

The geographic focus for these Terms of Reference is Chu Yang Sin National Park core zone and buffer zone (CYS), located in Krong Bong and Lak Districts, 60 km southeast of Buon Ma Thuat Town in Dak Lak Province, Vietnam. This area encompasses transitional landscapes between two macro-scale geomorphologies; the Dak Lak lowland plain and the central highlands. CYS holds global significance, as it covers an excellent representative sample of the hill and montane evergreen forest ecosystems of Indochina, and is located in the Da Lat Plateau Endemic Bird Area (EBA). The EBA is one of four centres of endemism identified in Indochina by BirdLife. CYS supports seven of the eight restricted-range species that define the Da Lat Plateau EBA, as well as two of the three species that define the South Vietnamese Lowlands EBA. The park protects a substantial part of the largest remaining forest block in the upper catchments of the Srepok River, which is a major tributary of the Mekong River.

The overall goal of this project is to conserve the biodiversity attributes of CYS in the long term, and to foster integrated watershed and biodiversity management at a broader scale. The project's purpose is to establish public support and effective management for the CYS by stabilising an interface between natural and agricultural landscapes, protecting the integrity of key biodiversity attributes, promoting integrated approaches to watershed and protected area management in the wider forest block, and elaborating realistic and sustainable development options for the park.

Consultancy Context

One of the three major threats identified to the park is large-scale infrastructure development. Recent development plans, some of which are proceeding already, include the Krong Kmar hydropower project and a planned private hydropower project (both situated within the park boundary), and the East Truong Son road that cuts across the park, substantially fragmenting it. Although all of these have the potential to seriously impact the national park, park staff have had little opportunity to input to the planning processes that identified these projects or the Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) that should have assessed the projects and either rejected them or proposed suitable mitigation measures. What little input there has been does not appear to have been taken into account. Although some developments are mandated by central government, with little opportunity for provincial- or district-level input, the future of the park is more likely to be assured if a process is established for integration of expert input from park staff to provincial planning processes.

Objectives and Main Tasks of this Consultancy

This consultancy focuses on provincial-, district-, and commune-level planning processes within Dak Lak Province. It is hoped, however, that the consultancy will have wider applicability. Thus, if there are any planning processes in Dak Lak which are standardised across Vietnam, the consultant should note which these are. A separate consultancy will assess issues related to EIAs. The objectives of the consultancy are to:

1. Clarify the legal situation, at national, provincial, district, and local level, with regard to infrastructure developments that impact special-use forests in Dak Lak. Concentration should be on the provincial, district, and local levels most easily influenced by this project.
2. Identify the planning processes within Dak Lak that determine the location, scale, or extent of large-scale developments. In regard to this consultancy, such developments particularly relate to infrastructure projects, but other relevant developments should also be considered.

These should include any developments which may affect special-use forest or surrounding areas in Dak Lak, and need not include such issues as town planning. Examples may include resettlement plans, agricultural plans. Details on each process should include at a minimum:

- (i) thematic area of impact;
- (ii) timing and frequency of planning (including next opportunity for input);
- (iii) lead agency and relevant contacts within the agency;
- (iv) description of process involved (e.g., number and location of meetings, workshops, etc);
- (v) evaluation of opportunities for expert input by CYS representatives.

3. Where input by CYS is currently judged difficult or insufficient, recommend any new processes which might be established to ensure representatives of CYS could give expert input to ensure that development plans do not impact CYS or, if they do, suitable mitigation and safeguard measures are put in place. Reference should be made to details of such processes if they exist elsewhere (e.g., perhaps the process established related to the Pu Luong-Cuc Phuong project in Thanh Hoa and Ninh Binh provinces).

Deliverables

1. Consultancy report, in English and Vietnamese, containing:
 - a. clarification of legal situation related to infrastructure projects in special-use forests;
 - b. details of current planning processes in Dak Lak (as above);
 - b. recommendations for any suitable new processes.

Consultancy Schedule and Time Allocated

The duration of this consultancy is approximately 20 working days, allocated according to the consultant, within the period September-October 2007.

Duty Station

The consultant's duty station will encompass Hanoi, Chu Yang Sing National Park, Buon Ma Thuot, and Krong Bong and Lak Districts as necessary to satisfy requirements to fulfill tasks set forth within these Terms of Reference. Time at the consultant's home base, in order to prepare the consultancy report, will also be considered. One return flight from Hanoi-Danang-Buon Ma Thuot will be provided for the consultant.

Consultant profile

National consultant with extensive experience of planning processes in Vietnam. English proficiency sufficient to write required report. Oral and written proficiency preferable in both English and Vietnamese.

Application

Prospective consultants should submit a proposed workplan, budget and CV to Mr. John Pilgrim (pilgrim@birdlife.netnam.vn) and Mr. Le Trong Trai (tra@birdlife.netnam.vn) by 15 September 2007. Please also use these contacts should you have any further questions.