

## Darwin Initiative Main: Annual Report

Project reference	28-020
Project title	Safeguarding globally important forests by improving livelihoods and strengthening governance
Country/ies	Vietnam
Lead Partner	Fauna & Flora International
Project partner(s)	The Centre for Sustainable Rural Development (SRD)
Darwin Initiative grant value	327,783
Start/end dates of project	July 2021 – June 2024
Reporting period (e.g. Apr 2023 – Mar 2024) and number (e.g. Annual Report 1, 2, 3)	April 2023- Mar 2024 Annual Report 3
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Project website/blog/social media	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/FaunaFloraVietnam">https://www.facebook.com/FaunaFloraVietnam</a>
Report author(s) and date	Lam Van Hoang – 30 <sup>th</sup> April 2024

### 1. Project summary

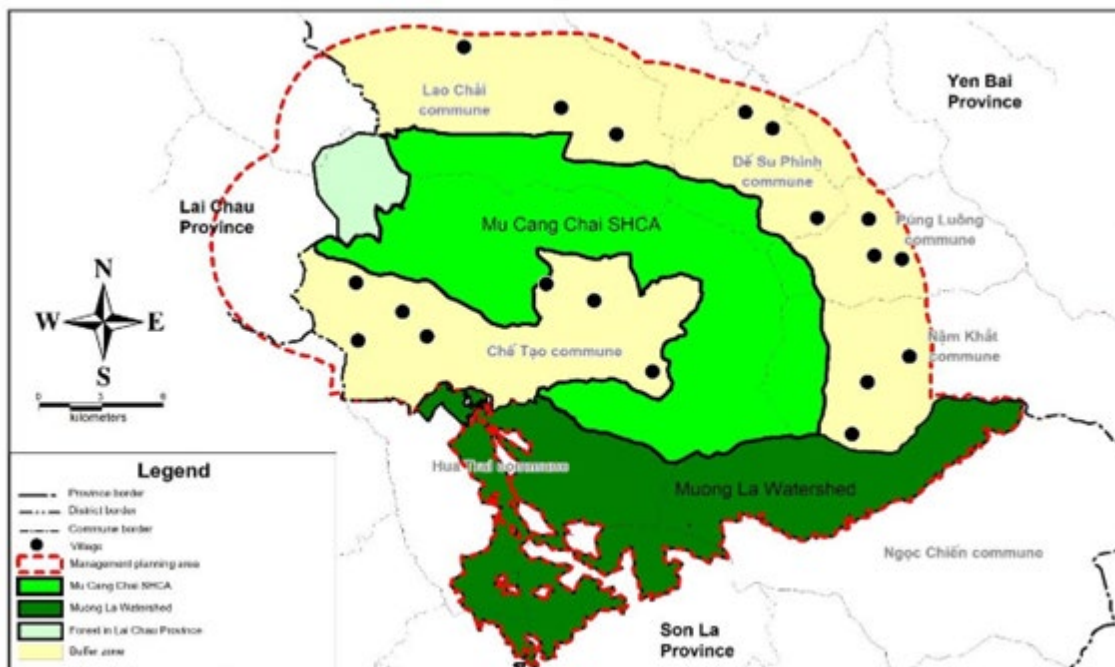
The Western black-crested gibbon (*Nomascus concolor*) has plummeted to Critically Endangered status according to the IUCN, with a global population dipping below 1,400 individuals in 2006. This decline has stemmed largely from extensive deforestation, illegal hunting, wildlife trade, and lax law enforcement. In Vietnam, the last viable population resides within the Mu Cang Chai Species & Habitat Conservation Area (MCC SHCA) and the Muong La Nature Reserve (MLNR), comprising roughly 19 groups and 80 individuals. Conservation efforts here are paramount not just for genetic diversity but also as a separate population to safeguard against declines in neighbouring China and Laos.

Key to conservation within the MCC SHCA – MLNR complex has been the Community Conservation Teams (CCTs) established by Fauna & Flora since 2003, comprising 22 members dedicated to safeguarding these gibbons.

The contiguous forests of MCC SHCA and MLNR boast exceptional biodiversity, particularly in herpetofauna, avifauna, trees, and primates. These areas remain among the most pristine in Vietnam, yet face threats from hunting, snaring, and encroachment driven by local livelihood activities such as terraced rice farming and livestock free grazing. Additionally, the emergence of cardamom cultivation poses a new threat, leading to forest thinning out and degradation of prime primate habitat.

An opportunity exists to implement transparent, collaborative governance measures around MCC SHCA and MLNR, utilizing a landscape planning framework unprecedented in Vietnam. This initiative, featuring zoning plans, collaborative protected areas, and livelihood improvements, aims to empower marginalized ethnic minorities, alleviate poverty, and ensure the survival of Critically Endangered primates, including the Western black-crested gibbon.

**Photo 1: Map of project site – Mu Cang Chai SHCA and Muong La NR landscape**



## 2. Project stakeholders/ partners

After two decades of engagement in the MCC SHCA and MLNR, Fauna & Flora maintains a strong reputation and collaborative relationships with both the Vietnamese Government and local stakeholders. Our primary partnership in this endeavour is with two key provincial government bodies, facilitated through longstanding Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) with the Yen Bai Provincial Forest Protection Department and the Son La Provincial Forest Protection Department. The MLNR and MMCC SHCA Management Boards, overseen by their respective Departments of Agriculture and Rural Development / Forest Protection Departments (FPD) in Son La and Yen Bai Provinces, form the core operational units.

At the sub-national level, decision-making authority lies with the Provincial People's Committees (PPC), akin to provincial cabinets. The project operates across two contiguous provinces, Yen Bai and Son La, with the respective PPCs responsible for project approval and oversight of key components and deliverables. Cooperation through joint field visits, participation in CCT monthly meetings, and collaborative development of monthly work plans have continued throughout the project.

Regular mechanisms such as field visits, meetings, and work planning sessions are employed to maintain active engagement. Workshops and monthly feedback sessions provide opportunities for representatives from relevant agencies, local authorities, and communities to provide input, ensuring inclusive decision-making processes. All project activities are conducted in partnership, with monthly progress updates shared with partners and feedback solicited.

Engaging with local government has posed certain challenges. While it falls under the purview of the FPD to bolster patrols and law enforcement in safeguarding the MLNR and MCC SHCA, resources and personnel are frequently inadequate. Additionally, there have been instances of reluctance to report illicit activities. However, a new management board of MCC SHCA is being established and they have committed to addressing these concerns, focusing on enhancing patrol support, transparency, law enforcement, and expediting decision-making processes.

Additionally, the project collaborates directly with the Centre for Sustainable Rural Development (SRD) to enhance sustainable livelihood opportunities for communities residing around these protected areas. Formal and informal meetings between project members, officials, and SRD representatives to facilitate discussions on project objectives, work plans, and feedback collection.

Fauna & Flora's UK technical specialists continue provide technical support to the delivery of training courses on market analysis, Situational Crime Prevention Strategy, and sustainable livelihoods for SRD, FPD, and Fauna & Flora staff, furthering capacity-building efforts.

In August 2023, Fauna & Flora Vietnam welcomed a Senior Technical Specialist to oversee biodiversity conservation efforts across project sites. This addition has notably enhanced the organization's ability to coordinate trainings and streamline data collection for CCTs, partners, and government entities. Consequently, there have been notable increase in training sessions for CCT and FPD personnel on utilizing SMART technology for enhanced patrol activities and species monitoring.

### **3. Project progress**

#### **3.1 Progress in carrying out project Activities**

**Output 1 – Quality and sustainability of community-based patrolling, crime prevention and PA monitoring is improved.**

##### **1.1 Implement SMART patrols by rangers and CCTs (22 members across both sites), providing support and training on snare removal, awareness raising, and SMART**

This activity takes place continuously throughout the project life cycle. The implementation of SMART patrols by CCTs, alongside support and training initiatives for snare removal, awareness-raising, and SMART technology utilization, has yielded promising results in the conservation efforts for the MCC SHCA and the MLNR.

Notable successes include maintained presence and effectiveness of patrols which aim to reduce illegal activities such as poaching and habitat destruction. The training provided on snare removal has empowered local communities and rangers to mitigate threats to wildlife more effectively. Awareness-raising campaigns have garnered support and participation from local stakeholders, fostering a culture of conservation.

Moreover, the increased understanding of SMART technology has enhanced monitoring and reporting capabilities, allowing for more efficient resource allocation and decision-making. These combined efforts have contributed to the improved protection and preservation of biodiversity within the MCC SHCA and MLNR, marking a significant step forward in their conservation journey.

From January to April 2024, 22 CCT members conducted 273 patrol days, with 2,092.7 km long and monitoring 25 – 40 individuals of Western black-crested gibbon in MLNR and MCC SHCA. Two refresher SMART mobile trainings were conducted in 2023 and we planned to conduct two more in 2024.

##### **1.2 Conduct forest cover, quality and connectedness surveys at project start and end.**

As reported, this initiative was successfully completed in Year 1. Fauna & Flora partnered with Alfordgood Asia, an international NGO specializing in AI and technology for environmental and social governance (ESG) projects. Together, they aimed to develop innovative and cost-effective solutions for monitoring forest changes and assessing habitat degradation. By pinpointing areas most impacted by cardamom cultivation, Fauna & Flora, along with government partners, can strategically target interventions to mitigate habitat degradation in these sensitive areas.

As a direct outcome of these efforts, the Mu Cang Chai District People's Committee issued an official directive in November 2021 to halt the expansion of cardamom farming and the drying process within forest areas. Additionally, the project team will host an end of project workshop with PA managers to discuss sustainable solutions and future steps to address the expanding cultivation of cardamom.

##### **1.3 Develop a sustainable incentive programme for CCT and PA rangers to motivate them beyond salary and SMART-based performance monitoring (annual payments).**

This initiative has been ongoing from Q1 Year 2 until the project's conclusion. Throughout this period, the project has organized annual meetings with CCTs and PA managers at both project sites to evaluate the performance of the CCT model, strategize improvements, and plan for the future.

Through the continuous collection of SMART data, all CCT members have shown improvement in their performance and increased motivation. They now operate as cohesive teams, with seven sub-groups established across the two sites (four in MCC SHCA and three in MLNR). At the annual meeting in 2023, it was unanimously decided that all CCT members would receive small cash rewards from the project in recognition of their year-long contributions to conservation. This was implemented in early 2024.

The project collaborated with Yen Bai and Son La provincial FPDs, as well as MCC SHCA and MLNR PA-managers, to develop a "wildlife hero programme." This programme aims to cultivate new role models to motivate CCTs and local youth. Unfortunately, due to human resources changes within the PA management staff, this has been postponed by the PA authorities ~~until 2025~~.

#### **1.4 Conduct intensive annual snare removal surveys by CCT and PA rangers, supported by Youth Union and volunteers.**

In April 2023, the project successfully completed intensive snaring removal campaigns, employing strategic approaches informed by collected data. These campaigns encompassed capacity-building initiatives targeting rangers, local government officials, local youth, and CCTs; Thirty participants from six sub-groups at both sites participated in six-day intensive patrolling expeditions.

Conducting intensive annual snare removal surveys by CCTs, with support from the Youth Union and volunteers, has yielded significant results in wildlife conservation efforts. These efforts have led to 34 snares collected within the protected areas, thereby mitigating the threat posed to wildlife populations. Additionally, the collaboration between rangers, the Youth Union, and volunteers has not only enhanced the effectiveness of snare removal operations but has also fostered community engagement and ownership of conservation initiatives.

Three snaring removal campaigns were conducted in 2023 and two more to be done in May 2024.

#### **1.5 Sign conservation agreements with community leaders and specific households (of known hunters), specifying project benefits and conditionality of benefits**

This activity was conducted in Q3, Q4 Year 1 and Q2 Year. This activity is integrated with the activity 2.5. Please see Activity 2.5 for further information.

#### **1.6 Conduct annual METT assessments at project start (to establish baseline), mid-project and project end.**

In March 2024, we conducted a METT-4 workshop to evaluate the effectiveness of PA management in 2023 in MLNR with participation of 35 people from MLNR including local communes and 10 CCT members. As a result, the METT score for 2023 is 84; higher than in 2021 with score of 73.

In April 2024, the project team conducted a METT-4 workshop in MCC SHCA with participation from 60 relevant partners, including representatives from Mu Cang Chai district FPD, relevant agencies, 5 local communities, and 14 CCT members. The result of METT in 2024 shown that the total score is 88 higher than 2021 with score of 68.

#### **1.7 Develop and implement a bio-monitoring protocol, for black gibbons and key indicators species, in addition to SMART monitoring.**

This activity was planned to occur consistently throughout the project's duration. Since its inception, the project team has collaborated with the technical team to formulate Conservation & Patrol Oriented Patrol Standards (COPS) tailored for the MCC SHCA and MLNR. Over several months, the initial version of COPS was applied in forest patrol to assist PA managers, local rangers, and members of the CCTs in maintaining effective protection and enforcement

capabilities to address the impacts of human activities and illegal incursions. This COPS serves as straightforward guidelines for both local and regional compliance and enforcement endeavours.

This activity was completed by Year 2.

### **1.8 Conduct annual market/wildlife trade surveys in surrounding districts and urban centres in Son La and Yen Bai (overt, not covert, data collection, including risk assessments).**

This activity has been conducted annually and is combined with Activity 2.9. Please see more details under Activity 2.9.

## **Output 2 – PA governance is effective, sustainable and collaborative.**

### **2.1 Develop collaborative PA management plans, including discussion facilitation and technical input, maintaining and supporting SMART ranger and CCT patrols.**

This initiative was strategically mapped out from Q4 Year 1 to Q1 Year 3, with a series of quarterly, mid-year, and annual meetings—totalling five sessions per year—set up to evaluate best practices and confront challenges, thereby informing future strategies and plans. These gatherings serve as pivotal moments for project stakeholders and CCTs to convene, hashing out short-term operational strategies for the upcoming quarterly activities to sustain the project's momentum.

Consistent dialogue on project performance enables adaptive management of protected area plans, fostering agility in response to evolving circumstances. Monthly SMART reports, encapsulating key highlights and actionable suggestions, have been disseminated among PA managers and other pertinent stakeholders, fostering transparency and accountability.

The project team has upheld a transparent line of communication with PA managers and the FPDs, keeping them abreast of project activities through regular briefings and presentations to senior staff. In the context of PA management plan development, the project has fostered collaboration and knowledge exchange on conservation and forest-related issues among multiple protected areas and national parks.

Collaborating with local government entities has also presented its share of obstacles. Despite the responsibility falling on the FPD to reinforce patrols and enforce laws for the protection of the MLNR and MCC SHCA, there's often a shortage of resources and personnel. Moreover, there have been cases of hesitance in reporting illicit activities. However, there's a positive development underway with the establishment of a new management board for MCC SHCA. They've expressed their commitment to tackling these challenges head-on. Their focus lies on bolstering support for patrols, fostering transparency, strengthening law enforcement efforts, and expediting decision-making processes. This proactive approach signals a promising shift towards more effective conservation management practices in the region.

In line with this collaborative ethos, the project team facilitated an exchange visit involving four protected areas, including MCC SHCA and MLNR, with which Fauna & Flora collaborates. This exchange, which took place in May 2022, coincided with a meeting aimed at developing collaborative PA management plans, fostering mutual support and expertise exchange among high-level officials and experts, including representatives from Yen Bai and Son La FPDs, Mu Cang Chai SHCA, and Muong La NR. For further details, please refer to activity 2.6.

Two refresher SMART training courses were conducted for 22 CCT members in Mu Cang Chai and Muong La in October 2023 another SMART field guideline for 15 CCT in Che Tao conducted by the biodiversity team in November 2023.

### **2.2 Develop and deliver training courses for PA staff, based on training needs assessments using the ARCBC/IUCN Competency Standards for Protected Areas.**

This initiative was planned across Q2 Year 1, Q1 and Q2 Year 2, and Q1 Year 4. The training needs assessment was successfully conducted in Year 1, adhering to the outlined schedule and utilizing the IUCN Competency Standards for PAs. Since the project's inception, a diverse array of training courses has been administered to PA staff, as detailed in activity 1.1.

Throughout the reporting period, the project diligently facilitated a variety of training sessions tailored to enhance the capabilities of rangers, PA staff, and CCTs. As highlighted in Activity 2.1, two SMART mobile trainings were conducted for CCT on field guidelines, gibbon survey training, and using audio devices to record gibbon sound. This comprehensive training delved into the practical aspects of utilizing the SMART Mobile application for efficient patrol data collection. Attendees were thoroughly instructed on key processes such as data collection during patrols, declaration of patrol information, initiation and termination of patrols, and the seamless uploading of data to the cloud post-patrol. Additionally, the training included strategic insights on how to effectively strategize and execute complementary motorbike and foot patrols.

### **2.3 Maintain and strengthen Collaborative Management Advisory Committees (MAC), including regulations, scope and memberships, and inclusive of MAC facilitation and technical advice.**

Throughout the project's lifespan, this activity has been a consistent fixture. Although no formal meeting was conducted in 2023, representatives from the MCC SHCA management board, the Mu Cang Chai District People's Committee, district police officers, delegates from five buffer-zone communes, as well as representatives from various other departments and civil organizations have been continually consulted with and included in operations.

The Director of MCC SHCA previously highlighted the necessity of scrutinizing the MAC model's compliance with Vietnamese regulations, decisions, and laws pertaining to the establishment of CSOs. Consequently, the project is still working to ensure that the MAC framework aligns with collaborative PA management principles while adhering to Vietnam's legal framework. Due to the current changes happening within the PA management board however, this is an ongoing process.

While awaiting the revision of MAC regulations, the project has proactively engaged stakeholders by extending invitations to attend annual meetings and key events. This inclusive approach has proven fruitful, with all local partners gaining insight into how a multi-stakeholder forest dialogue mechanism can expedite the transfer of responsibilities for forest management. This heightened political support serves to enhance collaboration among project stakeholders, fostering a conducive environment for shared success.

### **2.4 Develop site-specific/PA social safeguards, monitoring plan and grievance redress mechanism (GRM), through village-level, household and focus group discussions, ensuring participation of women and vulnerable groups.**

This activity was rescheduled to occur throughout the project life cycle and integrated with Activity 3.1 as reported previously. Please see Activity 3.1 for further details.

### **2.5 Conduct Knowledge-Attitude-Behaviour (KAB) surveys at project start (baseline), mid-project and project end.**

At the outset of the project, in November 2021, the baseline survey comprised the KAB assessment along with an annual socio-economic survey. The subsequent report, now released and disseminated among partners, served as a cornerstone for shaping activities.

In August 2023, the KAB surveys were repeated with the support of Fauna & Flora staff. This time, ten youths from local communities lent their assistance, facilitating the surveying process across both project areas. A total of 541 local participants, with a balanced representation of 48% women and 52% men, contributed to the survey.

The survey findings shed light on several pertinent observations. Notably, 54% of respondents derived their livelihood from payment for environmental forest services, underlining the economic significance of forest conservation efforts. An overwhelming majority (95.4%) of respondents emphasized the paramount importance of forest protection in their daily lives. However, despite this recognition, a significant proportion (78.9%) reported minimal engagement in activities within the forest.

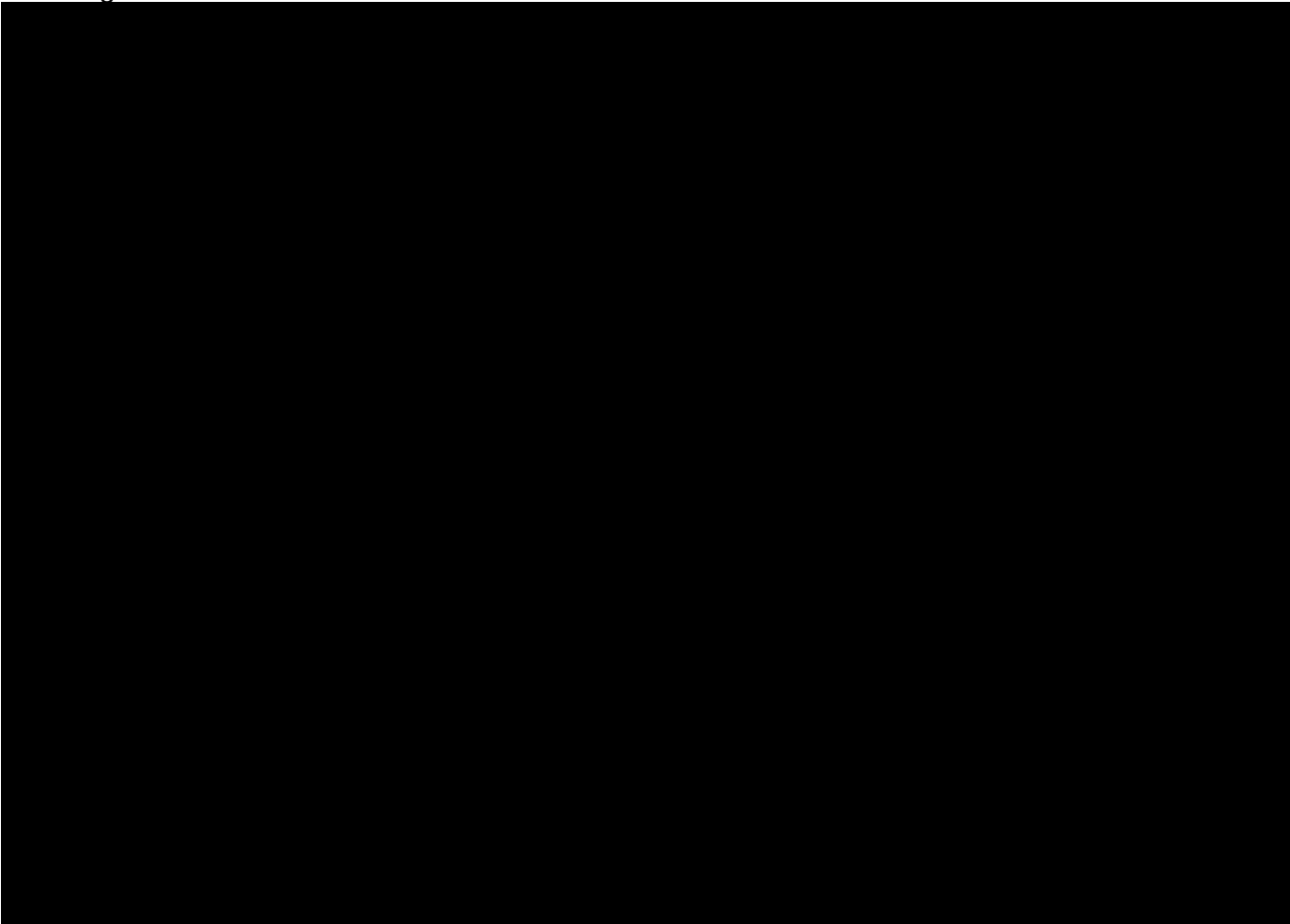
Primary concerns voiced by respondents included challenges such as limited market access (21.8%) and a decrease in family income (21.8%). Encouragingly, in comparison to the baseline KAB survey conducted in 2021, there has been a noticeable decline in reported concerns. For instance, worries regarding food shortages decreased from 58.2% in 2021 to 32.5% in 2023.

Similarly, concerns regarding difficulties in accessing markets dropped from 51.7% in 2021 to 21.8% in 2023, indicative of positive shifts in local perceptions and circumstances.

**2.6 Develop awareness-raising and communications strategies about the project at local (trainings, events, printed literature, schools curricular), sub-national (workshops, study tours), and national (fora) levels.**

In May 2023, an awareness raising campaign was implemented in Che Tao school for 120 students and local people in Che Tao village, Mu Cang Chai.

With the theme "Protect Mu Cang Chai conservation area together", the "Ring the Golden Bell" quiz game created an intriguing and educational playground for students to learn about knowledge related to nature conservation as well as the Western black crested gibbon. 25 questions about forestry and wildlife not only brought the students full of excitement and intensity but also equipped them with knowledge about biodiversity conservation and forest protection skills. At the same time, through this programme, they also aroused and nurtured pride in the Western black crested gibbon at Mu Cang Chai forest - one of only two areas in Vietnam where this gibbon is still alive.



crested gibbon through wall painting activity. It was the first time the school organised this and thus attracted many teachers and students to attend and participate with the artist and Fauna & Flora in designing and completing the painting. This wall painting with a positive message will help not only raise awareness of students and parents but also spread the love of nature, wildlife

and pride in the biodiversity of Mu Cang Chai Species & Habitat Conservation Area to the community.

## 2.7 Undertake IUCN Green List assessments for both PAs.

This initiative took place in Q4 Year 1, Q2 Year 2, Q4 Year 3, and Q2 Year 4.

The project has been collaborating with IUCN experts at the Vietnam office to gain insights into the IUCN Green List and its associated benefits for sites. The Green List covers four key areas: good governance, sound design and planning, effective management, and positive conservation outcomes. This partnership has facilitated a deeper understanding of the process involved in assessing the IUCN Green List criteria, as well as the preparation of materials and documents for introductory workshops tailored to MCC SHCA and MLNR.



Due to changes in personnel, namely the project manager's departure in 2023, this activity has been postponed. IUCN experts have been engaged several in-person meetings with Fauna & Flora staff to develop a roadmap for MCC SHCA and MLNR to join the IUCN Green List of Protected and Conserved Areas however, at this point, an assessor has not been able to visit to the site.

## 2.8 Develop a feasibility study for upgrading MCC HSCA to full Nature Reserve status and actively support the upgrade through consultation and data sharing.

This initiative was slated for implementation from Q3 Year 2 to Q1 Year 3 and has remained a consistent focus throughout the project timeline. Initially outlined in the project's first annual report, discussions were held with potential consultants to delineate the scope of work and expected outcomes for this activity. Unfortunately, logistical constraints and uncertainties regarding the feasibility of achieving desired results hindered progress with these candidates. Consequently, while efforts to secure external resources for the feasibility study persist, the new project manager has also taken proactive measures to gather all pertinent official documents related to upgrading MCC SHCA and has initiated the drafting of a policy brief.

In tandem with these efforts, the project team has engaged in a series of formal and informal meetings with key stakeholders, including the Yen Bai Provincial FPD, MCC SHCA managers, and local community members. These discussions have aimed to comprehensively understand the local contexts and requirements for upgrading MCC SHCA, with a focus on navigating the political and administrative processes involved and ensuring the establishment of a Management Board, which is currently lacking.

Despite the significant milestone achieved through in submitting an application package to the Yen Bai Provincial Department of Agriculture & Rural Development for the upgrade to full nature reserve status in 2022, challenges persist. This is particularly enhanced by Vietnamese government's downsizing policy affecting public employees receiving government salaries over the past decade, posing obstacles to establishing new management boards.

To intensify efforts, the Country Director conducted a ministerial-level meeting with the Division of Forest Species Use under the Ministry of Agriculture & Rural Development to chart a roadmap for upgrading MCC SHCA to MCC Natural Reserve. Further engagements with high-level ministries and provincial Forest Protection Departments have been conducted to advance this objective. Throughout these endeavours, the project team has played a pivotal role in facilitating progress through consultation and data sharing since the project's inception.

By the time of submitting this report, on June 04, 2024 the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development of Yen Bai province issued Decision No. 94 /QD-SNN on revision of new



Management Board for MCC SHCA. Its name remains the same but it has a full functioning management board.

## **2.9 Develop and implement a Situational Crime Prevention Strategy for each PA, working in close cooperation with commune authorities and police departments.**

This activity has been ongoing since the inception of the project. The team has been actively collaborating with the technical support of Fauna & Flora UK's Wildlife Trade Technical Specialist, Dr. Laure Joanny, to formulate a comprehensive crime prevention strategy for MCC SHCA and MLNR. The strategy commenced with semi-structured interviews conducted with key informants in MCC SHCA, including individuals from restaurants, CCT members, village leaders, rangers, and members of the PA management board at the district police department level.

In Year 3 of the project, particular emphasis was placed on addressing the issue of wildlife meat consumption within the landscape, particularly within the restaurant and trading sectors. Due to the sensitivities surrounding this issue, the project team invested time in devising appropriate questions and methods to garner meaningful responses, culminating in a survey conducted in 2023.

Throughout the reporting period, the project team diligently worked on fortifying the evidence base pertaining to illegal hunting activities in the two protected areas. This involved leveraging various sources such as key informant interviews and SMART patrolling data to enhance and refine crime scripts outlining instances of commercial illegal hunting in the landscape. Crime scripts provide a detailed account of the actions and decisions involved in executing an illegal activity, serving as a valuable tool for analysing and disrupting such activities.

Two consultation workshops were conducted in MLNR and MCC SHCA with supporting from Fauna & Flora Technical Specialists to identify markets for IWT including restaurant demand and supply chain mapping. The project also introduced the concept of Situational Crime Prevention (SCP), a novel approach in the realm of conservation, to engage PA partners and underscore the value of adopting an SCP approach. Building on the success of an introductory workshop and key findings from a wildlife trade survey, the project team commenced snaring and gun hunting prevention activities based on 25 SCP Techniques. These techniques were discussed with the MLNR Management Board at a meeting in June 2023, with similar introductions and discussions planned for MCC SHCA management in Q2 of Year 3.

The project has continued conducting hunting gun confiscation activities at both sites to disseminate messaging on the illegality of gun ownership and hunting within PAs. By the end of Year 3, significant progress has been made in integrating SCP interventions into the work plan of MLNR and MCC SHCA.

Gun confiscations have been implemented by FPD and police in both MLNR and MCC SHCA.

## **Output 3 – Resilience of forest-using communities is increased by land-use planning and sustainable livelihoods, creating result-based incentives for forest protection leading to reduced negative impact on forests and species.**

### **3.1 Facilitate and produce Participatory Resource/Land-Use Maps and Plans (PRUM/PLUPs) in 17 villages in the buffer zones surrounding the two PAs, following an FPIC process.**

This activity was completed and reported in annual report 2 (2023).

### **3.2 Support a consultative process of the review and strengthening of land tenure, in partnership with a local lawyer, following an FPIC process.**

This activity was completed in Q4 Year 1 and Q1 Year 2. This activity is related to Activity 3.1 and results have been reported there.

### **3.3 Collect socio-economic and social impact assessment data bi-annually, including a participatory identification of associated indicators of change that can be used for monitoring.**

This activity was combined with Activity 2.5. Please see Activity 2.5 for further information.

### **3.4 Conduct a review of existing farming systems, participatory SWOT and gap analyses, and farmer surveys, to inform and monitor agri-livelihoods interventions.**

As reported in the Year 1 report, this activity was completed in Q3 and Q4 Year 1.

### **3.5 Implement PMSD process in 17 villages to select products for market analysis and development, evaluating products under social and biodiversity criteria.**

As planned, this activity concluded in August 2022. The outcomes were disseminated to a wide array of stakeholders, including local government officials, district policymakers, managers of two protected areas, representatives from the private sector, and members of the local community.

### **3.6 Develop and implement an action plan based on multi-stakeholder workshop(s) with market actors and communities, ensuring participation of women and vulnerable groups.**

This activity was scheduled for Year 2. The multi-stakeholder PMSD workshops took place from October 31st to November 4th, 2022, in MCC SHCA and MLNR as planned. The plan was issued and shared in the last report.

### **3.7 Pilot five livelihood models, including agriculture and ecotourism interventions, developed and co-implemented with SRD, including business planning and training for communities on: crop diversification, yield maximisation, supply chains and market access.**

This project activity commenced in Year 1. The project provided training to establish a farmer collective model for seasonal vegetables. Additionally, the project facilitated meetings with market actors, including cooperatives, resulting in the signing of an MOU between the local cooperative and the farmer group established by the project (please refer to the annex for details). As per this agreement, the local cooperative now purchases products from the farmer group.

The success of the current farmer group model has sparked increased community participation in existing groups and the formation of some new ones. Furthermore, the project has achieved a 40% increase in crop yields by establishing more farmer groups, predominantly consisting of women. This has made a significant contribution to local food security, particularly benefiting women and vulnerable individuals.

In Year 3, the project targeted 15 households within the pilot areas as part of its ongoing efforts.

### **3.8 Implement an eco-stove design and procurement work-stream to reduce local fuel wood requirements for households and for cardamom drying.**

This activity was completed in Year 1 and Year 2.

## **Output 4 – Novel sustainable finance approaches for enforcement and PA management are piloted for both PAs.**

### **4.1 Explore innovative sustainable financing options for enforcement and PA management, developing a business plan to secure PES (and other) funding for these, including at least one additional CCT group.**

This activity has taken place continuously throughout the project life cycle.

### **4.2 Obtain legally binding government approval of all PES agreements, for community-based forest protection, through a process of collaborative policy development and advocacy.**

Progressing with a districtwide business plan and landscape management has been a challenging journey, marked by a slow pace. While the full coverage of CCT salaries by PES is not yet achieved, the strides made during the project represent a significant step forward.

Consistent consultation meetings with PA management boards and FPD have continued to navigate the complexities of establishing feasible PES agreements. Informal discussions with PA management boards at both project sites are also ongoing, aiming to identify potential PES arrangements.

Throughout the project's duration, consultations with PA management boards and FPD persist to secure PES agreements. In June 2024, a new Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) will be

signed among Fauna & Flora, PA management boards, and FPD. This MOU presents an opportunity to integrate PES payments for CCT operation.

### **3.2 Progress towards project Outputs**

#### **Output 1 – Quality and sustainability of community-based patrolling, crime prevention and PA monitoring is improved**

Continuous implementation of SMART patrols by rangers and Community Conservation Teams (CCTs), along with training on snare removal, awareness-raising, and SMART technology utilization, has resulted in effective patrols, reducing illegal activities such as poaching and habitat destruction. Training on snare removal has empowered local communities and rangers, while awareness campaigns have garnered stakeholder support, fostering a culture of conservation.

Successful completion of forest cover surveys has provided crucial insights into habitat degradation. Collaboration with partners has led to strategic interventions, such as halting cardamom farming expansion in sensitive areas, based on survey findings. Further workshops and assessments are planned to reinforce conservation efforts.

Annual meetings and performance evaluations have motivated CCT members, leading to improved teamwork and performance. The introduction of a wildlife hero program recognizes outstanding contributions, further incentivizing conservation efforts.

Intensive snare removal campaigns, supported by various stakeholders, have been instrumental in mitigating threats to wildlife. Successful operations have resulted in the removal of numerous snares within protected areas, thereby safeguarding wildlife populations. Collaboration between rangers, the Youth Union, and volunteers has not only enhanced the effectiveness of snare removal operations but has also fostered community engagement and ownership of conservation initiatives.

#### **Output 2 – PA governance is effective, sustainable and collaborative.**

The development of collaborative PA management plans has been a central focus, involving quarterly meetings to evaluate best practices and address challenges. Monthly SMART reports have been instrumental in fostering transparency and accountability among stakeholders. Despite challenges, such as resource shortages and reporting hesitance, the establishment of a new MCC SHCA management board signals a proactive approach towards effective conservation management.

Training courses based on the ARCBC/IUCN Competency Standards for Protected Areas have been consistently delivered to PA staff. These courses cover various aspects, including the practical use of SMART technology for patrol data collection, resulting in improved capabilities and performance among rangers and CCTs.

The maintenance and strengthening of Collaborative Management Advisory Committees (MAC) have provided a platform for policymakers and PA managers to engage in dialogue. Despite regulatory challenges, consultation with MAC members have facilitated mutual support and expertise exchange, fostering an inclusive approach to PA management.

Efforts to develop site-specific social safeguards, monitoring plans, and grievance redress mechanisms have involved village-level discussions, ensuring the participation of women and vulnerable groups.

Conducting KAB surveys at different project stages has provided valuable insights into local perceptions and concerns. Notable progress includes a decline in reported concerns compared to baseline surveys, indicating positive shifts in local perceptions and circumstances.

Undertaking IUCN Green List assessments and developing feasibility studies for upgrading PA statuses have furthered conservation efforts. Despite challenges, such as downsizing policies affecting public employees, proactive engagement with high-level ministries and provincial departments has advanced these objectives.

Developing and implementing Situational Crime Prevention Strategies has involved leveraging various data sources to fortify the evidence base on illegal hunting activities. Introducing SCP techniques and conducting awareness-raising activities have contributed to integrating SCP interventions into PA work plans.

Overall, these activities have collectively contributed to enhancing PA governance, fostering sustainability, and promoting collaboration among stakeholders.

**Output 3 – Resilience of forest-using communities is increased by land-use planning and sustainable livelihoods, creating result-based incentives for forest protection leading to reduced negative impact on forests and species.**

The project is making steady strides, having established five livelihood models across three communes in both project areas. These models encompass environmentally friendly seasonal vegetables (two models), local sticky rice (Nep Tan), and environmentally safe livestock raising (two models). Through a collaborative effort with SRD, these models are being implemented using participatory and market-oriented approaches, ensuring that all local residents receive comprehensive training and technical support throughout the farming process.

To bolster market access, the project has supported local communities in successfully completing the inaugural farming season for tomato cultivation (lasting three months) and sticky rice. Furthermore, the project has established a market channel to facilitate the sale of all products in Hanoi markets. In the fourth quarter of 2023, cucumber and cabbage farming initiatives were launched alongside discussions regarding sustainable alternative farming models promoting environmentally safe livestock raising.

**Output 4 – Novel sustainable finance approaches for enforcement and PA management are piloted for both PAs.**

Exploring innovative sustainable financing options for enforcement and PA management has been an ongoing effort throughout the project. This initiative aimed to develop a business plan to secure PES and other funding sources. The project team has continuously assessed and evaluated potential financing models, with a particular focus on securing funding for at least one additional CCT.

Obtaining legally binding government approval of all PES agreements has been a complex process involving collaborative policy development and advocacy. While progress has been slow, significant strides have been made. Although full coverage of CCT salaries by PES has not yet been achieved, the progress made during the project marks a significant advancement. The project has continued to conduct consultation meetings with PA management boards and Forest Protection Departments (FPD) to navigate the intricacies of establishing feasible PES agreements. Informal discussions with PA management boards at both project sites have also been ongoing to explore potential PES arrangements.

Throughout the project's duration, efforts to secure PES agreements have persisted through consistent consultations with PA management boards and FDP. In June 2024, a new Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) will be signed among Fauna & Flora, PA management boards, and FPD, presenting an opportunity to integrate PES payments for CCT operation. This milestone signifies a step forward in securing sustainable financing for enforcement and PA management initiatives, marking progress towards the project's objectives.

### **3.3 Progress towards the project Outcome**

The project aims to achieve improved and sustainable protection of forest habitats and associated species in two priority Protected Areas (PAs) in Northern Vietnam. This will be accomplished through enhanced governance, sustainable finance, and improved local well-being.

Progress toward all project outputs has been substantial. The assumptions and indicators outlined in the original proposal remain valid. While the project has not yet fully realized its intended outcome, significant achievements have been made. These results and progress indicate that the project is on track to achieve the desired outcome by the project's conclusion.

### 3.4 Monitoring of assumptions

**Project Outcome: Two priority PAs in Northern Vietnam demonstrate improved and sustainable protection of forest habitats and associated species through enhanced governance, sustainable finance, and improved local wellbeing.**

Assumptions:

1. Accuracy and consistency of monitoring by local people (patrol teams) and rangers, producing reliable data sets.

Comments: Monitoring efforts remain accurate and consistent. Evidence shows ongoing reliable data collection from CCT however, FPD can be less willing to report on illegal activities. With the newly elected PA management board, there should be more transparency with reporting.

2. Gibbon census records a significant proportion of the population, allowing inference of change. Comments: The gibbon census continues to provide valuable data, allowing inference of population changes. A new census should be conducted if additional funding is acquired.

3. Target communities/project beneficiaries have sufficient capacity and/or project mitigates any shortcomings to engage in and benefit from the project.

Comments: Target communities show sustained interest and capacity, with ongoing project support. Cardamom farming however, still persists in the region despite positive community engagement and participation in the project.

**Output 1: Quality and sustainability of community-based patrolling, crime prevention, and PA monitoring is improved.**

Assumptions:

1. Community patrol team members have sufficient support, capacity, and motivation to undertake required forest patrols.

Comments: Capacity-building efforts and support mechanisms remain effective, ensuring consistent patrols.

2. CCT and ranger patrols, coupled with awareness raising, is enough to significantly reduce threats.

Comments: Efforts to reduce threats show progress, supported by effective patrolling and awareness activities. Threats from snaring and hunting have decreased during the project lifespan.

3. Fauna & Flora financial support incentivizes effective enforcement/monitoring by CCT patrollers.

Comments: Financial support continues to motivate effective enforcement and monitoring.

4. Target species can respond to protection outcomes and demonstrate changes in the project timeframe.

Comments: Species monitoring indicates responsiveness to protection measures.

**Output 2: PA governance is effective, sustainable, and collaborative.**

Assumptions:

1. Management effectiveness tools reflect genuine condition of PA management.

Comments: Tools accurately reflect PA management conditions, supporting effective governance. Capacity building efforts have proven successful and with the new election of PA management board members, even more effective PA management is expected.

2. Improvement of local patrolling and law enforcement acts as a deterrent to threats.

Comments: Strong enforcement deters threats, supported by SMART data sharing.

3. Government authorities remain open to community/CSO participation in PA governance.

Comments: Evidence shows continued government openness to community involvement.

4. Local community members maintain interest and capacity to engage in PA management.

Comments: Community interest and engagement remain high, supported by capacity-building efforts.

**Output 3: Resilience of forest-using communities is increased by land-use planning and sustainable livelihoods.**

Assumptions:

1. Local community members have capacity and motivation to engage in sustainable livelihoods.

Comments: Communities engage in livelihood activities with continued motivation.

2. Government authorities maintain openness to clarifying/strengthening land rights.

Comments: Government remains supportive of community rights and tenure.

3. No unexpected events negatively affect local attitudes/behaviours towards conservation.

Comments: Local attitudes towards conservation remain positive.

4. Development of safeguards and grievance mechanisms results in appropriate protection.

Comments: Mechanisms are in place to protect community rights and wellbeing.

#### **Output 4: Novel sustainable finance approaches for enforcement and PA management are piloted.**

Assumptions:

1. Explore innovative financing options and secure PES funding for enforcement and management.

Comments: PES funding secured, though advocacy efforts continue for broader support.

2. Obtain government approval of PES agreements for community-based forest protection.

Comments: Progress made in obtaining government approval, with advocacy efforts ongoing however, funds for CCT through PES will be solidified through a new MoU with government in 2024.

In summary, the project has progressed well, with most assumptions holding true. Ongoing efforts ensure that any deviations are effectively managed and addressed.

### **3.5 Impact: achievement of positive impact on biodiversity and poverty reduction**

**Impact: The northern forests of Vietnam are flourishing under sustainable, local protection and use, supporting thriving populations of gibbons, langurs, and other endemic species.**

The project has significantly contributed to biodiversity conservation by:

- Strengthening the capacity of local communities and park rangers in patrolling and monitoring activities, leading to improved protection of forest habitats.
- Implementing strategies to combat illegal wildlife trade and reduce threats to biodiversity.
- Engaging local communities in conservation efforts through awareness campaigns and participatory activities.
- Facilitating the establishment of sustainable financing mechanisms for conservation activities, ensuring long-term viability.

Evidence:

- Increase in sightings of endangered species like gibbons due to improved monitoring efforts.
- Reduction in illegal logging and wildlife trade activities within project intervention areas.
- Some adoption of sustainable land-use practices by local communities however, more is needed.

The project has contributed significantly to poverty reduction by:

- Creating alternative livelihood opportunities for local communities, reducing their dependency on unsustainable practices.
- Strengthening local governance and community empowerment, ensuring equitable participation and benefit-sharing.
- Enhancing access to basic services and infrastructure in project areas.
- Improving income generation and economic resilience among project beneficiaries through sustainable livelihood initiatives.

Evidence:

- Increased household income among participating communities through sustainable livelihood activities such as agroforestry and ecotourism.
- Improvement in education and healthcare access due to project interventions.
- Reduction in poverty indicators such as improved housing conditions and food security among project beneficiaries.
- Enhanced social cohesion and empowerment among marginalized groups through community-led initiatives.

By effectively addressing these aspects, the project has not only contributed to the conservation of biodiversity but has also positively impacted the wellbeing and livelihoods of local communities, aligning with the broader goals of biodiversity conservation and poverty reduction.

#### **4. Project support to the Conventions, Treaties or Agreements**

The project aims to assist Vietnam in meeting its commitments under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) as outlined below.

To achieve both national targets and those set by the CBD, the project implements the following activities:

- Ensuring the maintenance of a national system of Protected Areas (terrestrial/forest, wetland, and marine) and safeguarding critical ecosystems;
- Granting conservation priority to Protected Areas in critical ecoregions;
- Promoting biodiversity conservation and management at three levels: ecosystem, species, and genetic diversity.

The project supports Vietnam's National Adaptation Plan (NAP) to meet the UNFCCC requirements. For instance, project activities focus on enhancing the resilience and adaptive capacity of natural, social, and economic systems for sustainable livelihoods (Vietnam NAP plan, 2.3.3. Land use, land use change, and forestry).

The project contributes significantly to:

- Protection of existing natural forest areas in mountainous regions, with priority given to deforestation and forest degradation hotspots;
- Protection and conservation of special-use forests;
- Restoration of protection forests and special-use forests;
- Improvement of the quality and carbon stock of degraded natural forests.

#### **5. Project support for multidimensional poverty reduction**

##### **Directly benefiting from the project:**

The project targets ethnic minority communities residing around MLNR and MCC SHCA including Che Tao, Ngoc Chien, and Hua Trai communes. These communities face unstable livelihoods, poverty, and limited knowledge.

The project aims to:

- Increase income for households/communities by supporting people with experience, knowledge, and skills to improve existing agricultural production activities, stabilizing food by maintaining suitable vegetable, tuber, and fruit species, improving output, reducing input costs, increasing consumption, and improving the value of products through better packaging and preservation.
- Promote responsible production by implementing guidance on environmentally friendly agricultural farming techniques, reducing the use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides, and implementing practices for circulating agricultural waste.
- Raise awareness about livelihood activities that have little impact on conservation and biodiversity through meetings, forums, and training activities.
- Ensure that livelihood activities have minimal environmental impact, protecting biodiversity for future generations.

##### **Indirectly:**

The project focuses on improving community governance by establishing community groups to facilitate production coordination and enhance linkages and sharing among households.

To improve community understanding, the project allows communities living near the project area to directly observe project models, participate in group meetings, and listen to successful households sharing their experiences.

By the end of Year 3, the project benefited at least 60% female-headed households and more than 100 households within the pilot areas.

Further funding is being sought from international donors to scale up livelihood models.

The project aims to spread the concept by establishing local cooperatives, ensuring capacity building and program benefits reach more people through a snowball effect by project completion.

Through these efforts, the project contributes to the overall sustainability of the environment and enhances the livelihoods of the community.

## 6. Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI)

Please quantify the proportion of women on the Project Board <sup>1</sup> .	The project team is comprised of the Country Director as Project Leader (male), the Country Programme Manager (female) and the Project Manager (male). This teams works together to develop and implement all project activities.
Please quantify the proportion of project partners that are led by women, or which have a senior leadership team consisting of at least 50% women <sup>2</sup> .	Both of SRD's director and SRD's the programme manager are women who partnered with the project to implement livelihood activities.

GESI Scale	Description	Put X where you think your project is on the scale
<b>Not yet sensitive</b>	The GESI context may have been considered but the project isn't quite meeting the requirements of a 'sensitive' approach	
<b>Sensitive</b>	The GESI context has been considered and project activities take this into account in their design and implementation. The project addresses basic needs and vulnerabilities of women and marginalised groups and the project will not contribute to or create further inequalities.	X
<b>Empowering</b>	The project has all the characteristics of a 'sensitive' approach whilst also increasing equal access to assets, resources and capabilities for women and marginalised groups	
<b>Transformative</b>	The project has all the characteristics of an 'empowering' approach whilst also addressing unequal power relationships and seeking institutional and societal change	

In designing our approach, we've taken into account the GESI context by deliberately selecting a number of women for leading roles during consultation activities. This decision significantly contributes to gender equality within the project. Additionally, our aim is to encourage equal participation of both men and women in various project activities, including livelihood interventions, the KAB survey, village meetings, training courses, and project implementation and management. By actively promoting equal participation across these activities, we are addressing the GESI context by ensuring that both genders have equal opportunities to engage and contribute.

<sup>1</sup> A Project Board has overall authority for the project, is accountable for its success or failure, and supports the senior project manager to successfully deliver the project.

<sup>2</sup> Partners that have formal governance role in the project, and a formal relationship with the project that may involve staff costs and/or budget management responsibilities.



To ensure meaningful participation for all engaged in the project, we have implemented several measures. Firstly, we've created opportunities for both men and women to take on leadership roles, ensuring that diverse perspectives are represented in decision-making processes. Secondly, we've conducted training on safeguarding in December 2023, which not only promotes safety but also encourages open dialogue and ensures that all participants feel comfortable and respected. This contributes to meaningful participation by fostering an environment of trust and inclusivity.

Our project has made it more equitable for women and marginalized groups by actively involving them in leadership roles and encouraging their participation across various project activities. By intentionally selecting women for leading roles, we're breaking down gender barriers and promoting inclusivity. Moreover, by ensuring equal participation in activities such as livelihood interventions, surveys, meetings, and training courses, we're providing marginalized groups with opportunities to have their voices heard and to actively engage in decision-making processes. This helps in addressing social inequalities and promoting empowerment.

Through our efforts, we've not only made the project more equitable for women and marginalized groups but have also taken steps to ensure it's not more inequitable. By actively promoting gender equality and social inclusion, we're actively working against any potential biases or barriers that might exist.

One notable achievement this year is the successful implementation of the safeguarding training in December 2023. This training has enhanced awareness and understanding of safeguarding measures among project participants, contributing to a safer and more inclusive project environment. Additionally, the increased participation of women in leading roles has led to more diverse perspectives being considered in decision-making processes, enriching the overall project outcomes.

A key lesson learned is the importance of ongoing training and awareness-building on gender equality and social inclusion. By continuously investing in these areas, we can ensure that our project remains inclusive and equitable, and that all participants feel valued and respected.

## **7. Monitoring and evaluation**

Fauna & Flora uses the same tracker that was developed at the beginning of the project (based on project logframe) as a guide to collect M&E data. M&E responsibility is shared between Fauna & Flora and SRD – the local partner organisation. The project continuously monitored its impacts through data collected by field staff and back to the office reports. The monitoring data, both quantitative and qualitative, is collected during activities implementation and input into the tracker immediately subsequent to implementation stage. Fauna & Flora takes the main responsibility to collect and manage the M&E data; however, a small number of livelihoods-related indicators are collected by partner organisation – SRD and then submitted to Fauna & Flora.

SMART patrol is ongoing at project sites, during which data on patrol routes, threat locations and illegal cases were recorded. This information would be presented back and analysed with the patrol team as well PA managers on a monthly basis to strategically plan future patrols and target at-risk areas. Additionally, more in-depth analysis of illegal activities was conducted to develop a Situational Crime Prevention (SCP) strategy.

To support effectiveness PA management, the project organised the METT workshop for PAs annually. The results METT workshop were combined with training needs assessment and patrol performance review (included in monthly meeting with patrol team and PA managers) to develop a suitable capacity building program for PA staff, which can equip them with necessary assets to deliver high quality work and achieve their target METT score. The project keeps track of METT score, pre- and post-training survey results as evidence for improved PA management capacity and effectiveness.

Socio-economic and KAB surveys were also conducted annually to assess the impacts of livelihood interventions and awareness raising activities. Results from these surveys were used to inform project manager, designing awareness raising activities and materials that can effectively redirected local communities' attitude and behaviour towards pro-conservation.

In general, the project has been consistently using the indicators from the project logframe for data collection and reporting; therefore, the project is confident that the Outputs and Activities will contribute to project Outcome.

## **8. Lessons learnt**

Facilitating the process of upgrading MCC SHCA to a full functioning nature reserve takes longer time than expected. This process needs to engage or at least support from central government. The project at first intended to work with provincial FPD to convince provincial government but it failed to achieve. The project latter asked for support from central government agency i.e. Central government FPD, Management Board for Forestry Project, and Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. By the time of reporting, the new Management Board for MCC SHCA was approved on June 04, 2024.

Promoting the payments for Community Conservation Teams from Payments for Forest and Environmental Services (PFES) did not work well because there is no clear policy on using PFES money to hire addition labours for forest patrol. It needs to wait until government issue policy on this. This policy was issued in May 2024 and being effective from 1<sup>st</sup> July 2024.

This project is going well on track and therefore no request for change until this period.

## **9. Actions taken in response to previous reviews (if applicable)**

Year 2 Annual Report Comment: Eco-tourism seems to be a key component of Output 3. – increasing resilience of forest-using communities - in the application, however, the report has not commented on the progress of ecotourism strategies/interventions. Clarification of whether ecotourism remains a key livelihoods strategy and, if so, information regarding planned activities would be helpful.

Half Year Report Response: Yes, eco-tourism was considered one of activities under Output 3. However, the project focused more on land use planning and livelihood activities. During last six months, the project has discussed several times with local authorities in both Mu Cang Chai and Muong La on options of promoting eco-tourism in the region. It was suggested by local authorities that the project should pilot this intervention before introducing it to local farmers in order to demonstrate the benefits to communities and conservation. The project has contacted some primatologists and tourism experts to help with options that latter can develop in the region. Next month, from 8 – 12 November 2023, a group of primatologists and experts is visiting Mu Cang Chai as a first test of eco-tourism. If we see it works and local people are happy with, the project will continue to develop options/plan for eco-tourism.

Year 3 Update: In Mu Cang Chai, an ecotourism model has begun including homestays and trekking routes in 2024. FPD has supported the commune to create an ecotourism plan. While this is in the early stages, progress so far has been positive.

## **10. Risk Management**

N/A

## **10. Sustainability and legacy**

The project is centred on long-term collaborative work with key government counterparts at the provincial level right from the project's inception. This ensures that the knowledge and lessons gained persist even after the project concludes. Specifically, the Darwin project has received approval from the Yen Bai and Son La Provincial People's Committees under Decree 80/2020/ND-CP, utilizing grant aid rather than official development assistance from foreign agencies. Sustainability of the project is achieved through the ongoing implementation of core findings by local stakeholders and communities, including cooperatives. The goal is for communities to take ownership of livelihood initiatives, even though the initial model started at a small scale. By securing Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) funding for Conservation Trust Fund (CTF) operations, the project is exploring the potential expansion of this model for the future financial self-sustainability of CTFs in both locations.

Moreover, this project has garnered full recognition from local residents, stakeholders, and other NGOs operating in the region. The voices of local communities have been respected throughout the entire process of protected area development. Community representatives will be involved in decision-making regarding protected area management. The project's information continues to be disseminated through workshops, newsletters, online resources, reports, and peer-reviewed literature. Additionally, knowledge transfer and technology handover to both local stakeholders and the wider public are achieved.

### 11. Darwin Initiative identity

The Darwin Initiative is always duly acknowledged for supporting though project activities. The logo has been displayed in presentations, newsletters, reports, calendars, posters, workshop invitations, FFI Vietnam Programme Facebook Fan page's post. The Darwin Initiative is now very well known in Mu Cang Chai and Muong La due to a series of highly successful community outreach activities which were participated by communities, governments departments and new papers magazines, local TV station.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

### 12. Safeguarding

Has your Safeguarding Policy been updated in the past 12 months?	No
Have any concerns been reported in the past 12 months	No
Does your project have a Safeguarding focal point?	Yes Contacts of focal points as bellows: Le Hong Viet; Administrative Officer Email address: [REDACTED]
Has the focal point attended any formal training in the last 12 months?	Yes  It is essential that all Fauna & Flora staff understand their safeguarding responsibilities and how to report an allegation, and for this reason the training is mandatory for all staff. All project staff required to enrol Summary of Safeguarding Essentials (kayaconnect.org). The course itself takes between 1 hour and 90 minutes to complete. The main contents of this course aims to:  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Know the five non-negotiables of conduct</li> <li>• Recognise safeguarding concerns</li> <li>• Understand the importance of safeguarding</li> <li>• Know what to do if you observe or hear testimony or</li> </ul>

	<p>rumour about another individual causing harm, exploitation or abuse</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Act and report safeguarding concerns.</li> </ul> <p>All project staff were also required to already completed our Fauna &amp; Flora's 'Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy' course on Mangrove, and gain certificates before starting working.</p> <p>In December of 2023 a three-day refresher course on safeguarding, gender, and human resources was conducted in person by Fauna &amp; Flora's</p>
<p>What proportion (and number) of project staff have received formal training on Safeguarding?</p>	<p>Past: 100% - all staff including cross cutting team. Planned: 100% - all new staff are also required to receive formal training on Safeguarding</p>
<p>Has there been any lessons learnt or challenges on Safeguarding in the past 12 months? Please ensure no sensitive data is included within responses.</p> <p>Not from this project but from other projects within the region.</p>	
<p>Does the project have any developments or activities planned around Safeguarding in the coming 12 months? If so please specify.</p> <p>No formal trainings are scheduled aside from those related to new staff.</p>	
<p>Please describe any community sensitisation that has taken place over the past 12 months; include topics covered and number of participants.</p> <p>One community sensitisation was conducted during the KAB survey (an FPIC) in 2023.</p>	
<p>Have there been any concerns around Health, Safety and Security of your project over the past year? If yes, please outline how this was resolved.</p> <p>No</p>	

### 13. Project expenditure

**Table 1: Project expenditure during the reporting period (1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024)**

Project spend (indicative) since last Annual Report	2023/24 Grant (£)	2023/24 Total Darwin Costs (£)	Variance %	Comments (please explain significant variances)
Staff costs (see below)				
Consultancy costs				
Overhead Costs				
Travel and subsistence				
Operating Costs				
Capital items (see below)				
Others (see below)				Underspend due to the cost is charged to other funds
<b>TOTAL</b>	£108,680.6	£108,680.6	£81,510.75	

**Table 2: Project mobilised or matched funding during the reporting period (1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024)**

	Secured to date	Expected by end of project	Sources
Matched funding leveraged by the partners to deliver the project (£)	n/a	n/a	n/a
Total additional finance mobilised for new activities occurring outside of the project, building on evidence, best practices and the project (£)	n/a	n/a	n/a

### 11. Other comments on progress not covered elsewhere

In August 2023, the Project Manager for Son La and Yen Bai underwent a change, but the replacement manager resigned shortly after assuming the role due to personal reasons. Regrettably, other candidates for the position were found to be significantly underqualified. Consequently, Fauna & Flora Vietnam made the decision to promote a member of the existing team who had previously served as the Livelihoods Advisor.

### 12. OPTIONAL: Outstanding achievements or progress of your project so far (300-400 words maximum). This section may be used for publicity purposes.

I agree for the Biodiversity Challenge Funds to edit and use the following for various promotional purposes (please leave this line in to indicate your agreement to use any material you provide here).

File Type (Image / Video / Graphic)	File Name or File Location	Caption including description, country and credit	Social media accounts and websites to be tagged (leave blank if none)	Consent of subjects received (delete as necessary)
Video	[Redacted]	Project Recap (Vietnamese)		Yes
Graphic	[Redacted]	Project Introduction brochure		Yes
				Yes / No
				Yes / No
				Yes / No

13. Annex 1: Report of progress and achievements against logframe for Financial Year 2022-2023

Project summary	SMART Indicators		Actions required/planned for next period
<p><b>Impact</b></p> <p>Globally important forests in northern Vietnam are flourishing under sustainable, collaborative protection and use, supporting thriving populations of gibbons, langurs, and other threatened and endemic species</p>		<p>The project is currently underway, successfully implementing in MCC-ML protected areas. It has started off well, showing positive impacts on biodiversity and the conditions of local communities.</p> <p>The project has been maintaining forest protection and gibbon monitoring through the CCT model, gradually reducing financial and technical support in preparation for a full handover by project end.</p> <p>Significant progress has been made in the project, with a focus on improving PA management capacity and governance, measured through various tools such as METT and SCP.</p> <p>Continued development of PES mechanisms by the project contributes to sustainable financing for forest protection and community development.</p> <p>The project conducts a significant number of training courses to support capacity building in management and facilitate the exchange of experiences.</p> <p>Five pilots of diversified and more resilient, sustainable livelihoods are now operational as part of the project. Activities related to social safeguards and land use mapping have been implemented to enhance community rights.</p>	

<p><b>Outcome</b></p> <p>Two priority PAs in Northern Vietnam demonstrate improved and sustainable protection of forest habitats and associated species through enhanced governance, sustainable finance and improved local wellbeing</p>	<p>0.1 Recorded/Reported incidents of illegal hunting (firearms/bows) have reduced by 10% by project end, from 2019 baseline</p> <p>0.2 Recorded/Reported incidents of snaring have reduced by 10% by project end from 2019 baseline</p> <p>0.3 By project end, for at least 400 women and men (approx. 20% of the local population) in 17 villages (in three communes: Che Tao, Ngoc Chien and Hua Trai) community wellbeing has improved by 10% against 2019 baseline</p> <p>0.4. METT data (coupled with threat/SMART and key species data) shows measurable improvement in PA governance of both sites by project end, compared to baseline.</p> <p>0.5 By project end, the attitude and actions of local people have shifted significantly towards, and in support of, achieving conservation objectives, compared to baseline (to be established at project start)</p> <p>0.6 By project end, at least 15% of CCTs' salary comes from PES payments</p>	<p>The foundational work aligned with the project's purpose is currently underway, and the indicators remain adequate and appropriate.</p> <p>Incidents of illegal activities are documented monthly through SMART.</p> <p>Community members, equipped with training and workshops, continue to be motivated to participate in planning, development, and implementation.</p> <p>Community consultation and public outreach have fostered positive attitudes and behaviors toward forest and gibbon/wildlife conservation.</p> <p>METT data collected at the beginning of the project has been integrated into the PA's workplan.</p> <p>PES funding will be included in the MOU with the government for CCT members in Muong La NR.</p>	
<p><b>Output 1.</b></p> <p>Quality and sustainability of community-based patrolling, crime prevention and PA monitoring is improved.</p>	<p>1.1 SMART data is collected accurately and regularly, according to work plans and Terms of References, from Q2Y1 to project end</p> <p>1.2 No detectable decreases in forest cover, quality (degradation) or connectedness within or between the PAs between project start and end</p>	<p>SMART data has been collected monthly and annually, used by PA managers to develop patrol plans. Workplans and Terms of References for CCTs have been reviewed and developed. A revised SMART dataset was created in Year 2 and finalized during Year 3.</p> <p>A forest cover survey was completed at the beginning of the project, and the results were distributed to key stakeholders.</p> <p>Gibbon monitoring surveys, integrated with patrolling activities, have been recorded monthly.</p>	



	<p>1.3 There is a measurable reduction in cumulative, reported incidents of illegal hunting and snaring (see 0.1/0.2) both within and outside of the two PAs, by project end.</p> <p>1.4 SMART data used by PA managers to inform monthly patrol plans and adaptive PA management inform monthly patrol plans and adaptive (on-the-ground) PA management, throughout project duration</p> <p>1.5 Gibbons (flagship species), and at least 3 'threat indicator' species (chosen to indicate changes in forest condition and hunting threats, e.g. butterflies, orchids and/or Owston's civet) , show measurable increases in population, or abundance, or occupancy, by project end, from 2019 baselines, following a detailed monitoring plan that will be developed</p>		
<p>Activity 1.1 Implement SMART patrols by rangers and CCTs (20 members across both sites), providing support and training on snare removal, awareness raising, and SMART (including using SMART reports to inform adaptive PA management).</p>		<p>This activity has been ongoing throughout project cycle.</p> <p>03 training courses carried out in Year 3 for FPD rangers and CCTs</p>	
<p>Activity 1.2 Conduct forest cover, quality and connectedness surveys at project start and end.</p>		<p>This activity was completed at project start.</p>	
<p>Activity 1.3 Develop a sustainable incentive programme for CCT and PA rangers to motivate them beyond salary and SMART-based performance monitoring (annual payments).</p>		<p>This activity has been completed. A sustainable incentive programme was revised in Year 3</p>	

Activity 1.4 Conduct intensive annual snare removal surveys by CCT and PA rangers, supported by Youth Union and volunteers.	This activity has been conducted throughout the project.	
Activity 1.5 Sign conservation agreements with community leaders and specific households (of known hunters), specifying project benefits and conditionality of benefits.	This activity has been completed.	
Activity 1.6 Conduct annual METT assessments at project start (to establish baseline), mid-project and project end.	This activity has been completed for both sites at project start and end.	
Activity 1.7 Develop and implement a bio-monitoring protocol, for black gibbons and key indicators species, in addition to SMART monitoring.	A final report has been released and best practices and recommendations developed in Year 3	
Activity 1.8 Conduct annual market/wildlife trade surveys in surrounding districts and urban centres in Son La and Yen Bai (overt, not covert, data collection, including risk assessments).	This activity is integrated with the implementation of SCP and best practices and recommendations developed in Year 3.	
<p><b>Output 2.</b></p> <p>PA governance is effective, sustainable and collaborative.</p>	<p>2.1 Both PAs show evidence of improved management at project end compared to project start, by a 25% increase in METT scores (and associated improvements in threat reduction shown in SMART data)</p> <p>2.2 20% more local people, of whom 100% are from local, ethnic minority groups and at least 50% are women, are engaged in PA management/oversight and 80% report having a greater influence on PA management, throughout the project period</p> <p>2.3 Feasibility study for upgrading MCC Species and Habitat Conservation Area to a Nature Reserve completed by end of Year 2</p> <p>2.4 Social safeguards and</p>	<p>METT scores for both sites were published at the beginning and end of the project.</p> <p>A report on IUCN's 'PA job competency standards' assessments has been completed. The following trainings have been delivered to PA staff and CCTs.</p> <p>Socio-economic condition and KAB reports were completed at the beginning of the project and will be conducted again in the next two months.</p> <p>Social safeguards and Grievance Redress Mechanisms (GRM) were established across 17 villages. A Situational Crime Prevention Strategy has been developed and gradually implemented in Muong La NR.</p> <p>The project has made significant progress in supporting the upgrade of MCC SHCA to nature reserve status.</p>

	<p>Grievance Redress Mechanisms (GRM) are in place by end of Year 1, and either no grievances recorded or all grievances have been redressed</p> <p>2.5 A Situational Crime Prevention Strategy has been developed and implemented for each PA, by Q4Y2</p>	
Activity 2.1 Develop collaborative PA management plans, including discussion facilitation and technical input, maintaining and supporting SMART ranger and CCT patrols.	This activity has been ongoing though project cycle.	
Activity 2.2 Develop and deliver training courses for PA staff, based on training needs assessments using the ARCBC/IUCN Competency Standards for Protected Areas.	This active has been completed.	
Activity 2.3 Maintain and strengthen Collaborative Management Advisory Committees (MAC), including regulations, scope and memberships, and inclusive of MAC facilitation and technical advice.	This active has been completed.	
Activity 2.4 Develop site-specific/PA social safeguards, monitoring plan and grievance redress mechanism (GRM), through village-level, household and focus group discussions, ensuring participation of women and vulnerable groups.	This active has been completed.	
Activity 2.5 Conduct Knowledge-Attitude-Behaviour (KAB) surveys at project start (baseline), mid-project and project end.	The baseline survey has been completed at project start and will be completed for project end over the next two months.	This activity will be carried out by June 2024.
Activity 2.6 Develop awareness-raising and communications strategies about the project at local (trainings, events, printed literature, schools curricular), sub-national (workshops, study tours), and national (fora) levels.	This activity has been completed	
Activity 2.7 Undertake IUCN Green List assessments for both PAs.	Introduction IUCN Green lists has commenced however, activities are still under development	
Activity 2.8 Develop a feasibility study for upgrading MCC HSCA to full Nature Reserve status and actively support the upgrade through consultation and data sharing.	This activity has been completed and achieved. Decision on revision of new full functioning management board for	

	MCC SHCA was issued on June 04, 2024.	
Activity 2.9 Develop and implement a Situational Crime Prevention Strategy for each PA, working in close cooperation with commune authorities and police departments.	Strategy has been developed, activities has implemented, and results shared with stakeholders.	
<p><b>Output 3.</b></p> <p>Resilience of forest-using communities is increased by land-use planning and sustainable livelihoods, including results-based incentives for forest protection, leading to a reduction in negative impacts on forests and wildlife.</p>	<p>3.1 Local capacity built for livelihood skills (heritage crops varieties, medicinal plants, market systems and ecotourism – see 3.7) in 17 local ethnic minority communities (ensuring gender equality and access), by Year 2 of the project.</p> <p>3.2 90% of local ethnic minority Communities who are directly engaged in project activities report feeling more empowered (in their own lives and with specific regard to PA engagement/steering), at project end compared to project start.</p> <p>3.3 Land-use planning (process) undertaken in all 17 target villages with engagement from local people of whom 50% are women, by end of Year 1</p> <p>3.4 Land-use plan implementation is observable in 17 keys villages, reducing negative biodiversity impacts on the two PAs (see Outputs 1 and 2) and underpins both livelihoods improvements and clarification of land-use and rights (see following indicators 3.5-7), between completion of planning (end of Year 1) and end of project.</p> <p>3.5 Security and/or clarity of land tenure and rights for local</p>	<p>The project's activities in facilitating participatory resource/land-use maps and plans (PRUM/PLUPs) in 17 villages in buffer zones surrounding the two PAs, following a Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) process, were concluded in Year 1 and Year 2. This process was complemented by a consultative review of land tenure, conducted with the support of a local lawyer.</p> <p>Data collection for socio-economic and social impact assessments occurred bi-annually, overlapping with other activities, as outlined in Activity 2.5. Reviewing existing farming systems, conducting participatory SWOT and gap analyses, and farmer surveys to inform and monitor agri-livelihood interventions were completed in Year 1.</p> <p>The Participatory Market System Development (PMSD) process, aiming at product selection for market analysis and development, concluded in August 2022, with outcomes disseminated to various stakeholders. An action plan, developed through multi-stakeholder workshops, ensuring the participation of women and vulnerable groups, was implemented in Year 2.</p> <p>Pilot projects, including agriculture and ecotourism interventions, benefitted approximately 100 households, particularly enhancing food security through increased crop yields and facilitating market access. Eco-stove design and procurement work-streams to reduce local fuelwood requirements were completed in Year 1 and Year 2.</p>

	<p>communities around the PAs is improved through formal recognition of land-use rights within and outside the PA boundaries, further supported by approved land-use plans.</p> <p>3.6 Participatory Market System Development (PMSD) has been undertaken in all 17 target villages by end of Y1, including market analysis and action plan development.</p> <p>3.7 Five pilots of diversified and more resilient, sustainable livelihoods are operational by end Y2, and demonstrating measurable benefits (e.g. improved yields) by end Y3 (project end) against baseline (to be established at project start), including diversification of crops/commodities cultivated, market access improvements, and community-based tourism. Baseline data to be established at project start (e.g. actual yields, estimates of yields, or perception of yields), and repeated at project end.</p>	
<p>Activity 3.1 Facilitate and produce Participatory Resource/Land-Use Maps and Plans (PRUM/PLUPs) in 17 villages in the buffer zones surrounding the two PAs, following an FPIC process.</p>	<p>This activity has been completed</p>	
<p>Activity 3.2 Support a consultative process of the review and strengthening of land tenure, in partnership with a local lawyer, following an FPIC process.</p>	<p>This activity has been completed</p>	

Activity 3.3 Collect socio-economic and social impact assessment data bi-annually, including a participatory identification of associated indicators of change that can be used for monitoring.	This active has been completed	
Activity 3.4 Conduct a review of existing farming systems, participatory SWOT and gap analyses, and farmer surveys, to inform and monitor agri-livelihoods interventions.	This activity has been completed	
Activity 3.5 Implement PMSD process in 17 villages to select products for market analysis and development, evaluating products under social and biodiversity criteria.	This activity has been completed	
Activity 3.6 Develop and implement an action plan based on multi-stakeholder workshop(s) with market actors and communities, ensuring participation of women and vulnerable groups.	This activity has been completed	
Activity 3.7 Pilot five livelihoods models, including agriculture and ecotourism interventions, developed and co-implemented with SRD, including business planning and training for communities on: crop diversification, yield maximisation, supply chains and market access.	This activity has been completed	
Activity 3.8 Implement an eco-stove design and procurement work-stream to reduce local fuel wood requirements for households and for cardamom drying	This activity has been completed	
<b>Output 4.</b>	4.1 Community patrol payments (for CCT) are part-funded, at least 10%,	In 2022, the annual revenue for Muong La NR through the Payment for Environmental Services scheme will be VND 133.609.500 (c. \$5,000)

<p>Novel and sustainable finance approaches for enforcement and PA management are piloted for both PAs.</p>	<p>by Payments for Forest Ecosystem Services (PES) by Q1Y3</p> <p>4.2 Patrols are taking place as contracted and payments (from FFI and PES) are performance-based, based on SMART/GPS data</p> <p>4.3 PES funding is made available to support the operational costs of both PAs (baseline: 0; at project start all PES monies go to communities or admin)</p>	<p>accounting for 47% of the annual budget for CCT member salaries. This achievement continues to be addressed to the Output 4, focusing on novel sustainable finance approaches. Having said that, the project progress toward outputs at this stage is on track. The proposed indicators at output level are still the best indicators.</p> <p>However, in 2023 the provincial government stopped this payment because of weakness on legal basis. The government issued a new policy in May and being effective from 1<sup>st</sup> July 2024.</p> <p>SMART data recorded monthly.</p>
<p>Activity 4.1 Explore innovative sustainable financing options for enforcement and PA management, developing a business plan to secure PES (and other) funding for these, including at least one additional CCT group.</p>	<p>This activity has been completed</p>	
<p>Activity 4.2 Obtain legally binding government approval of all PES agreements, for community-based forest protection, through a process of collaborative policy development and advocacy.</p>	<p>This activity is ongoing and will be solidified by the new MOU</p>	<p>The project will continue and facilitate the payment mechanism after the new government policy being effective from 1<sup>st</sup> July 2024.</p>

**14. Annex 2: Project’s full current logframe as presented in the application form (unless changes have been agreed)**

Project summary	SMART Indicators	Means of verification	Important Assumptions
<p><b>Impact:</b></p> <p><b>Globally important forests in northern Vietnam are flourishing under sustainable, collaborative protection and use, supporting thriving populations of gibbons, langurs, and other threatened and endemic species</b></p>			

<p><b>Outcome:</b> Two priority PAs in Northern Vietnam demonstrate improved and sustainable protection of forest habitats and associated species through enhanced governance, sustainable finance and improved local wellbeing</p>	<p>0.1 Recorded/Reported incidents of illegal hunting (firearms/bows) have reduced by 10% by project end, from 2019 baseline</p> <p>0.2 Recorded/Reported incidents of snaring have reduced by 10% by project end from 2019 baseline</p> <p>0.3 By project end, for at least 400 women and men (approx. 20% of the local population) in 17 villages (in three communes: Che Tao, Ngoc Chien and Hua Trai) community wellbeing has improved by 10% against 2019 baseline</p> <p>0.4. METT data (coupled with threat/SMART and key species data) shows measurable improvement in PA governance of both sites by project end, compared to baseline.</p> <p>0.5 By project end, the attitude and actions of local people have shifted significantly towards, and in support of, achieving conservation objectives, compared to baseline (to be established at project start)</p> <p>0.6 By project end, at least 15% of CCTs' salary comes from PES payments</p>	<p>0.1 SMART reports; Annual reports of local wildlife trade (district and provincial markets and restaurants)</p> <p>0.2 SMART reports; Annual reports of local wildlife trade (district and provincial markets and restaurants); specific snare density baseline and project end surveys</p> <p>0.3 Direct wellbeing measures (metrics), e.g. happiness, hunger, employment, and cumulative indicators for material conditions, quality of life and future sustainability (natural, social, human and economic capital) for ethnic minority people living around the PA complex, as measured against 2019 baselines, via: Social impact assessment; Annual KAB reports; Annual socio-economic reports; Annual social safeguard (SIS) and grievance redress (GRM) reports</p> <p>0.4 Annual METT scores (reports) for both PAs</p> <p>0.5 Knowledge-Attitude-Behaviour (KAB) survey reports; SMART data/reports</p> <p>0.6 FFI finance reports (showing amount and proposal of CCT salary covered) and corroborated by annual finance records from FPD</p>	<p>1. Evidence that monitoring by local people (patrol teams) and rangers is accurate and consistent, and produces reliable data sets.</p> <p>2. The gibbon census is able to record a significant (enough) proportion of the population and occupancy from which to infer change</p> <p>3. Target communities / project beneficiaries have the sufficient capacity (including time), and/or the project mitigates any shortcomings (e.g. language or literacy barriers) and continues interest to engage in and benefit from the project as planned</p>
<p><b>Output 1</b></p> <p>Quality and sustainability of community-based patrolling, crime prevention and PA monitoring is improved.</p>	<p>1.1 SMART data is collected accurately and regularly, according to work plans and Terms of References, from Q2Y1 to project end</p>	<p>1.1. SMART reports (with GPS tracking data)</p> <p>1.2 Land cover change detection for both sites – e.g. Google Forest, the</p>	<p>1. The community patrol team members have sufficient support (from FFI and PA staff), capacity (built by FFI as needed) and ongoing motivation (internal but also linked to incentives) to</p>



	<p>1.2 No detectable decreases in forest cover, quality (degradation) or connectedness within or between the PAs between project start and end</p> <p>1.3 There is a measurable reduction in cumulative, reported incidents of illegal hunting and snaring (see 0.1/0.2) both within and outside of the two PAs, by project end.</p> <p>1.4 SMART data used by PA managers to inform monthly patrol plans and adaptive PA management inform monthly patrol plans and adaptive (on-the-ground) PA management, throughout project duration</p> <p>1.5 Gibbons (flagship species), and at least 3 'threat indicator' species (chosen to indicate changes in forest condition and hunting threats, e.g. butterflies, orchids and/or Owston's civet), show measurable increases in population, or abundance, or occupancy, by project end, from 2019 baselines, following a detailed monitoring plan that will be developed.</p>	<p>Norway-Planet tool or Global Forest Watch</p> <p>1.3 SMART reports; Annual reports of local wildlife trade (district and provincial markets and restaurants); specific snare density surveys at project start (baseline) and project end.</p> <p>1.4 SMART data is collected around 15 days/month throughout project duration by CCT (and by CCT and rangers in ML NR) and turned into monthly SMART reports by PA staff each month from project start to end</p> <p>1.5 Gibbon monitoring data (monthly); gibbon census at project end (against 2019 baseline); and annual camera-trapping / bio-indicator surveys (reports). Changes in Phayre's langur (Grey leaf monkey – <i>Trachypithecus crepusculus</i>) will also be monitored during gibbon surveys, SMART and bio-monitoring / patrol activities.</p>	<p>undertake the required forest patrols (approx. 15 days/month)</p> <p>2. CCT and ranger patrols and snare removal, coupled with awareness raising and crime prevention activities, is enough to significantly reduce threats</p> <p>3. That FFI financial support to the CCT patrollers incentivises effective enforcement / monitoring</p> <p>4. That target species have the time and ecological ability to respond to improved protection outcomes and demonstrate changes in population, abundance or occupancy in the timeframe of the project</p>
<p><b>Output 2</b></p> <p>PA governance is effective, sustainable and collaborative.</p>	<p>2.1 Both PAs show evidence of improved management at project end compared to project start, by a 25% increase in METT scores (and associated improvements in threat reduction shown in SMART data)</p> <p>2.2 20% more local people, of whom 100% are from local, ethnic minority groups and at least 50% are women, are engaged in PA management/oversight and 80% report having a greater influence on PA</p>	<p>2.1 METT scores (annual) and ACB/IUCN 'PA job competency standards' assessments at project start and end; at least one PA is eligible for IUCN Green List nomination</p> <p>2.2 (i) Annual MAC reports; (ii) Social-economic and KAB reports (baseline and project end)</p> <p>2.3 Feasibility study for PA upgrading (submitted to Yen Bai Provincial People's Committee)</p>	<p>1. Management effectiveness tools reflect the genuine condition of and change in PA management effectiveness</p> <p>2. Improvement of local patrolling and law enforcement, by state and non-state actors, is a sufficient deterrent to change local behaviour / reduce threats. SMART data/reports will be used to measure this and inform adaptive management or other interventions, as needed</p>

	<p>management, throughout the project period</p> <p>2.3 Feasibility study for upgrading MCC Species and Habitat Conservation Area to a Nature Reserve completed by end of Year 2</p> <p>2.4 Social safeguards and Grievance Redress Mechanisms (GRM) are in place by end of Year 1, and either no grievances recorded or all grievances have been redressed</p> <p>2.5 A Situational Crime Prevention Strategy has been developed and implemented for each PA, by Q4Y2</p>	<p>2.4 (i) Safeguards (list) and final report; (ii) The GRM are producing regular reports from Q1Y2 to project end</p> <p>2.5 Situational Crime Prevention Strategy for each PA; SMART reports; annual reports of local wildlife trade (district and provincial markets and restaurants); specific snare density surveys at project start (baseline) and project end.</p>	<p>3. That local government authorities and other state actors, including PA management boards, remain – and are increasingly – open to the active participation of local community members and/or CSOs in PA/forest governance</p> <p>4. That local community members / representatives maintain interest in and/or have the time and (other) capacity to meaningfully engage in PA management</p>
<p><b>Output 3</b></p> <p>Resilience of forest-using communities is increased by land-use planning and sustainable livelihoods, including results-based incentives for forest protection, leading to a reduction in negative impacts on forests and wildlife.</p>	<p>3.1 Local capacity built for livelihood skills (heritage crops varieties, medicinal plants, market systems and ecotourism – see 3.7) in 17 local ethnic minority communities (ensuring gender equality and access), by Year 2 of the project.</p> <p>3.2 90% of local ethnic minority Communities who are directly engaged in project activities report feeling more empowered (in their own lives and with specific regard to PA engagement/steering), at project end compared to project start.</p> <p>3.3 Land-use planning (process) undertaken in all 17 target villages with engagement from local people of whom 50% are women, by end of Year 1</p> <p>3.4 Land-use plan implementation is observable in 17 keys villages, reducing</p>	<p>3.1 Reports of gender-disaggregated community empowerment training, pre-PMSD</p> <p>3.2 Community consultations and KAB reports</p> <p>3.3 Consultation reports; Land-use plans; KAB reports; SMART data/reports</p> <p>3.4 17 village level land-use plans; Community consultation and SMART / biodiversity data and reports</p> <p>3.5 Social impact assessments at project start and end and annual socio-economic reports; participatory exploration of customary legal systems and their application, and potential for forest land allocation (report)</p> <p>3.6 PMSD reports; market analysis reports; action plan</p>	<p>1. That local community members have the capacity, and continue to have motivation, to engage in the planning, development and implementation of sustainable livelihoods</p> <p>2. That local government authorities maintain openness to the clarification and/or strengthening of tenure and customary legal and land rights</p> <p>3. That no unexpected events happen to substantially, negatively affect local attitudes and behaviours towards forest and gibbon/wildlife conservation</p> <p>4. That the locally-owned development of safeguards and grievance redress, through processes that enable equitable participation, results in mechanisms that are ultimately appropriate, such that community rights and wellbeing are fully</p>

	<p>negative biodiversity impacts on the two PAs (see Outputs 1 and 2) and underpins both livelihoods improvements and clarification of land-use and rights (see following indicators 3.5-7), between completion of planning (end of Year 1) and end of project.</p> <p>3.5 Security and/or clarity of land tenure and rights for local communities around the PAs is improved through formal recognition of land-use rights within and outside the PA boundaries, further supported by approved land-use plans.</p> <p>3.6 Participatory Market System Development (PMSD) has been undertaken in all 17 target villages by end of Y1, including market analysis and action plan development.</p> <p>3.7 Five pilots of diversified and more resilient, sustainable livelihoods are operational by end Y2, and demonstrating measurable benefits (e.g. improved yields) by end Y3 (project end) against baseline (to be established at project start), including diversification of crops/commodities cultivated, market access improvements, and community-based tourism. Baseline data to be established at project start (e.g. actual yields, estimates of yields, or perception of yields), and repeated at project end.</p>	<p>3.7 Livelihoods pilot reports; annual crop/production (farmer) surveys; social impact assessments and socio-economic reports at project start and end</p>	<p>protected, enhanced, and take into account the differing roles, power and status of men and women, and other vulnerable groups (relates also to Output 2)</p>
<p><b>Output 4</b> Novel and sustainable finance approaches for enforcement and PA management are piloted for both PAs.</p>	<p>4.1 Community patrol payments (for CCT) are part-funded, at least 10%, by Payments for Forest Ecosystem Services (PES) by Q1Y3</p> <p>4.2 Patrols are taking place as contracted and payments (from FFI and</p>	<p>4.1 FFI financial reports (linked to 1.1) and governmental agreements or local policy / ordinance on payments and benefits sharing</p> <p>4.2 SMART / GPS data and monthly &amp; annual SMART reports (including track data / route maps)</p>	<p>1. The government (local/provincial authorities) approve for approx. 10% of household PES payments to be pooled for community-based forest patrolling</p>

	<p>PES) are performance-based, based on SMART/GPS data</p> <p>4.3 PES funding is made available to support the operational costs of both PAs (baseline: 0; at project start all PES monies go to communities or admin)</p>	<p>4.3 MAC meeting minutes / reports and verbal reports from PA managers (with written confirmation, if possible)</p>	<p>2. That both the local communities and the local government, including PA Management Boards, are all in support of using a proportion of PES income for PA management, to bolster operational budgets</p>
<p><b>Activities</b> (each activity is numbered according to the output that it will contribute towards, for example 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3 are contributing to Output 1)</p> <p><b>Output 1 – Quality and sustainability of community-based patrolling, crime prevention and PA monitoring is improved.</b></p> <p>1.1 Implement SMART patrols by rangers and CCTs (20 members across both sites), providing support and training on snare removal, awareness raising, and SMART (including using SMART reports to inform adaptive PA management).</p> <p>1.2 Conduct forest cover, quality and connectedness surveys at project start and end.</p> <p>1.3 Develop a sustainable incentive programme for CCT and PA rangers to motivate them beyond salary and SMART-based performance monitoring (annual payments).</p> <p>1.4 Conduct intensive annual snare removal surveys by CCT and PA rangers, supported by Youth Union and volunteers.</p> <p>1.5 Sign conservation agreements with community leaders and specific households (of known hunters), specifying project benefits and conditionality of benefits.</p> <p>1.6 Conduct annual METT assessments at project start (to establish baseline), mid-project and project end.</p> <p>1.7 Develop and implement a bio-monitoring protocol, for black gibbons and key indicators species, in addition to SMART monitoring.</p> <p>1.8 Conduct annual market/wildlife trade surveys in surrounding districts and urban centres in Son La and Yen Bai (overt, not covert, data collection, including risk assessments).</p> <p><b>Output 2 – PA governance is effective, sustainable and collaborative.</b></p> <p>2.1 Develop collaborative PA management plans, including discussion facilitation and technical input, maintaining and supporting SMART ranger and CCT patrols.</p> <p>2.2 Develop and deliver training courses for PA staff, based on training needs assessments using the ARCBC/IUCN Competency Standards for Protected Areas.</p> <p>2.3 Maintain and strengthen Collaborative Management Advisory Committees (MAC), including regulations, scope and memberships, and inclusive of MAC facilitation and technical advice.</p> <p>2.4 Develop site-specific/PA social safeguards, monitoring plan and grievance redress mechanism (GRM), through village-level, household and focus group discussions, ensuring participation of women and vulnerable groups.</p> <p>2.5 Conduct Knowledge-Attitude-Behaviour (KAB) surveys at project start (baseline), mid-project and project end.</p> <p>2.6 Develop awareness-raising and communications strategies about the project at local (trainings, events, printed literature, schools curricular), sub-national (workshops, study tours), and national (fora) levels.</p> <p>2.7 Undertake IUCN Green List assessments for both PAs.</p> <p>2.8 Develop a feasibility study for upgrading MCC HSCA to full Nature Reserve status and actively support the upgrade through consultation and data sharing.</p> <p>2.9 Develop and implement a Situational Crime Prevention Strategy for each PA, working in close cooperation with commune authorities and police departments.</p> <p><b>Output 3 – Resilience of forest-using communities is increased by land-use planning and sustainable livelihoods, creating result-based incentives for forest protection leading to reduced negative impact on forests and species.</b></p> <p>3.1 Facilitate and produce Participatory Resource/Land-Use Maps and Plans (PRUM/PLUPs) in 17 villages in the buffer zones surrounding the two PAs, following an FPIC process.</p> <p>3.2 Support a consultative process of the review and strengthening of land tenure, in partnership with a local lawyer, following an FPIC process.</p> <p>3.3 Collect socio-economic and social impact assessment data bi-annually, including a participatory identification of associated indicators of change that can be used for monitoring.</p> <p>3.4 Conduct a review of existing farming systems, participatory SWOT and gap analyses, and farmer surveys, to inform and monitor agri-livelihoods interventions.</p>			

- 3.5 Implement PMSD process in 17 villages to select products for market analysis and development, evaluating products under social and biodiversity criteria.
- 3.6 Develop and implement an action plan based on multi-stakeholder workshop(s) with market actors and communities, ensuring participation of women and vulnerable groups.
- 3.7 Pilot five livelihoods models, including agriculture and ecotourism interventions, developed and co-implemented with SRD, including business planning and training for communities on: crop diversification, yield maximisation, supply chains and market access.
- 3.8 Implement an eco-stove design and procurement work-stream to reduce local fuel wood requirements for households and for cardamom drying.
- Output 4 – Novel sustainable finance approaches for enforcement and PA management are piloted for both PAs.***
- 4.1 Explore innovative sustainable financing options for enforcement and PA management, developing a business plan to secure PES (and other) funding for these, including at least one additional CCT group.
- 4.2 Obtain legally binding government approval of all PES agreements, for community-based forest protection, through a process of collaborative policy development and advocacy.

# Annex 3: Standard Indicators

**Table 1 Project Standard Indicators**

DI Indicator number	Name of indicator	Units	Disaggregation	Year 1 Total	Year 2 Total	Year 3 Total	Total to date	Total planned during the project
E.g. DI-A01	E.g. Number of people in eligible countries who have completed structured and relevant training	People	Men	20			20	60
E.g. DI-A01	E.g. Number of people in eligible countries who have completed structured and relevant training	People	Women	30			30	60
E.g. DI-B01	E.g. Number of new or improved habitat management plans available and endorsed	Number	New	1	1		1	2
E.g. DI-B01	E.g. Number of new or improved habitat management plans available and endorsed	Number	Improved	1			1	3
DI-A01	People who attended SMART and gibbons monitoring trainings (Number of CCTs & PA staff from MCC SHCA & ML NR who attended SMART & gibbon monitoring)	people	Men	26	43	5	74	70
DI-A01	People who attended law enforcement trainings (Number of CCTs, PA staff, commune policer who attended Law enforcement training in MCC SHCA & ML NR)	people	Women (4) Men (50)	0	52	2	54	55
DI-A01	People who attended METT workshop in MLNR (Number of PA staff, CCTs, government officials who attended METT workshop in MLNR)	People	Women (15) Men (73)	48	35	15	88	83
DI-A01	People who attended the first aid trainings (Number of CCTs, PA staff, who attended the first aid training in both sites)	People	Men	0	42	10	52	48
DI-A01	People who attended the meeting of Collaborative Management Advisory Committees (MAC) in MCC	People	Women (3) Men (13)	0	16	0	16	16
DI-A01	People who attended the Year-end meetings in Muong La NR	People	Women (10) Men (88)	49	49	0	98	100

DI Indicator number	Name of indicator	Units	Disaggregation	Year 1 Total	Year 2 Total	Year 3 Total	Total to date	Total planned during the project
DI-A01	People who attended the exchange visit	People	Women (5) Men (44)	0	34	15	49	34
DI-A01	People who attended the workshop IUCN Green List assessments for both PAs.	People	Women (4) Men (11)		0	15	15	20
DIA04	People who attended the Crime Prevention workshop in Muong La NR	People	Men (15) Women (2)	0	17	0	17	27
DI-B07	People who attended the community based conservation group	People	Men	26	26	26	26	26
DI-B12	Number of policies developed or formally contributed to by projects and being implemented by appropriate authorities	Number	Improved	1		1	2	2
DI-A07	Number of government institutions/departments with enhanced awareness and understanding of biodiversity and associated poverty issues	Number	Improved	6		4	10	4
DI-B05	Number of people with increased participation in local communities / local management organisations (i.e., participation in Governance/citizen engagement)	People	Men (700) Women (1300) Student (900) Men (130), Women (70)			3,200	3,200	3,000
DI-B10	Number of individuals / households reporting an adoption of livelihood improvement practices as a result of project activities.	Household			15	5	20	40
DI-C15	Number of Media related activities.	Number of Media related project activities.	Number	10	3	13	26	22



DI Indicator number	Name of indicator	Units	Disaggregation	Year 1 Total	Year 2 Total	Year 3 Total	Total to date	Total planned during the project

**Table 2 Publications**

Title	Type (e.g. journals, best practice manual, blog post, online videos, podcasts, CDs)	Detail (authors, year)	Gender of Lead Author	Nationality of Lead Author	Publishers (name, city)	Available from (e.g. weblink or publisher if not available online)
2022 Year Calendar	Calendar	FFI, 2023	Female	Vietnamese	N/A	Printed and electronic copies
Together young generation protect primates	Cap	FFI, 2023	Female	Vietnamese	N/A	N/A
Black gibbon – The pride of Mu Cang Chai MCC & Muong La NR	Drawing	FFI, 2023	Male	Vietnamese	N/A	N/A
Black gibbon – The pride of Mu Cang Chai MCC & Muong La NR	Backdrop & check in area for gibbon festivals	FFI, 2023		Vietnamese	N/A	N/A
The conservation project – black gibbon	Leaflet	FFI, 2023	Female	Vietnamese	N/A	N/A
The conservation project – black gibbon	Poster	FFI, 2023	Female	Vietnamese	N/A	N/A

<b>Title</b>	<b>Type</b> (e.g. journals, best practice manual, blog post, online videos, podcasts, CDs)	<b>Detail</b> (authors, year)	<b>Gender of Lead Author</b>	<b>Nationality of Lead Author</b>	<b>Publishers</b> (name, city)	<b>Available from</b> (e.g. weblink or publisher if not available online)

## Annex 4: Onwards – supplementary material (optional but encouraged as evidence of project achievement)

[Supporting documents](#)

### Checklist for submission

	Check
Different reporting templates have different questions, and it is important you use the correct one. Have you checked you have used the <b>correct template</b> (checking fund, type of report (i.e. Annual or Final), and year) and <b>deleted the blue guidance text</b> before submission?	Yes
<b>Is the report less than 10MB?</b> If so, please email to <a href="mailto:BCF-Reports@niras.com">BCF-Reports@niras.com</a> putting the project number in the Subject line.	Yes
<b>Is your report more than 10MB?</b> If so, please discuss with <a href="mailto:BCF-Reports@niras.com">BCF-Reports@niras.com</a> about the best way to deliver the report, putting the project number in the Subject line.	No
<b>Have you included means of verification?</b> You should not submit every project document, but the main outputs and a selection of the others would strengthen the report.	Yes
If you are submitting photos for publicity purposes, do these meet the outlined requirements (see Section 16)?	Yes
Have you involved your partners in preparation of the report and named the main contributors	Yes
Have you completed the Project Expenditure table fully?	Yes
Do not include claim forms or other communications with this report.	