

Introduction on China-Lao PDR Transboundary Biodiversity Conservation Collaboration

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1. Background

Yunnan Province is one of biodiversity rich area in China and regarded as “Kingdom of wildlife” and “Kingdom of plants”, Xishuangbanna National Nature Reserve (XNNR) is the core area of the “Kingdom”. The nature reserve has 5 sub-nature reserves, Mengyan, Menglun, Mengla, Shangyong and Mangao, and the total size is 242,510 ha. The vision of the nature reserve is to preserve the tropical forestry ecosystem and rare and endangered wildlife and plants species. There are 2,100 wildlife species including Asian Elephant, Indian Tiger, Green Peacock and other 108 state key preserved species and other critical protection target species.

Two of five sub nature servers of Xishuangbanna border with Lao PDR and the boundary between China and Lao PDR has 108 km long. Shangyong sub nature reserve connects with Nam Ha Nature Reserve of Luang Nam Tha Province of Lao PDR directly. Both Nam Ha and Xishuangbanna Nature Reserve are Indo-Burma Biodiversity Hot Spots in the world.

Challenges: The local people living along the China-Lao border have the tradition of hunting, and forest cutting, and they rely on the natural resources heavily because of poor economic situation that damage the rich biodiversity and increase the pressure on wildlife and forests.

In order to improve the preservation on wild elephants, tiger and ecosystem, in 2006, XNNR proposed the concept of “establish transboundary protected area between China and Lao”. Since then, XNNR started collaboration with Lao PDR, and established collaboration relationship with Department of Agriculture and Forestry, Department of Natural Resources of Lung Nam Tha Province and Phom Saly and Oumdomxay Provinces, Nam Ha Nature Reserve.

2. Transboundary Conservation Collaboration

Xishaungbanna has long history of communication with 4 provinces in the northern provinces of Lao PDR (Lung Nam Tha, Phong Saly, Oudomxay and Bo Qiao?), but less cooperation on forest and biodiversity conservation.

In April 2006, the first Seminar on Wild Asian Elephants Protection between China and Lao PDR held in Xishuangbanna. The suggestion of establishing “China – Lao cross border elephant’s protection” has been proposed by XNNR.

Both sides made agreement on the suggestion and expressed desire of collaboration.

Three annual meeting on “China and Nam Ha Nature Reserve Transboundary Conservation Communication” held in 2006, 2007 and 2008. These meeting strengthened understanding between two sides, and identified the collaboration in the communities awareness improvement, capacity building for nature reserve staff, establish joint protected area, biodiversity baseline survey, establish communication mechanism between administration agencies. The activities also established the trust and understanding between two parties, and set up the basis for further collaboration. A project official from Lao said, that “After several years communication and cooperation, we have more clear understanding on Chinese colleagues ideas and thinking on transboundary conservation collaboration and are more confident to collaborate with Chinese partners.

In November 2009, in the 4th “China-Lao Transboundary Annual Meeting”, China and Lao signed a “China and Lao Agreement on Transboundary Conservation”, and established China-Lao: Xishuangbanna Shangyong and Nam Ha Joint Protected Area after 4 years preparation, which is a mark of implementation of transboundary conservation strategies

3. Transboundary Conservation Strategies

Based on the annual meeting and other communication, select establishment of joint protected area as entry point, and “conservation no boundary” as the concept to explore and practice transboundary conservation collaboration between China and Lao PDR.

4. Activities and Achievements

The activities of transboundary conservation collaboration are:

1) Establish Join Cross Border Protected Areas

- 2009, the first Joint Protected Area “ Shangyong of China (31,300 ha) -Nam Ha of Lao (23,400 ha) ” established, 5.47 ha;
- Nov. 2011, signed agreement and establishing second Joint Protected Area “ Mengla, Xishuangbann of China (55,000 ha)– Phong Saly of Lao PRD (55,453 ha)”,

- Nov. 2013, two new agreements will be signed to establish “Mengla, Xishuangbanna, China (5,100 ha) – Oudomxay of Lao PDR (5,200 ha) Joint Protected Area”, “Mohan of China (20,000 ha) – Moding, Lao (16,000 ha) Cross Border Joint Ecological Conservation Area in Economic Collaboration Zone”.

2) Establish local communities communication mechanism

The communication between local communities becomes an annual event and mechanism to share conservation and sustainable development knowledge. In 2010, 2011, and 2012, villagers and nature reserve staff from Lao PDR visited villages and nature reserve in China, and experiences on conservation, livelihood improvement and development have been shared. Villagers and nature reserve staff from Lao also visited nature reserve, township and conservation project sites.

3) Capacity building for nature reserve staff

Several capacity building workshops have been organized on GIS application, camera for wildlife monitoring, field patrol and monitoring, forest fire prevention.

4) Baseline information survey

Survey on biodiversity baseline information has been conducted in 2010 and 2012, nature reserve staff from both China and Lao joined activities and recorded biodiversity data and information.

5) Joint patrol and monitoring

Staff from China and Lao joined nature reserve patrol and monitoring activities.

6) Promotion

Promotion of biodiversity conservation activities have been conducted

7) Villagers training

Training courses on biodiversity conservation and livelihood, community based monitoring have been conducted to villagers from Lao and China.

5. Potential Transboundary Conservation Collaboration with Myanmar

Xishuangbanna also bordered with Myanmar. The newly established Bulong Nature Reserve (supported by CEP BCI Phase I project) which is managed by XNNR connects with Myanmar directly. Bulong Nature Reserve conducted conservation activities after establishment and is facing the challenges especially from Myanmar side due to poverty, lack of conservation management and other issues.

The transboundary collaboration with Myanmar has been planned as task of 2013-work plan for Bulong Nature Reserve, and relevant leader and staff have been appointed. In May of 2013, staff from XNNR visited the forth-Special Region of Myanmar and met with conservation administration to discuss the potential cooperation to look for potential opportunities to establish “China-Myanmar

Transboundary Joint Protected Area". The group from XNNR met with the highest local government leader and communicated with police bureau, forestry bureau and local administration committee.

XNNR group introduced the situation of China –Lao Joint Protected Area, work of Bulong Nature Reserve and expressed the willingness of collaboration. Senior Official from Myanmar side introduced local social, economic and natural resources situation, and mentioned that a nature reserve in the northeast of Nanban has been set up. Due to the poor economic condition and poverty, improving the livelihood is the priority. The leader also expressed the willingness for the collaboration.

XNNR group visited sites and did social and economic assessment in the potential China-Myanmar Joint Protected Area.

6. Experiences

After 6 years collaboration and practice, the cross border biodiversity conservation have been strengthened, and the capacity of nature reserve staff on management of conservation has been improved, and the conservation awareness of villagers have been improved and there are more communication and understanding between administration of two countries. The main experiences are:

- 1) Establish communication and collaboration mechanism between administration agencies, this mechanism has been set up at provincial, nature reserve level;
- 2) New approach: to establish Joint Protected Area (JPA) for transboundary conservation;
- 3) Establish trust and understanding for long term collaboration;
- 4) Establish communication mechanism at local community level to obtain more support from local communities;
- 5) Integrate transboundary conservation into GMS mainstream and supported by international partners, e.g. CI, CEP BCI Phase I and others.
- 6) Conduct capacity building, joint survey and patrol and other activities to implement joint conservation strategies.

7. Challenges

The transboundary collaboration has made progress, due to some barriers and challenges, some planned project activities could not be conducted. The challenges are:

- 1) Limitation and shortage of funding
- 2) Language and communication
- 3) Shortage of equipment, especially field equipment
- 4) Shortage of technical staff and senior management staff
- 5) Differences on policy, legislation, regulations and administration in two countries
- 6) Lack of project and financial support from Lao side

8. Plans

We have explored approaches and methods to conduct transboundary biodiversity conservation between China and Lao PDR since 2006 and hope to get more support from national government (especially from Lao PDR), international organizations and other agencies, and establish China-Lao Green Corridor to preserve more ecosystem and biodiversity. The plans for next 3 years are:

- 1) Conduct biodiversity baseline survey for China- Lao Joint Protected Areas;
- 2) Organize international workshop to discuss biodiversity action plan for transboundary conservation actions;
- 3) Provide capacity building for conservation administration staff in both countries;
- 4) Conduct promotion to improve biodiversity conservation awareness for communities in the Joint Protected Areas;
- 5) Support livelihood improvement for cross border Joint Protected Areas.

Figure 1: Location of Xishuangbanna Nature Reserve and other protected Areas

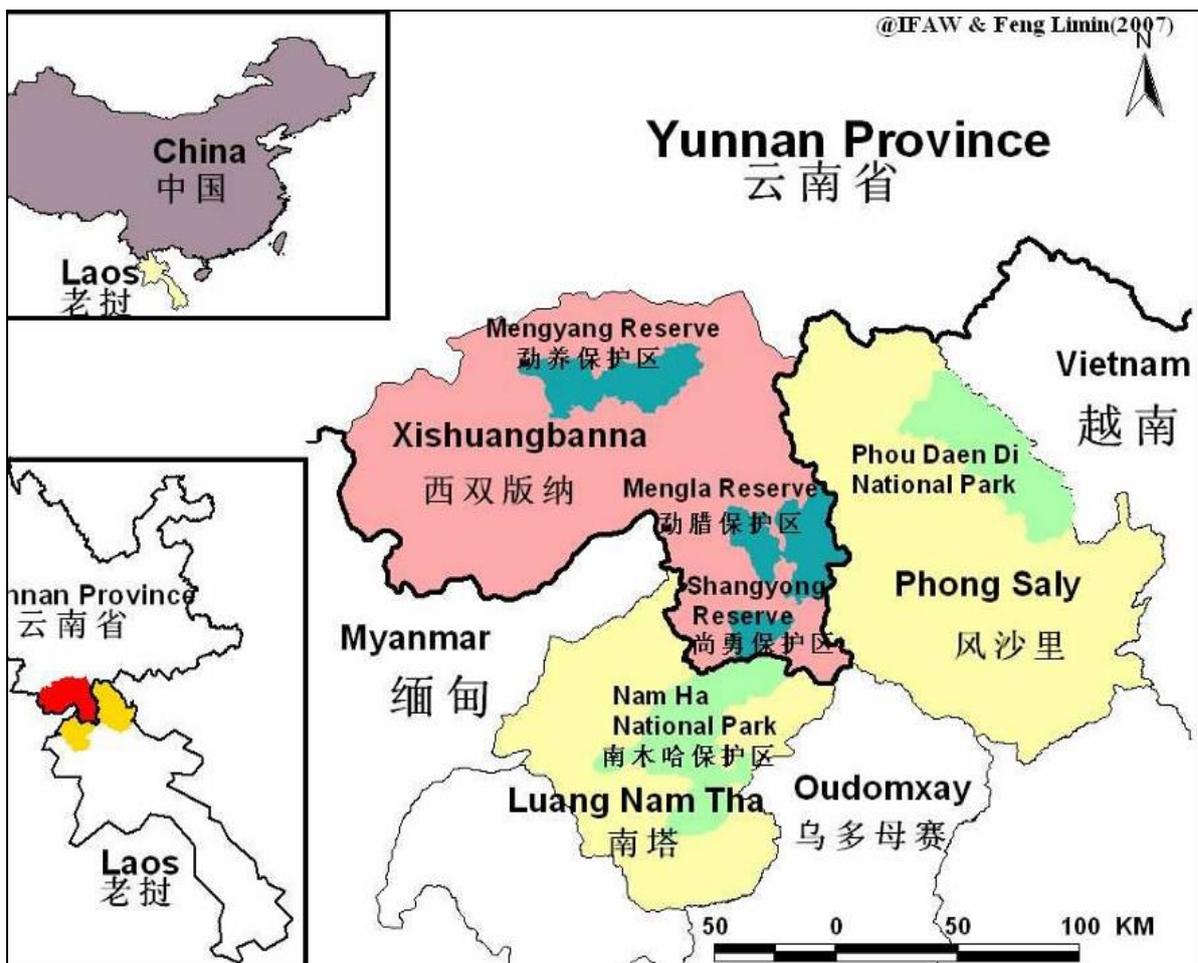


Figure 2. Joint Protected Areas of China and Lao PDR

中国—老挝跨境联合保护区域情况示意图

