

WWF Environmental and Social Safeguards Categorization Memorandum

<p>Project Title: Strengthening conservation and resilience of globally significant wild cat landscapes through a focus on small cat and leopard conservation</p>	<p>Date: 3/30/2020</p>
<p>Project Location and salient physical characteristics relevant to the safeguard analysis:</p> <p>The WWF GEF funded components of the project (C2, C3) will focus on two landscapes in wild cat hotspots in northern and north-eastern India that each contain multiple species of small cats as well as tiger and leopard. These are critical sites for the maintenance of wild cat diversity in India. Each project landscape is built around a key PA for wild cat conservation and surrounding buffer zones that contain important habitats for small cats. Activities will be conducted within PAs, buffer zones (demarcated as up to 10km around each PA) and identified tiger corridors within these landscapes. The project landscapes are: Dudhwa landscape in Uttar Pradesh, and Pakke – Eaglenest landscape in Arunachal Pradesh. In addition, Ranthambhore landscape in Rajasthan is covered under the UNDP GEF funded components of the project for soft support (e.g. staff training) and as such is excluded from the scope of WWF/GEF intervention in project Components 2 and 3, and from this memo.</p> <p>Dudhwa landscape in Uttar Pradesh</p> <p>The Dudhwa landscape comprises three protected areas which together form the Dudhwa Tiger Reserve. The surrounding matrix is primarily agriculture with sugarcane and paddy being dominant crops. The landscape lies in Eastern Uttar Pradesh in Lakhimpur-Kheri and Bahraich Districts. The international boundary with Nepal forms the northern boundary of the landscape, with the northern boundaries of Dudhwa National Park (NP) (approx. 56 km) and Katerniaghat Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS) (approx. 55 km) lying on the international India-Nepal border. The landscape comprises lowland sal forest, grassland and wetland habitats, supporting a wide range of globally significant wildlife species including at least four species of small wild cats – fishing cat, jungle cat, leopard cat and rusty-spotted cat.</p> <p>The Tiger Reserve consists of three disjunct PAs: Dudhwa NP and Kishanpur WLS in Lakhimpur-Kheri district and Katerniaghat WLS in the adjacent Bahraich district. Parts of North Kheri Forest Division, South Kheri Division and a small part of Shahjahanpur Forest Divisions form parts of the buffer of the Tiger Reserve. The core area is 1093.79 km², and buffer is 1107.98 km², thus the total area is 2201.77 km²</p> <p>Project interventions in Components 2 and 3 will focus mainly on grassland, wetland and agricultural lands in the vicinity of Dudhwa NP and Katerniaghat WLS.</p> <p>Pakke – Eaglenest landscape in Arunachal Pradesh</p> <p>The Pakke-Eaglenest project landscape situated in the districts of West Kameng and East Kameng in the western part of State of Arunachal Pradesh, India. It consists of three protected areas, the Pakke Tiger Reserve, Eaglenest Wildlife Sanctuary, Sessa Orchid Sanctuary (OS) and surrounding Reserved and Unclassified Forests in Arunachal Pradesh. In the south the landscape is contiguous with Nameri Tiger Reserve in Assam and in the West with Sakteng Wildlife Sanctuary in Bhutan. The Pakke river forms the eastern boundary of the Pakke Tiger Reserve and landscape. Altogether it forms a large</p>	<p>Project Categorization (A, B, C): B</p>

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tract of forested landscape in the mountains of Eastern Himalayas spread across more than 3000 km²

The protected areas of Pakke Tiger Reserve (862 km²), Sessa Orchid Sanctuary (100 km²) and Eaglenest (217 km²) cover a large altitudinal gradient from the foothills in Pakke to about 3000 m in the Eaglenest sanctuary, thus encompassing a large fraction of the biodiversity of this exceptionally biodiverse part of the Himalayas. It harbours six small cat species, Jungle Cat, Fishing Cat, Leopard Cat, Marbled Cat, Golden Cat and Clouded Leopard along with the Tiger and Leopard.

The large altitudinal gradient supports a corresponding ecological gradient from lowland tropical evergreen (below 1000 m), subtropical (1000 m –2000 m) to temperate broad-leaved and temperate coniferous forest (above 2000 m). The treeline in the Eastern Himalayas appears above 4000 m.

Project interventions in Components 2 and 3 will mainly focus on the buffer zone areas of Eaglenest WLS and Pakke TR, including parts of Tenga RF and Papum RF.

(Landscape Profile, 2019).

Project Description:

The project objective is to secure populations and habitats of wild cats subject to habitat encroachment, human-wildlife conflict, poaching and illegal trade in priority landscapes of northern, north-eastern and western India. This will be achieved through four complementary components that aim to:

Component 1: build the required enabling policy framework and institutional capacity;

Component 2: strengthen government management of wild cats and habitats

Component 3: build community stewardship at landscape level;

Component 4: enhance corporate sector partnerships, regional collaboration, and knowledge transfer and learning.

The project is a child project of the GEF-7 Global Wildlife Program.

Component 1 (UNDP GEF funded) will put in place a landscape-level approach to wild cat conservation that will guide the revision and implementation of existing policies, plans and programs of government departments at national and sub-national levels, and other donor/partner initiatives.

Components 2 and 3 (WWF GEF funded) will be implemented in two project landscapes (Dudhwa and Pakke-Eaglenest), putting in place the required local capacity, collaborations and community stewardship for landscape-scale conservation in globally-significant landscapes for wild cats that are focused on Key Biodiversity Areas where small cat distribution overlaps with big cat habitats. **Component 2** will bring together key government departments with roles to play in wild cat conservation to support the implementation of landscape-scale master plans. This will help to build a complementary and coordinated action portfolio for wild cat conservation bringing together big cat and small cat conservation under the guidance and supervision of NTCA. Working in parallel with Component 2, in the same wild cat landscapes, **Component 3** will build community stewardship and engagement towards the co-management of wild cat habitats.

Component 4 (UNDP GEF funded) will build the necessary partnerships and platforms for integrated and collaborative wild cat conservation. This will include the establishment and initial operation of a national-level platform for green business including development of a corporate-sector fund for community-based wildlife conservation.

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For safeguards purposes and this Categorization memo, Component 2 and 3 will be implemented by WWF GEF Agency and therefore WWF's Environment and Social Safeguards Integrated Policies and Procedures (SIPP) will apply to activities funded under these two components.

Safeguard Standards Triggered	Yes	No
Environment and Social Risk Management	X	
Natural Habitats	X	
Pest Management		X
Indigenous Peoples	X	
Involuntary Resettlement	X	
Community Health and Safety	X	

Summary of Key Safeguard Issues:

The proposed project is a Category "B" given that it is a conservation initiative, expected to generate significant positive and durable social, economic and environmental benefits. Any adverse environmental and social impacts due to project activities to ensure effective management or involvement of indigenous people are minor and site specific and can be mitigated. Specific intervention sites within the targeted buffer zones and corridors where activities will be financed are not known as they would be chosen during project implementation. However, the main focus of intervention in Dudhwa landscape will be the grasslands and wetlands of Katerniaghat WS and Dudhwa NP, including engagement of surrounding farming communities, who be selected during project execution. In Pakke-Eaglenest landscape, the project interventions will focus on securing the connectivity and integrity of forest cover across the landscape by addressing critical bottlenecks (eg Tenga RF and Sessa Orchid Sanctuary, between Eaglenest WLS and Pakke TR) and forested areas under active encroachment and degradation, mainly in buffer zone areas (eg tree felling in Papum RF, in the eastern buffer zone of Pakke TR). Component 3 of the project will strengthen community engagement processes for the high conservation value habitats for Pakke & Eaglenest buffer zones (village areas of Rupa Sinchung and Shergaon), and the governance and capacity of existing community and village-level institutions (e.g. Gram Panchayats, Women Self-Help Groups, Eco-Development Committees (EDC), Forest Rights Committees (FRC), Tribal Village Councils (Pakke and Eaglenest), cooperatives, etc.) for some 26 villages to take a greater role in wild cat conservation. Finally, Human-Wildlife Conflict hotspots will be identified and innovative mechanisms for preventing and managing HWC in areas adjacent to PAs and corridors demonstrated in two communities in each landscape (locations to be determined during implementation).

Standard on Natural Habitat – is triggered as the proposed project directly targets protecting, managing and restoring globally significant species and habitats in Dudhwa and Pakke – Eaglenest landscapes in Uttar Pradesh and Arunachal Pradesh States; strengthening local communities' ability to conserve the natural resources they depend on. Management of these habitats will involve removal of invasive alien species, and use of native species (only) for rehabilitation.

Standard on Involuntary Resettlement – While the proposed project is unlikely to cause displacement of people, the project may restrict access to natural resources such as collection of fodder, roofing and fencing materials, firewood and other forest products; and also grazing of livestock will be impacted given the project activities include grassland and forest management and rehabilitation. Therefore,

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WWF's Standard on Involuntary Resettlement will apply. These communities depend on forest, grassland and wetland habitats for fuel, fodder, grazing land and NTFP products like mushrooms and medicinal herbs, hence, the lives and livelihoods of some marginalized groups are dependent on these natural resources. There is a probability that access rights of these communities to forest, grassland and wetland areas might be restricted while implementing the project activities like habitat management and rehabilitation interventions in Dudhwa; protecting and restoring degraded forest habitats in PA buffer zones (ESZ) through improved regulation and supporting community-based conservation measures in Pakke-Eaglenest Landscape. Thus, the food and financial security of local communities dependent on natural resources for their lives and livelihoods might be affected.

Standard on Indigenous People – There are some Indigenous People/Tribal communities residing in the areas where the project will execute its activities. In Arunachal Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh States the project will aim to work with communities in the areas buffering national parks and tiger corridors (Katarniaghat Tiger Reserve and Dudhwa National Park in Uttar Pradesh and Pakke Tiger Reserve and Eaglenest Wildlife Sanctuary in Arunachal Pradesh). Majority of the Indigenous People in project landscapes include the Monpas, Sherdukpens, Buguns and Nyishi in Arunachal Pradesh and the Tharu in Uttar Pradesh. The project will determine the exact demonstration sites during the project execution, therefore an Indigenous Peoples Planning Framework or Tribal people planning framework will be prepared.

Standard on Pest Management – The activities are not expected to trigger the Standard on Pest Management, as any agricultural extension activities targeting settlements in the project demonstration landscapes will not include promoting the use of pesticides – in fact, it will promote the reduction in use of agrochemicals in order to benefit the prey base for small wild cats.

Standard on Community Health and Safety – This standard is triggered as there is a risk of health and safety (due to incidences of encounter with illegal wildlife poachers, timber loggers and wild animals like tigers) for frontline staff, line departments, EDCs and other local stakeholders including community rangers involved in cat conservation, monitoring, surveillance and enforcement after their training and deployment under the provisions of Output 2.2. Mitigation measures to ensure community health and safety will be incorporated into the IPPF/PF.

A comprehensive Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP) is being prepared. The SEP will be finalized incorporating project's grievance response mechanism and will be implemented during designing and implementation of the project.

Describe any potential indirect and/or long term impacts due to anticipated future activities in the project area:

The project expects to achieve improved conservation and sustainable use of natural resources as its long-term impact of project interventions, which will be both environmentally and socially positive.

Required actions: (type of ESIA, ESMP, IPP, IPMP, RAP, consultations, disclosure)

An Indigenous Peoples/ Tribal people Planning Framework (IPPF) will be prepared and disclosed before GEF Agency approval. The framework will clarify the principles, procedures and organizational arrangements to ensure



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culturally appropriate benefits for indigenous communities including guidelines for obtaining Free Prior Informed Consent (FPIC) to be applied to Indigenous Peoples (IP)/ Tribal Peoples (TP) for the activities that impact them.

A Process Framework (PF) will be prepared and disclosed before Agency approval which describes a process to be established by which members of potentially affected communities participate in designing, implementation and monitoring of relevant project activities.