

Thesis Title	Assessment of Effectiveness of the Saola Conservation in Laos
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ABSTRACT

The Saola (*Pseudoryx nghentinhensis*) is an animal found in the Annamite Mountains of Laos and Vietnam. It is one of the most enigmatic animals in the world. Since its scientific discovery in 1992 it has declined to the status of critically endangered species of IUCN in 2008 and CITES list in 2009. Now, it is one of the most endangered mammals in the world with estimated population not more than few hundreds. This research studies the activities of Saola Working Group (SWG) for Saola conservation in Laos in order to evaluate the effectiveness of this program by using theory-based evaluation (TBE). The SWG worked for Saola conservation and efforts to protection Saola from extinction with strategies for conservation including: protection, research, awareness-raising, mentoring and fund-raising. Based on these strategies, seven distinctive but interrelating activities for Saola conservation can be identified: camera-trapping, field survey, patrols, protected area management, awareness raising capacity building and community participation.

The activities vary in its effectiveness to detect and protect Saola. SWG's camera-trap failed to record any picture of Saola with, as Saola lives in forest that is hard on camera-traps and a little is known at Saola's behavior. Field survey also was

problematic. At present, it discovered but cannot prove with certainty that the hoof prints, dung, or feeding signs belong to Saola. Their identifications are currently subjective without definite parameters. One activity that was effective was patrols. During 2011 to 2012 patrols team reduced threats to Saola by destroying 26,651 snares and 11 poacher's camps in Saola habitat. In 2012 SWG also helped WMPA improving protection at Nakhai-Nam Theun Biodiversity Conservation Area (NNT NBCA) by providing technical trainings on a protocol of patrols, ranger-based data collection, building local understandings and supporting strategic patrol planning. All rangers and villagers that related to Saola conservation were trained. And now there are new three protected areas established for Saola in Laos and Vietnam. SWG also conducted the workshop with the staff and rangers for improving their technique for snare removal and field survey. Awareness program was conducted with 12 villages and 11 schools at NNT by providing the information about Saola and convincing them to be active on Saola conservation. The community participation was also one of the more effective activities. Local people were very active and always join the patrols or field survey because they got the appropriate compensation.

With limited funding and unsustainable financial supported, the SWG faces difficulty to implementation activities for detecting and protecting Saola. It would be extremely difficult to monitor Saola population directly. There are also some constraints for Saola conservation in Laos such as limited knowledge about Saola, difficult to keep the animals in captivity and a security reason that prevents foreign experts accessing some sensitive areas. In order to make the conservation program more effective, this research suggest that SWG should continuous with selective focus on the most important activities including local experts , rangers and villagers, would allow the work to be more continuous and routine. And SWG also would be

continuous and improve the activities that were not yet effective but necessary to detection such as camera-trap.

Keywords: Wildlife conservation/Saola/Saola conservation/Saola Working Group

