



Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)
Sustainable Natural Resources Management Project (SNRM)

**A GUIDELINE ON OPERATION OF
COLLABORATIVE MANAGEMENT PLATFORM
IN LANGBIANG WORLD BIOSPHERE RESERVE**

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ABBREVIATION

BR	Biosphere reserve
CMP	Collaborative Management Platform
CPC	Communal People's Committee
LB	Lang Biang
MB	Management Board
SOP	Standard Operation Protocol
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization

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I. Overview information

1.1. Introduction of Langbiang World Biosphere Reserve

Langbiang plateau and its surroundings officially became the ninth biosphere reserve of Vietnam and joined the network of over 650 biosphere reserves in the world after the decision of designation of International Coordinating Council of the Program on Man and Biosphere at the meeting of UNESCO on June 6, 2015 in Paris, the capital of French Republic.

With the total area of 275,439 ha, Langbiang World Biosphere Reserve (hereinafter referred to as “LB-BR”), which is located in administration land of 6 districts of Lam Dong province, named Lac Duong, Lam Ha, Dam Rong, Don Duong, Duc Trong and Da Lat city, possesses core value, acknowledged by the international community, as follows: (i) A mosaic of ecological systems representative of major biogeographic regions; (ii) The area of significance for biodiversity and culture conservation; and (iii) Providing an opportunity to explore and demonstrate approaches to sustainable development on a regional scale. These values of the LB-BR help it to meet three fundamental functions of the BR, that are conservation, supporting and development.

In order to maintain and develop the LB-BR in harmonious way, aiming at contributing to the strategy of sustainable development of highland area in particular and the whole country in general, with the motto of “conservation for development and development for conservation”, the LB-BR has identified its own management vision to be: “to maintain and develop the natural ecosystems, cultural diversity of the BR for the objective of sustainable development of Lam Dong province and the country and contributing to the objectives of sustainable development of the UN”. In addition, so as to materialize the management vision, management objectives of the BR have been formulated, as follows:

- Conservation of natural ecosystems;
- Conservation of cultural diversity;
- Sustainable economic development in the area;
- Contribution to environment education and scientific research of the nation;
- Maintaining the mechanism of multisectoral cooperation.

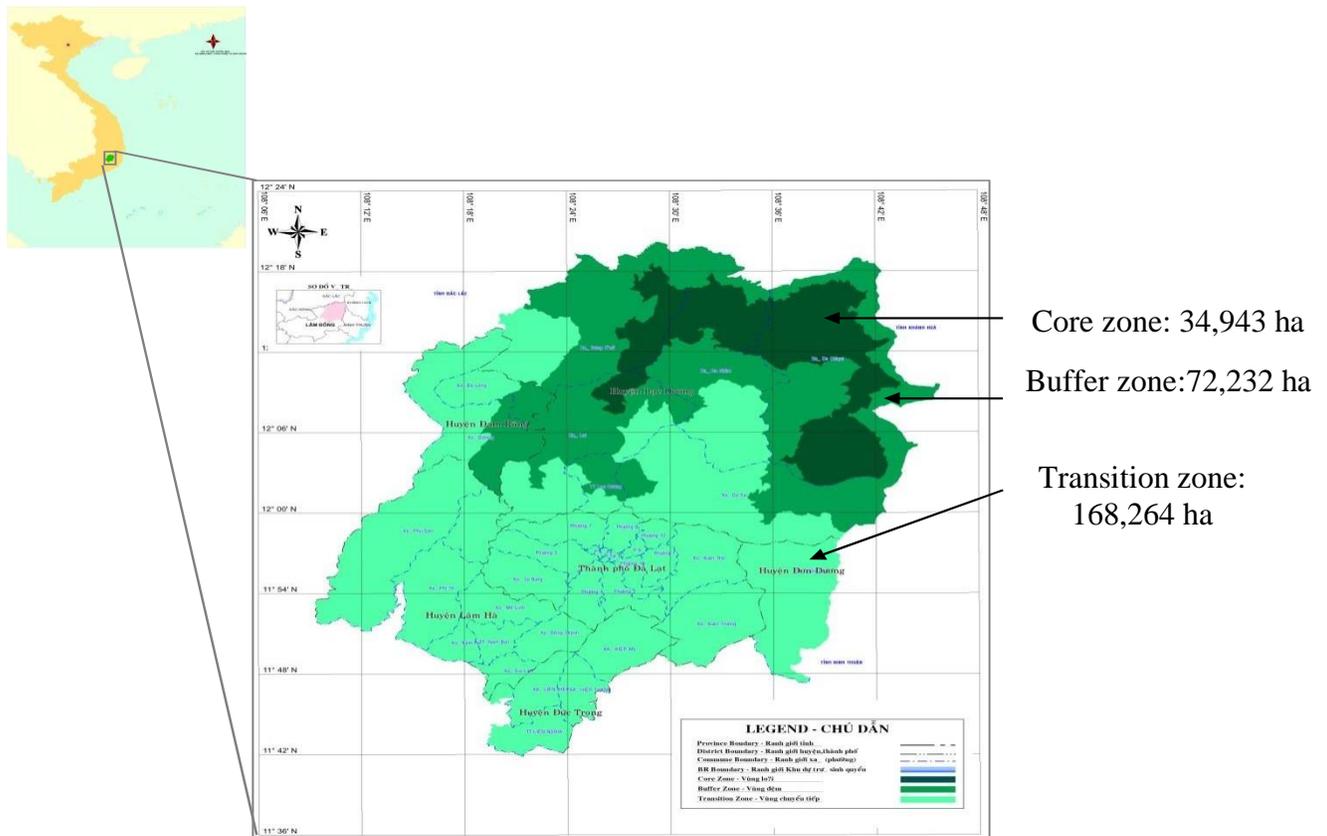


Figure 1: Map of functional zones of LB-BR
 (Source: Five-year Management Plan period 2018-2022, LB-BR)

With the management vision and objectives formulated, the development of the management tool suitable with general features of a BR as well as socio-economic conditions specific to Vietnam and the highland area is important. That management tool has to make favorable conditions to issue management decisions that both satisfy as many as relevant stake holders in a BR and align with current legal framework of the country. In that context, a mechanism of identification/analysis of issues, discussion on the issues and agreement/ collaborative action among relevant stakeholders inside the LB-BR, especially from local communities, in dealing with these issues/ problems was developed by LBBR management board (hereinafter referred to as LB-BRMB) as an effective measure to contribute to the materialization of the management vision and objectives.

1.2. Rationale for development of Collaborative management platform (CMP) from perspectives of changes in management method of BR

The Man and Biosphere Reserve (MAB) Programme was launched in 1970 by UNESCO with the aim of establishing the scientific basis for improving the relationships between people and the environment, addressing the problems such as the rational use of natural resources and their conservation and ecologically sound land use (Bioret *et al* 1998).

However, when Seville International Conference on Biosphere Reserves was organized in Spain in March 1995, the issues on the structure, the way of management... of a BR was discussed and determined to be based on two important documents of (i) Seville strategy: Setting out the main goals and actions at the level of individual BRs as well as at the national and international levels; (ii) Statutory Framework which gives the first time a formal definition of BRs, their functions, the criteria for designation and the nomination procedure of a BR (UNESCO 1996).

Seville International Conference on BRs made an important landmark in management of a BR with giving increased emphasis to the “M” of MAB biosphere reserves (Bioret *et al.* 1998). It affirmed that the functions of a BR are only implemented through the connection and mobilization of all structure and relevant stakeholders inside a BR. Therefore, in order to manage effectively a BR, it is necessary to formulate a mechanism which makes good conditions for all relevant stakeholders of the BR to discuss and agree to make decisions for dealing with issues/ problems arising in the process of BR management.

In addition, for most of BRs, their legal status in management system of their nations is also an issue needing to be considered to have suitable management measures. In most of the nations, a BR land is not owned by BRMB but other organizations and agencies, furthermore, the MB of a BR is also not given a legal status, making it impossible to issue administrative documents to control actions taking place inside the BR whereas local governments and many other authorities can do it. Therefore, management decisions of a BR require prior agreements of relevant stakeholders, especially the agreement of local communities (Amer *et al* 2015) which is a stakeholder always making up a largest part in a BR. This agreement and active commitment of local community meet the expectation of management of a BR that focuses on the role of “M” in ensuring the sustainable development of the BR.

With the issues mentioned above, the development of the CMP in the LB-BR where relevant stakeholders, especially local community can participate in

open, equal way discussion and build up/ agree together on suitable management decisions for handling issues/ problems of the LB- BR is indispensable for effective management of the LB-BR. This allows shares social responsibilities among stakeholder in managing the LB-BR toward achieving the goal of harmonious development between Man and Biosphere.

II. CMP in LB-BR

2.1. What is a CMP

2.1.1. Key principles of the platform:

A platform is understood as a forum where all participants having **concerns** over issues/ problems, **discuss in equal and free manner** and **agree together** to handle the issues/ problems.

In LB-BR there is a provincial level Platform (LB-BRMB meeting) as well as a provincial level of the Platform (CMP), the former of which is currently organized twice a year with provincial stakeholders such as provincial departments etc. whereas, the latter of which is organized when necessity arises which district level stakeholders such as DPC. CPC local people etc. as shown in figure 1 (page10).

The platform is totally different from the meeting or the conference. key principles of the platform are as follows.

- (i) There is no chairperson(s), but **facilitator(s)**;
- (ii) All participants have the **equal** roles/right (every opinion from different stakeholders is freely expressed and equally respected regardless of social status etc. of participants.);
- (iii) Ways of handling issues/problems as the topic of platform are determined through **discussion**;
- (iv) The conclusions of the platform are only made when **all participants agree**.

2.1.2. CMP in LB-BR:

a. Definition

CMP is the district level coordination mechanism which shall function as a venue for the field stakeholders, e.g., DPC, forest owners, DAC, and CPCs concerned, to discuss and solve issues and problems on management of the

core and buffer zones of the LBBR for the goal of sustainable development of the LB-BR.

b. Function/ Responsibility of the CMP

- (i) To collect information from all stakeholders on issues/ problems, possibly causing negative impacts on natural ecosystem and the life of people inside the LB-BR;
- (ii) To determine an issue(s) /problem(s) to be discussed as well as related stakeholders/participants, to hold consultation meetings with important stakeholders to discuss/agree on solutions against the issue(s)/ problem(s), to obtain agreement on the CMP organization from the LB-BRMB and to make/ send official invitation letters;
- (iii) To organize the CMP to discuss the issue(s) and agree on proposed solution(s) (activities) with roles/ responsibilities and time frame for implementation among the participants, to make minutes of meeting on the agreed solution(s) including role /responsibility etc. of each participant and to obtain signatures from the participants in agreed solution (activities);
- (iv) To inform the result of the CMP including the minutes of meeting to LBBR MB; and
- (v) To monitor the progress and results of implementation of solution/ activities committed by the participants in the minutes and to make reports on the result of the monitoring in a nearest LB-BRMB meeting.

2.1.3. The task of relevant stakeholders in CMP

Determination of one or several organizations participating permanently in CMP is impossible. This is because CMP - a multisectoral and multisectoral coordination framework - is organized when necessary to discuss and find the measures for issues/ problems taking place within LB-BR, and with each issue/ problem, different stakeholders concerned are invited to participate in the CMP.

Therefore, the secretariat of LB-BR MB is the body which has main responsibility for the operation of the CMP, from information collection of issues/ problems, selection of issues/ problems needing to be handled through CMP and invitation to relevant stakeholders to participate in the CMP, organization of the CMP and reporting the results of CMP to LBBR MB and monitoring, promoting the implementation of commitments from all participants in the CMP.

a. The task of the LBBR Secretariat:

- (i) Receiving information on issues/ problems arising inside LBBR from all stakeholders. Selecting issues/ problems for CMP organization to handle. Selecting issue(s)/ problem(s) as a topic(s) of the CMP.
- (ii) Selecting stakeholders relating to the issues/problems for the CMP. Holding consultation meetings with the relevant stakeholders for possible solution against the issue(s)/ problem(s) with use of available programs/ services of the stakeholders. Gaining an agreement form LBBR MB for CMP organization; Determination of a venue of the CMP organization. and making/sending the official invitation letter;
- (iii) Organizing the CMP. Facilitating participants for discussion on the issues. Promoting for building up agreement on measures/ activities as a solution as well as recommendations, proposals to LBBR MB (if any);
- (iv) Making the minutes of CMP with agreed activities, roles/ responsibilities of the participants in the agreement and time frame of the activities. Obtaining signatures form the participants in the agreement. Submitting the minutes to LBBRMB;
- (v) Making monitoring on implementation of committed activities by the participants together with organizations committed to make monitoring. Informing timely to all the participants on the progress of implementation of activities committed.
- (vi) Presenting the result of the CMP including monitoring result in the nearest LB-BRMB meeting.

b. The tasks of other stakeholders in CMP:

- i. Cooperating on information collection by the secretariat on issues / problems taking place within LB-BR;
- ii. Cooperating on selecting issue(s) as well as on identifying solutions in consultation meetings if requested for joining the meetings;
- iii. Participating in the CMP when invited
- iv. Discussing actively in a free and equal manner on the issues/ problems with all other relevant stakeholders in the CMP;
- v. Working together in cooperative sense to build up the agreement on solution (s)/ activities against the issue(s)/ problem(s) presented in the CMP as well as recommendations, proposals to LBBR LB for handling the issues/ problems better;
- vi. Cooperating in signing the minutes prepared by the LB-BRMB secretariat; and
- vii. Implementing their own commitments based on the minutes,

informing to LBBR secretariat the progress and result of commitment implementation when required.

LB-BR Platform

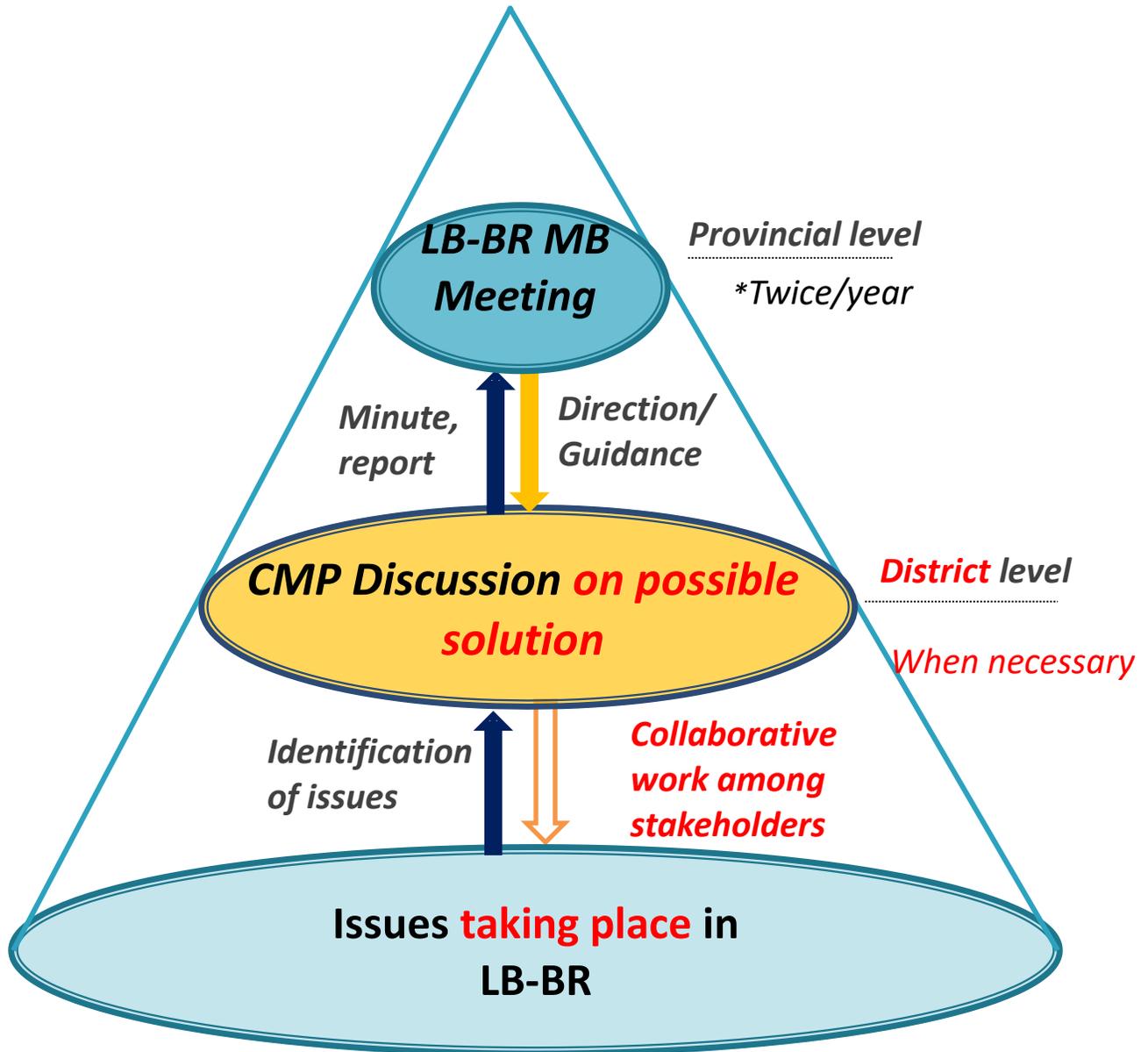


Figure 2: Flow chart of LB-BR Platform describing the responsibility of provincial level platform (LB-BRMB meeting) and district level platform (CMP) in LB-BR

2.2. Operation of CMP in LB-BR

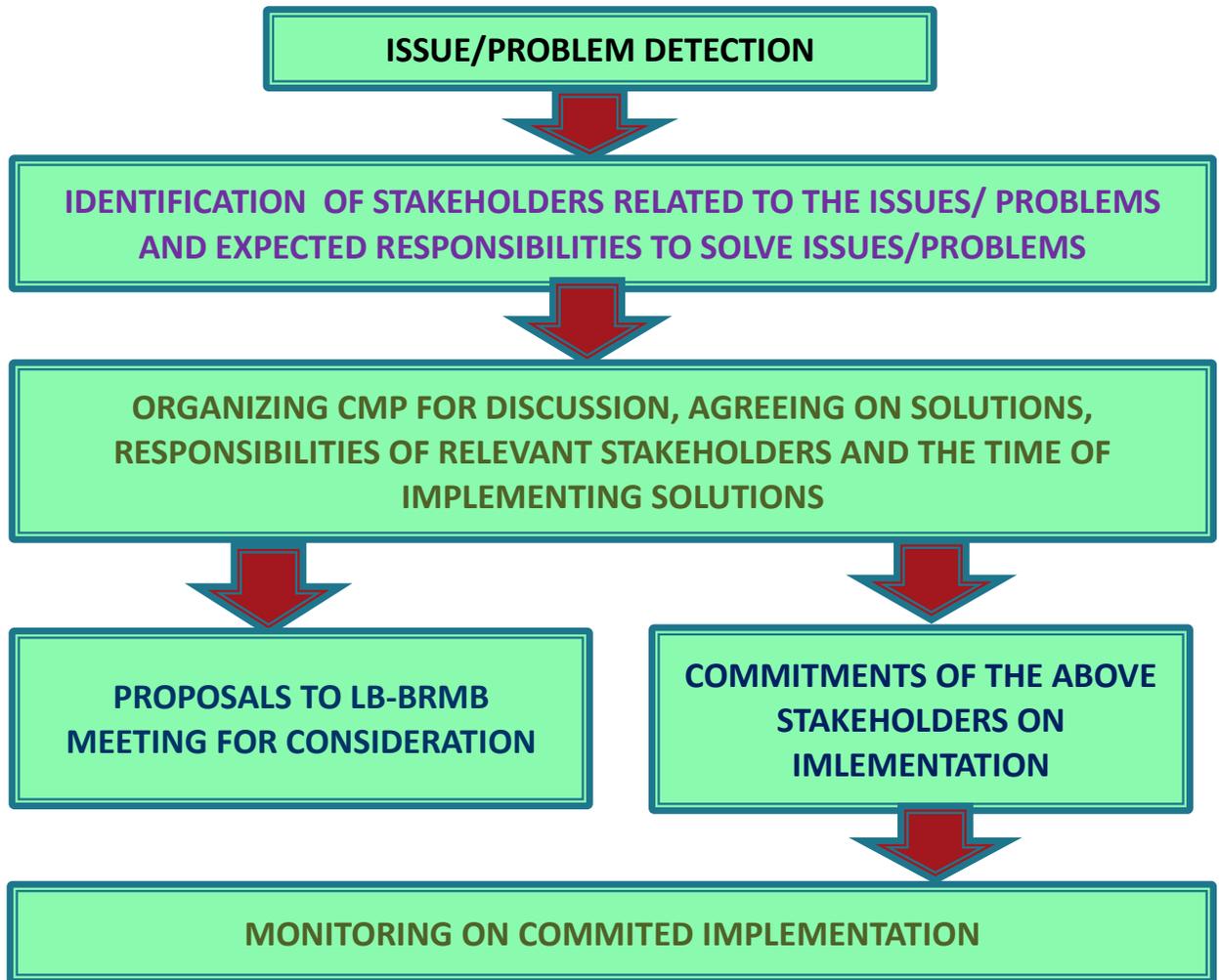


Figure 3: Flowchart on the operation of CMP in LB-BR

2.2.1. Detection of issues/ problems:

With reference to the management of LBBR, the LB-BRMB (secretariat) is to deal with issues/ problems arising which may cause negative impacts on natural resources, environment etc. as well as on the livelihood of people living inside the LB-BR. The secretariat needs to collect the information on issues/ problems to judge whether or not CMP on the issues should be organized with relevant stakeholders.

In this connection, it is important and necessary to build **Standard Operation Protocol (SOP)** for information collection. These SOPs after established should be informed to local people, organizations, agencies... inside LBBR to form a network of information collection which can be used as input material of CMP organization. (See Figure 3: Example in SOP to collect information on forest violation).

In order to build SOP, LBBRMB (secretariat) should organize consultation meetings with local communities and other relevant stakeholders (social civil organizations, fatherland, people's commission...) to explain the operation of CMP in LBBR, the purpose of SOP and how to use SOP to collect information as input materials for CMP organization, aimed to handle collaboratively urgent local issues/ problems arising inside the LB-BR among stakeholders as a process of management of LB-BR. After being formulated, a flow chart diagram on SOPs should be displayed in the places where the diagram can be seen easily by every people and thus, the possibility of information provision of issues/ problems happening in the LB-BR from them can be increased.

(See Figure 3: An example of SIP to collect information on forest violation)

2.2.2. Identification of stakeholders related to the issues/ problems and solution against the issues/ problems with their responsibilities

After the CMP topic (the issues/ problems) was determined by the secretariat and endorsed by LB-BRMB, the secretariat is to identify the stakeholders such as agencies, organizations, bodies... which are also supposed to be responsible for conduct solutions against the issues/ problems. Then the secretariat needs to organize consultation meetings in advance with relevant stakeholders on the topic of the CMP. The purposes of the consultation meetings are for:

- (i) Confirming again on the issues/ problems (the topic of CMP) with the relevant stakeholders;
- (ii) Confirming necessity of the CMP organization to tackle the issues/ problems with the relevant stakeholders;
- (iii) Discussing with the relevant stakeholders on solution (measures) against the issues with their responsibilities and timeframe of implementation as well as recommendations, proposals (if any) to the next LBBR MB meeting.

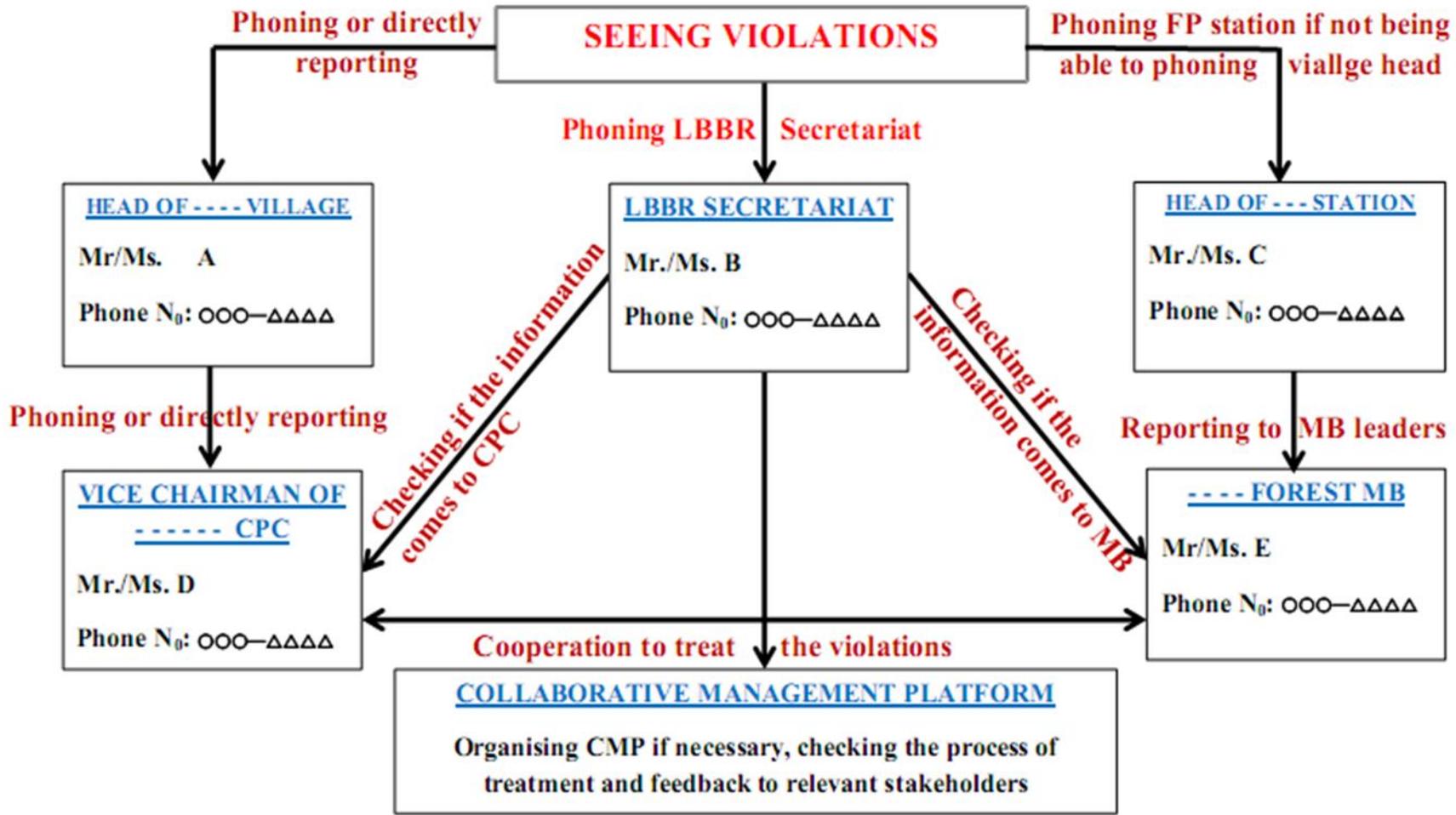


Figure 4: An example of SOP to collect information on forest violation

2.2.3. Organizing CMP, agreeing solutions with each stakeholder's responsibility and the time of implementation of commitments from relevant stakeholders

After having the above consultation meetings with the relevant stakeholders, the secretariat sets the date suitable with all stakeholders who will be invited for the CMP and then determines/ books a venue for the CMP. The secretariat also makes/sends official invitation letters to the stakeholders. Finally, the secretariat organizes the CMP.

As mentioned in the characteristics of a platform, there is nobody to chair the CMP as well as no organization, agencies... has a decisive voice in the CMP but the secretariat will be the body who play the role of facilitator to promotes open discussions on the issues/ problems (the topic of the CMP) among all participants of the CMP. One thing required to pay attention is that participants in the CMP are surely different in education level and social position, thus, the role of the facilitator is very important, considering that local people or representative from junior agencies, have difficulties to express their real thinking in front of senior agencies or high-ranking officials. Therefore, facilitation should be made in a way to provide favorable condition for discussion as well as to respect all opinions from all participants. Taking into consideration that the role of all CMP participants is equal, the discussion should be facilitated to focus on the proposed solution to come to agreement among the participants. If necessary, the secretariat can organize separate discussions for participants with the same education level or social position to make favorable condition for all participants to be able to express their real thinking. After that, all opinions from separate discussion groups will be presented to all participants of the CMP for agreement.

The secretariat has the responsibility to record all the opinions of participants in the CMP, especially the commitments of the stakeholders to conduct activities as a solution against the issues/ problems, time frame for implementing the activities as well as proposals, recommendations (if any) of the CMP to LBBR MB. Before the end of the CMP, the minutes on agreed activities with responsibility and time frame of the implementation should be shared with all the participants for agreement, which must be signed by all the stakeholders participating in the CMP. Each stakeholder keeps one copy of the minutes to know their responsibility and the time to implement their responsibility as committed. A copy of minutes is also submitted to LBBR MB.

2.2.4. Commitments and proposals, recommendations of CMP

In the conclusion of CMP, the commitments from relevant stakeholders participating in the CMP are the most important outputs. These commitments are specific activities of relevant stakeholders to be implemented in a specific time as a solution against the issues/ problems. In addition, these commitments (activities) show willingness of CMP participants for contribution to sustainable conservation /development of LB-BR as well as very good possibility of CMP as a tool for making collaboration among stakeholders toward sustainable conservation/ development of LB-BR. The commitments are recorded in the minutes of the CMP and monitored by the secretariat of LBBR and their results and the progress of implementation will be informed to the relevant stakeholders.

The proposals and recommendations of the CMP would include good ideas of activities/measures which could bring better solutions against the issues/ problems, however, they are beyond authority of CMP participants. Therefore, they are submitted to LBBRMB to coordinate with competent organizations for approval on the implementation of them against the issues/ problems. These proposals, recommendations are also recorded in the minutes of the CMP and reported to LB-BRMB meeting for consideration and possible actions.

2.2.5. Monitoring on committed implementation of CMP

Monitoring on implementation of commitments from relevant stakeholders participating in the CMP is the responsibility of LB-BRMB secretariat. Based on the commitments and the timeframe of implementation, the secretariat shall set up the series of meetings with relevant stakeholders to confirm the progress or any concerns to fulfil their commitments and coordinates the activities of relevant stakeholders to achieve the possibly highest efficiency in dealing with the issues/problems. The progress of implementing activities from the relevant stakeholders should be timely informed to LB-BR MB so that the LB-BRMB can understand the progresses and the responsibilities of the relevant stakeholders in dealing with the issues/ problems of the BR for possible interventions.

III. Conclusion

CMP in LBBR plays an important role in coordinating social responsibilities among all sectors and components inside the LB-BR in dealing with local issues/ problems arising in the process of the BR management. Because of inherent, complicated and diverse relationships among stakeholders inside the LB-BR,

harmoniously handling possible conflicts among these components aimed at achieving harmonious development between Man and Nature is crucially important. In addition, the legal status of a BR in the management system of this nation which is often not very clear and strong enough, it requires discussions and agreements from relevant stakeholders in dealing with issues/ problems of the BR rather than taking administrative measures from authorities. With the reasons mentioned above, CMP, where relevant stakeholders can have open discussions and agree together with the measures on local issues/ problems, is an effective tool for the management of the LB-BR. This is corresponding to the tendency of managing a BRs in the world with the increasing emphasis on the role of Man (the agreement from relevant stakeholders) in achieving harmony with the Nature.

The operation of the CMP in LBBRMB is based on respects to the equality of all relevant stakeholders participating in the CMP. The participants, despite of difference in education level and social position, have the same role in the CMP and the solutions of CMP are only given when all participants agree. By this way, the activities to handle the issues/ problems are implemented by relevant stakeholders which in line with their own regulations/ plans and then the results of implemented activities can be more effective.

The role of LBBR secretariat is very important in the operation of the CMP as successful implementation depends mostly on the secretariat. It always has the main role to play in all the steps, from the first step of information collection for input materials of a CMP to the step of achieving the agreement from CMP participants as well as monitoring on committed implementation, coordinating the activities of relevant stakeholders for effectively handling issues/ problems. Therefore, the secretariat should be determined based on the capacity of dealing with the above works among candidates.

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