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INTERNATIONAL

January 2015, Volume 2

Exploring Conservation Success in the Eastern Plains and Prey Lang Landscapes



The USAID Supporting Forests and Biodiversity Project

The Supporting Forests and Biodiversity Project is funded by the United States Government through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The Project began in November 2012 with the goal of improving conservation and governance of the Eastern Plains and Prey Lang Landscapes to mitigate climate change, conserve biodiversity, and increase equitable economic benefits to forest communities.

This four-year project is implemented by the Winrock International (WI) in partnership with four strong partners that include Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), East-West Management Institute (EWMI), and The Center for People and Forests (RECOFTC). The Project is implemented in close cooperation and coordination with the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries through Forestry Administration (FA), and with the Ministry of Environment through the General Department of Administration for Nature Conservation and Protection (GDANCP).

Three teams of development professionals employed by the Project focus assistance to the primary stakeholder groups. This assistance includes 1) collaboration and training to government and key natural resource managers at the national and sub-national levels to enhance their effectiveness to sustainably manage forest and conserve biodiversity; 2) collaboration and meaningful assistance to community forest groups, government officers, and private firms engaged in enterprises in or near forests to promote constructive dialogue that promotes better decision making for forest management and to improve economic development in the two landscapes; and 3) collaboration with forest communities and private sector firms to increase equitable economic benefits from the sustainable management of forests.

Through this assistance, the Project aims to strengthen the skills of government officers, forest communities, civil society organizations, non-government organizations, and the private sectors to build wider participation and broader representation within the two landscapes. One of the more practical results will be an improved ability to implement sustainable forest management practices that reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, conserve biodiversity, and support local livelihoods.

For additional information about the Supporting Forests and Biodiversity Project, please visit the Project's Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/Supporting-Forests-and-Biodiversity-Project>, or visit the Project's Phnom Penh office located at Room 588, Building F, Phnom Penh Center, corner of Sotheros and Sihanouk Blvd., phone us at 023-220-714, or e-mail us at infosfb@winrock.org.

Note: The content of these stories is the sole responsibility of Winrock International and does not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.

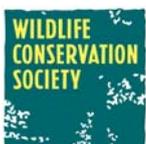


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Ecotourism Encourages a Positive Change in Local Behaviors and Incomes While Boosting Wildlife Conservation

Mr. Phat Bunty, a poor farmer in Dongphlat village, Preah Vihear province, used to earn his living collecting forest products and poaching wild animals such as wild pigs and Red Muntjac.

After joining a series of skills and knowledge training workshops that stressed the importance of forest and wildlife conservation, Mr. Bunty began to understand the value to be gained by promoting wildlife-watching tourism.

Coordinated with the workshops, the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) identified that the forests surrounding Dongphlat village were an important home for a group of critically endangered vultures, whose global population is rapidly declining at alarming rate. The decline is associated with a lack of natural food sources for these carrion-feeding birds and use of Diclofenac, a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug often fed to livestock.

With assistance from the USAID Supporting Forests and Biodiversity Project implemented

through WCS, a “vulture restaurant,” or feeding station for the birds, was developed inside the Dongphlat village forest to reduce mortality of the vultures through supplementary feeding with healthy food. The vulture restaurant is now a tourist attraction drawing attention from tourists keen to see endangered wildlife in its natural habitat.

This initiative has assisted local villagers to become more involved in conservation activities and to generate additional income by providing tourism services. Mr. Bunty and other 13 other villages have joined together to provide services visitors. The village made \$8,687 from tourism in the past year.

“The assistance from USAID has helped us benefit from our forests and wildlife,” said Mr. Bunty *“I’m now a tourist service provider, guiding tourists to see forests and wildlife around my village.”*

“I am pleased that I now understand the importance of wildlife and also that wildlife can bring tourists to visit our village,” added Mr. Bunty, *“I now protect these important wild birds and animals and I educate other villagers not to poach the birds or their nests. We can protect the vultures and other wildlife for ecotourism so our younger generation can also earn income this way.”*

The USAID Supporting Forests and Biodiversity Project assists Cambodian communities to conserve biodiversity and generate income through ecotourism.



A group of endangered vultures photographed at the feeding center.

Photo © Ashish John / WCS

Exchange Visit Assists Local Communities to Boost Their Forest Protection Efforts and Share Best Practices in Forest Management

Elected as a Chief of Puradat Community Forestry in 2009, Mr. Phsat Ratha, age 24, works with the community members, local authorities, and Forestry Administration (FA) officials using his local knowledge and skills to protect the 1,323 hectares of his community's forest.

However, Mr. Ratha wanted to increase his technical knowledge, forest management skills, and provide greater leadership to his community forest members. In discussions with members of USAID's Supporting Forests and Biodiversity Project, Mr. Ratha learned that other forest communities used a variety of techniques to protect, maintain and improve their forests and wildlife. He wished to learn more from these other successful communities and requested a skills-exchange visit.

The team from the USAID Supporting Forests and Biodiversity Project arranged for Mr. Ratha and seven other members from four different forest communities in

Mondulkiri province to visit the well-known Tbeng Lech Community Forest in Siem Reap province. The visit allowed everyone to exchange knowledge and explore learning opportunities on effective community forest protection and sustainable utilization of non-timber forest products (NTFP) that contribute to conservation and livelihood development. Mr. Ratha also took the opportunity to learn about building good relationships and effectively engaging with local authorities and Forest Administration officers.

Mr. Ratha took the lessons learned back to Mondulkiri to share what he had learned with the Community Forest Management Committee and other members. He proposed a new management structure and new enforcement techniques, changes to the community's by-laws and internal rules and regulations, proposed new patrolling ideas, and informed the membership of more practical and sustainable methods of collecting NTFP.

"USAID offered us an opportunity to learn and explore new ideas for forest management. I learned how to work with community members to better manage our limited resources. We are working together with all stakeholders and recognize important role we play in forest protection," said Ratha.

The USAID Supporting Forests and Biodiversity Project assisted a local community to improve their management skills through and skills-exchange visit.



Mr. Phsat Ratha stands inside the Tbeng Lech Community Forest in Siem Reap province.



A New Generation of Resin Tappers Adopt More Sustainable Resin Collecting Techniques While Contributing to Forest Protection

Nineteen year old, Ms. Phoeun Champa, is the second of six children from an ethnic Bunong minority family in Sre Ey village. At the age of 15, shortly after her older sister got married, Ms. Champa assumed responsibility for supporting her entire family. This responsibility includes working long hours in the forests near her village home tapping resin from the 100 trees she inherited from her father. She collects an average of 30 liters each week for which she earns about \$100 per month.

“Many families in the village rely on resin tapping to earn cash income. They use this cash to buy groceries and pay for their children’s school. Several of us younger village members are now taking over the resin tapping tasks, just like our parents did 30 years ago. Our parents are getting too old and weak to travel into forests every day. Until recently, we were using the same

traditional collecting techniques taught to us by our parents and grandparents,” said Ms. Phoeun Champa.

Recently, the forests of Sre Ey village have been threatened by illegal logging activities that resulted in the felling of resin trees. In addition, the traditional resin tapping techniques have been shown to reduce harvests and, oftentimes, harm or shorten the life of the resin trees.

To assist the communities in the Phnom Prich Wildlife Sanctuary protect the forest resources while improving the livelihoods of villagers, the USAID Supporting Forests and Biodiversity project through its good partner, World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), organized to train resin tappers in Sre Ey village. The training included better techniques that will increase the value and quality of the resin tapped, while extending the life of the trees.

“The new harvesting techniques shown to us were easy to learn and put into practice. We’re really happy with this training. We can now make more money and our trees will produce for several years longer,” said Ms. Champa.

"Thank you to USAID for their assistance and to WWF for training us. These new skills contribute to the value of our lives and of the forests. We are committed to doing our best and working together to protect our forest," added Ms. Champa.



Ms. Phoeun Champa heads out from her home to the forest to tap tree resin that she sells for cash to support her family.



Forest Management Plan Secures Livelihoods of Forest Community and Maintains Protected Area Wildlife Corridor

Extending over an area of 1,164 hectares, Dei Ey was officially established as a Community Conservation Forest in 2007. This important forest has been providing significant livelihood benefits more than 200 households and also serves as an important corridor for wildlife passage between Phnom Prich Wildlife Sanctuary and Mondulkiri Protected Forest.

However, illegal logging, land clearance, encroachment, and deforestation have been increasingly posing threats to the limited forest resources and endangering the survival of wildlife in the area. The livelihoods of hundreds of households hang in the balance, along with the culture and traditions of the indigenous people who have lived in Dei Ey for many generations.

Recognizing the importance of Dei Ey forest for biodiversity conservation and

rural livelihoods, USAID Supporting Forests and Biodiversity Project, implemented by Winrock International, organized a series of meetings with local villagers to develop a management plan to end the deforestation through its partner organization, the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF). The Project trained local people to conduct a resource assessment and inventory of their community forest. The resulting management plan is assisting the community to improve their forest management and protection efforts and directly contribute to improve sustainable livelihoods for community members.

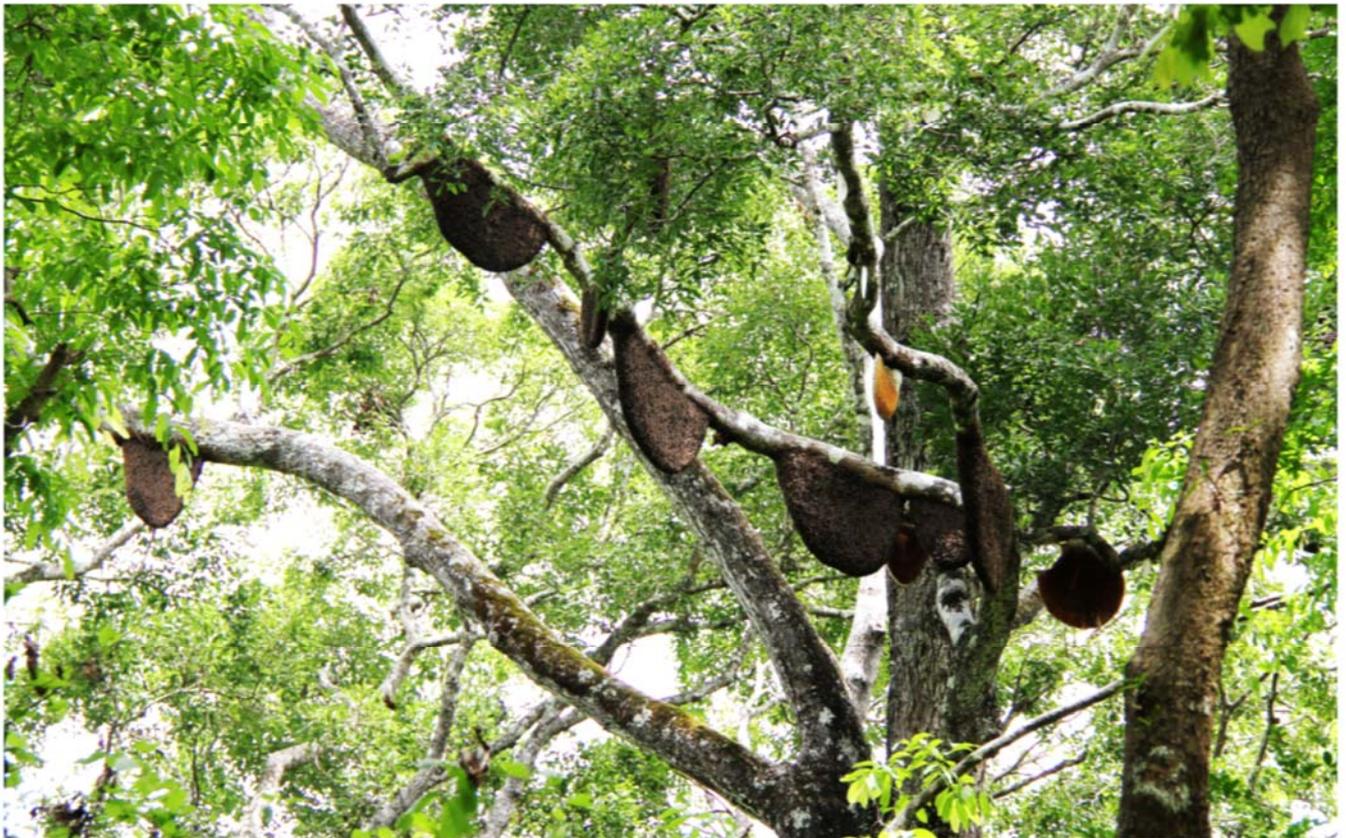
With training and a forest management plan in place, people in the village are now aware of how to protect their local forest resources. The community also organized a team to patrol the local forest to prevent and report wildlife poaching and logging.

Mr. Yal Touy knows how important the forests are; they support his entire nine-person family. *“I want to see more forests protected,”* said Mr. Touy. *“Without forests, our village and my family will not survive; forests provide us with everything”*.

“I am thankful for the assistance the USAID Supporting Forests and Biodiversity Project offered us. People in my village are now committed to protect our forests. We patrol our community forest every day now and we hope to protect this forest for generations to come,” Mr. Touy added.



Yal Touy, age 40, collects wild vegetables from the forest of Dei Ey Community Conservation Forest to feed his family of nine persons.



New Understanding and Skills Provided by USAID Assists Villager to Act and Recover from a Livelihood Threatening Event

Mr. Tek Pin, age 40, of Dang Kambit village had many livelihood options. He harvested tree resin from his 300 resin trees, farmed a small plot of land from which he met most of his food needs, poached wild animals, including the muntjac, a deer-like animal, and wild pigs from nearby forests, illegally felled forest trees to sell to traders, and, finally, held a job as security officer for a local private firm.

But two near-simultaneous life-changing events occurred that changed Mr. Tek's life beginning in 2013. The changes started when a private firm was given an economic land concession (ELC) on land adjacent to his and after he participated in USAID awareness-raising events.

Almost simultaneous to the ELC impacts, in 2013 and 2014, Mr. Tek participated a series of awareness-raising and skill-building events organized by the USAID Supporting Forests and Biodiversity Project team. These events improved the understanding of forest

communities about the importance of natural resource management and how poaching and felling trees had serious negative consequences. The USAID Project also assisted the community with land demarcation.

As a result of Mr. Tek's participation in the USAID-funded events, he decided to stop poaching animals for food and illegally felling trees for cash. He had just quit his job as a security officer and had decided to focus on resin tapping and farming, when the ELC concession started activities. The ELC immediately cut down and sold his 300 resin trees without consulting or compensating Mr. Tek. Then the ELC encroached on his land, reducing his rice farm by five hectares.

In a matter of days, cash from resin and food from farming harvests were gone. The livelihood of his family was in jeopardy. *"I was scared and didn't know of what to do. I didn't know what to say or how to deal with the powerful ELC,"* said Mr. Tek.

The USAID Project team, managed by Winrock International, consulted with Mr. Tek and advised him on a strategy to take a collective approach to solving his land dispute. Based on this advice, Mr. Tek met with local authorities and other community members, prepared a logical case to establish his land ownership, and then met with company representatives to advocate for his interests. With the assistance of local authorities and his unwavering commitment, the company agreed to give all of Mr. Tek's land back.

"I am thrilled because I can continue farming my land to grow crops to feed my family. Without USAID Project assistance, my land would have been lost and I would be much poorer," said Mr. Tek.



Mr. Tek Pin led the effort to reclaim land from a private firm that had begun working in community-managed forest land.



Photos of Prey Lang © Jeremy Holden / Conservation International



Community Members Learn to Preserve Their Forests by Stopping Illegal Logging and Land Encroachment

“The loggers are scared of us because we’ve caught them many times and seized their chainsaws. Our community has advocated for many years to keep our forests safe from loss to illegal loggers and land grabbers,” said Sok Kha, Chief of Kbal Kla Community Forestry.

The Kbal Kha Community Forestry is located in Sandan district of Kampong Thom, covers 2,548 hectares of highly productive forest. With easy access to paved roads, this forest is under continuous threat by illegal loggers. The concerted efforts of its community forest members have preserved the remaining forest, so that it continues to provide livelihoods for the community’s 105 households.

Since 2013, the USAID Supporting Forests and Biodiversity Project has facilitated several meetings and trainings with the Kbal Kla Community Forestry. Course topics

included how to protect the forest and wildlife, how to arrange forest patrols, how to report forest crimes, and how to improve resin tapping, etc.

As part of the community forest legalization process, community members have been introduced to and learned alongside local and provincial Forestry Administration officers, Commune Councilors, and representatives from the district governor’s office. The USAID Project facilitated trainings on how to present important issues, challenges and concerns, and proposed solutions to government representatives and how to advocate to protect the forests and livelihoods.

Relationships with authorities encourage community members to record and report forest crimes and improve the sense of community ownership. Government authorities have demonstrated their commitment to the legalization process and forest protection by arresting and prosecuting forest criminals.

“No matter if crimes happen during the day or night time, our community members work together to stop illegal logging. If we don’t protect our forest, it will be gone, along with our livelihoods. We patrol the forest every day,” said Mr Kha.

“Our forests provide us woods for fuel, poles for buildings, resin for cash income, and medicines for our health. It is well worth protecting for future generations. Our community has appreciated the assistance from the USAID Supporting Forests and Biodiversity Project team. Thanks to the Project, we have the skills to protecting our remaining forests,” added Mr. Kha.



Sok Kha, age 32, Chief of Kbal Kla Community Forestry, encouraged his friends and neighbors to advocate for their interests and organize against illegal loggers. His good work has saved much of the Kbal Kha community forest.



The Sweet Taste of Success - Better Conservation and Better Incomes Result from Improved Honey Collecting Techniques

Kul Sra is a 28 year old ethnic Bunong who works hard for the money he earns collecting wild forest honey in Sre Ey Village, Mondulkiri province. For three months each year – March through May – Mr. Sra spends every day climbing trees in the forest collecting wild honey. Honey sales are one of the few sources of cash income by which he buys food and pays for his other family needs. In a good season, he can earn about \$300.

"Using the honey harvesting techniques I learned as a child from my relatives, I would remove the entire bee hive, including the brood combs and queens," Mr. Sra said. This technique usually resulted in damaging or killing the bee colony. When combined with widespread illegal logging and conversion of forests to agricultural production, this honey harvesting method was causing a dramatic decrease in honey production and greatly reduced incomes from honey sales.

The USAID Supporting Forests and Biodiversity Project, implemented by Winrock International, provided training on new honey collecting techniques to Mr. Sra and 12 other honey collectors in Sre Ey village through its partner, World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF). The training taught the collectors how to extract honey from the honey comb without killing the bees. The new techniques encouraged twice per season honey production as well as reproduction of bee colonies. The training also taught collectors how to improve the quality of honey by practicing more-hygienic handling methods.

Since receiving the training, Mr. Sra and the other collectors in the village have applied the sustainable honey collecting techniques. The results have meant improved protection for the forest honey bees, increased honey production and honey quality, and increased incomes for every collector.

"Without the training and guidance provided by USAID, I would have continued to use the traditional methods; killing our wild bees and putting our future incomes at risk. If we would have continued using our traditional honey-collecting practices, our children would never been able to benefit from this vital source of income," Sra said.

"Thanks to the USAID Supporting Forests and Biodiversity Project's training and sharing, this new technique enables all of us to collect honey from each honey comb twice per season. The improved handling methods have meant better incomes for our families. We continue to promote these techniques to other honey collectors in our province because they protect our wild bees," Mr. Sra added.



Mr. Kul Sra heads to the community forest with his honey collecting gear near his village in Mondulkiri province.



Establishing regular patrols and displaying signs marking forest boundaries reduces deforestation and poaching

The valuable, dense forests surrounding the village of Kampong Sraloa in Preah Vihear province used to be rich with majestic luxury trees and non-timber forest products, and teeming with wildlife, including elephant, tigers, guar, kouprey and samba.

In the past, these forest resources provided the local residents with a variety of foods and sufficient income. In recent years, illegal loggers have stolen most of the luxury wood and illegal hunters have poached much of the wildlife. No one has seen elephants, tigers or kouprey for a decade.

Realizing that their forests and wildlife were disappearing at an alarming rate, the Preah Lean Forest Community of Kampong Sraloa initiated several actions to conserve their remaining 3,130 hectares located in Cambodia's north.

“We lost a lot of forest to criminal loggers and poachers before we realized how significant the losses were. These crimes



Thong An builds and sells traditional Cambodian furniture and other useful products from locally source wild rattan.

were committed by people outside our community. Most of the luxury wood is gone now, as is much of the wildlife, as well. In the past few years, community members would observe evidence of these crimes almost daily.” said Mr. Thong An, Chief of Preah Lean Community Forestry.

To conserve the remaining forests before the community livelihoods were further damaged, community members, with assistance from the USAID Supporting Forests and Biodiversity Project, implemented by Winrock International, engaged project partner Ponlok Khmer to work with the community to stop illegal activities.

USAID provided funding to Ponlok Khmer to provide a series of capacity building trainings and assist the community to create 10 patrol teams of 22 members each. The teams patrolled the forest at least two days each week. The community also designed and installed more than 200 territory-marking signboards to clearly identify community forest boundaries. The signage and patrols have been effective at reducing land encroachment and forest clearance.

“After we started patrols and installed signboards, illegal logging and poaching dropped almost completely. We find it easier now to protect and patrol the forest,” said Mr. An.

“We thank USAID for their assistance. Our community members are continuing to collect non-timber forest products, and several report seeing more wildlife in our forest, including the wild Banteng. These are good indicators for us. This is what we want to see.”



How USAID Assistance Slowed Deforestation and Improved Livelihoods in a Remote Cambodian Community

Mrs. Sok Net has been collecting resin from forest of Prey Snoul village, a remote village in Preah Vihear province, for 30 years. Resin sales provide her with the cash she needs to feed her family of six. She taps 70 resin trees, which allow her to earn about \$120 per month. Resin tapping is her only source of cash income, which is used to send her children to school.

However, the forest around Prey Snoul village is increasingly under threat from persons outside the community who enter to illegally log timber. So far, these loggers have cut down more than 1,000 of the village's resin trees; 30 of them had belonged to Mrs. Sok Net for the past three decades. Illegal logging was visibly destroying the forest's ecosystem and putting at risk the livelihoods of 32 village households.

“Prior to establishing our community forest, the outsiders entered our forests to cut the large luxury wood and the resin trees, which

are easy to sell inside and outside Cambodia. We didn't know how to stop them. We were too scared to try to stop the loggers ourselves, but we also knew that if we didn't act quickly, the loggers would take away our livelihoods and the forest would be lost for future generations,” said Mrs. Sok Net.

To help them protect their remaining forests, while improving the economic value they could extract from the remaining resin trees and other non-timber forest products, the USAID Supporting Forests and Biodiversity Project, implemented by Winrock International, through sub-grantee non-government organization Ponlok Khmer, assisted the Prey Snoul villagers.

With USAID assistance, in January 2014, the Prey Snoul Community Forest was established. The Project then introduced forest patrols, tree inventories, and improved resin tapping techniques, which allowed year-round resin collection. Two hundred boundary signboards were installed to demarcate the community forestry boundaries and discourage trespassers.

“We sincerely appreciate the assistance of USAID and the good technical advice we received from Ponlok Khmer. We are no longer scared to protect our forests and we have greatly improved our resin production.” said Sok Net. *“Our community is now much more cohesive. We work well together to regularly patrol our forest. Without the forest, we would have no resin and no income, and our livelihoods would be in jeopardy.”*



Ms. Sok Net and her husband collect resin from one of the 70 trees remaining in her family and her only source of cash income.



Too Late to Save the Honey Bees, but In Time to Save Most of the Community Forest's Other Resources

Kampong Chrey is a poor village located in Preah Vihear province. The families of this village farm rice and collect renewable forest resources to support their livelihoods. Two of the essential forest products are wild mushrooms and honey, which are relied on both as food sources and for selling to obtain cash incomes.

In the past, almost all of the 78 village households traveled to the forests to collect wild mushrooms and honey from their 3,682 hectare community forest concession. Sales of wild mushrooms could earn them nearly \$500 dollars per season.

“There were lots of honey bees and a large variety of mushrooms in our forest. By sustainably harvesting the wild honey and mushrooms, we could feed our families and exchange some excess for food and cash,” said Mr. Horm Lyheang.

However, poor forest management, combined with illegal logging and forest land clearance, have placed the livelihoods of the villagers at risk. Many luxury trees have been stolen, and nearly a hundred hectares of forest lands have been cleared. As a result, the wild bees have disappeared from the community's forest.

In response to a request for assistance, the USAID Supporting Forests and Biodiversity Project, implemented by Winrock International, funded a local NGO named Ponlok Khmer, to assist the communities to reverse the destructive trends. The NGO trained village members how to sustainably manage forest products and showed them how to conduct regular forest patrols. Villagers learned to cooperate with authorities to report and eliminate forest crimes. As a result, the community has stopped illegal logging and seized many chainsaws. The USAID project also assisted them to install 200 signboards to demarcate forest boundaries.

“We responded too late to save our honey bees; they are gone, and with them a vital source of income. But our remaining forests are now being well-protected,” said Mr. Lyheang.

“We're now aware of the negative consequences of deforestation. We will not let it happen again. We will no longer give illegal loggers the chance to destroy our forests. We appreciate the valuable assistance given by the USAID Supporting Forests and Biodiversity Project. We commit to fight against deforestation to save our remaining forests for future generations,” he added.



Mr. Horm Lyheang collects wild mushrooms from the forests located near his village. Mushrooms are an important food source.



Great Progress in Wildlife Tourism Thanks to the Good Work of Indigenous Community

Andong Kraloeng is in Seima Protection Forest, located in the remote hilly province of Mondulkiri in the northeast of Cambodia. The community is Bunong, an indigenous group whose ancestral home is the extensive forest found in this area. Villagers' main source of income is from farming hill-rice, cassava, vegetables, and non-timber forest products collection from the forest. Many of the families are poor and through desperation are drawn into illegal activities, including logging of luxury timber and wildlife poaching.

The USAID Supporting Forests and Biodiversity team held several meetings with the village elders and leaders, to discuss the potential of tourism for the area. The community decided that they wanted tourism in their village and forest as it would provide income to the village and provide an alternative employment for villagers instead of them being caught up in environmentally damaging and destructive illegal activities, therefore helping to protect the forest and wildlife for their next generation. And through these discussions

realized that their forest holds many attractive features that visitors' would pay to see, including sacred waterfalls, ancient forest, and diverse wildlife, including several different species of primate.

Over the past few months with support from USAID Project, implemented by Winrock International, the community has been making progress in establishing their community-led ecotourism project. Several of the community have volunteered and started training for their roles in the project. These roles include cooks, tourist guides, and new gibbon researchers. Many of these villagers are from the poor parts of the community, and are pleased to be given the opportunity to get a steady income and be part of a project that helps to protect their forest and benefit the wider community.

This project, supported through the good work of the Wildlife Conservation Society, is extremely important as through tourism the community is incentivized to protect the forest and wildlife that visitors come to see. Seima Protection Forest is home to the largest populations in the world of the endangered Yellow-cheeked crested gibbon and Black-shanked douc, and the dense evergreen forest of Andong Kraloeng is home to a huge majority of this population, making it an extremely important place to save these species from extinction.

“Thanks to USAID Supporting Forests and Biodiversity Project for assisting our community to develop tourism in a manner that protects the forest and wildlife for our children,” said Mr. Plev Bill, Chief of the Indigenous Community Commission of Andong Kraloeng.



Gibbon researchers work with local tourist guides to understand how to use GPS units.

Photo © WCS

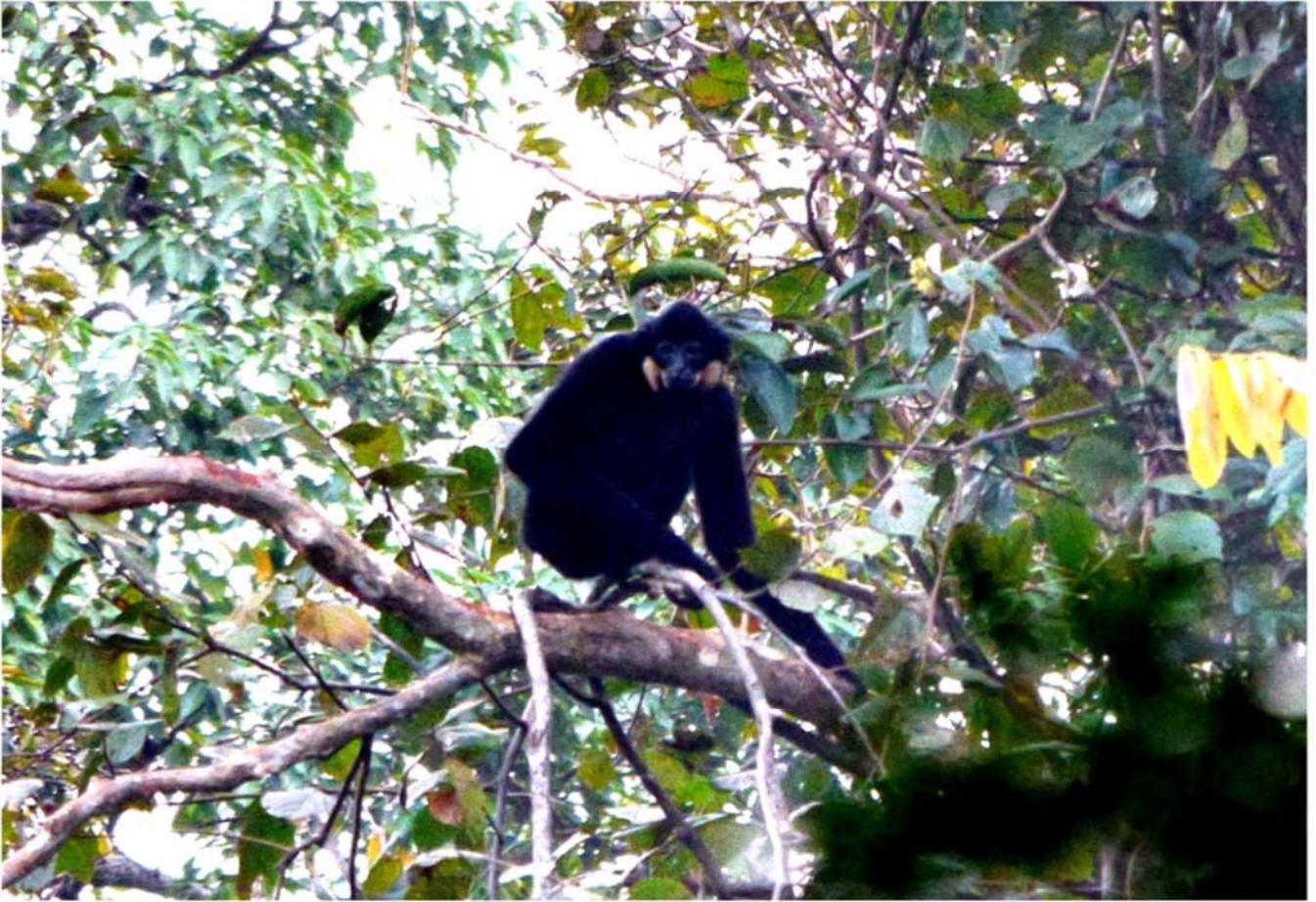


Photo © Julia Dolhem / WCS



Facilitating Dialogue Resolves a Contentious Forest Boundary Issue and Results in Land Being Returned to Community

Contentious boundary issues represent a real and continuous threat to the viability of forest communities. With hundreds of active economic land concessions across Cambodia, encroachment on community forestry land is problematic. This story tells how the USAID Supporting Forests and Biodiversity (SFB) Project, implemented by Winrock International, facilitated dialogue between the stakeholders to resolve their dispute.

The Prey Kbal Ou Thnong Community Forestry covers three villages in Dang Kambet commune in Sandan district of Kampong Thom province. In June 2014, the CRCK Company, owner of an economic land concession was clearing its forests to prepare for a rubber plantation, when they also cleared 10 hectares of the community forestry land.

The USAID SFB Project received a request from the Community Forestry members to facilitate a dialogue that could resolve this contentious issue. In June, the SFB Dialogue Team met with provincial and local government authorities, CRCK management,

and Community Forestry members individually to discuss their viewpoints. On July 4, the Project facilitated a full-day meeting where all stakeholders presented their opinions and views on how to resolve the overlapping boundary issue.

Mr. Un Both, Sandan District Governor, and Mr. Sao Vanny, Chief of Sandan Forestry Administration Division chaired the meeting. Mr. Nguyen Van Binh, Director of CRCK, and representatives of the Community Forest presented legal documents and views. After the meeting, the stakeholders conducted a field visit to verify the overlapping area.

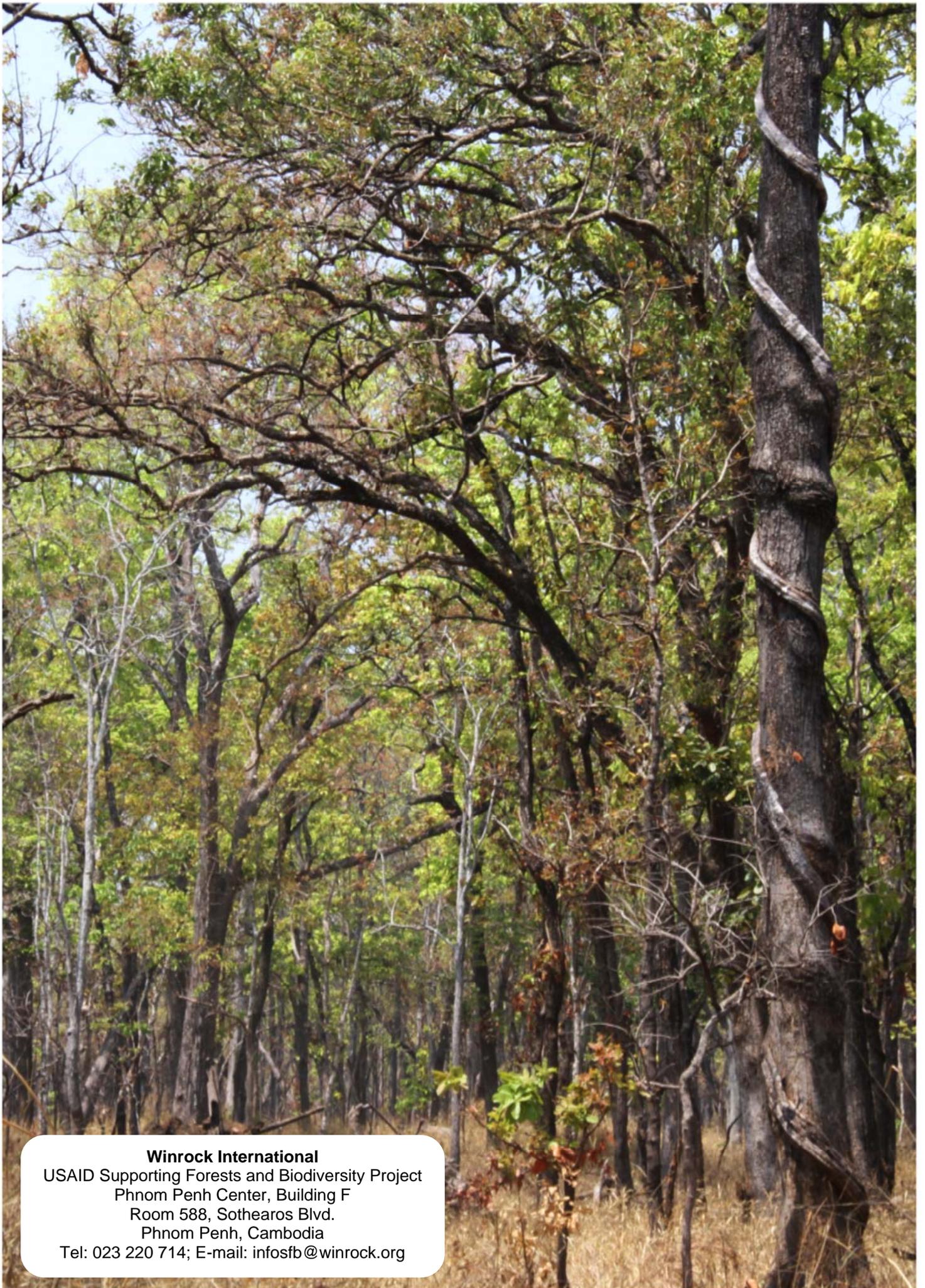
After checking boundary locations using GPS devices, both parties agreed on the boundary points originally approved by MAFF. As a result, CRCK agreed to return to the Community Forest about 10 hectares of overlapping land area that was already cleared. The Chief of the Community Forest has requested that CRCK replant trees and rehabilitate the land they cleared. That decision is still being discussed.

Mr. In Nam, Deputy Chief of Prey Kbal Ou Thnong Community Forestry, said, “*People in the villages, especially Community Forestry members, were delighted to hear that the issue had been mitigated. We were very happy because our problems were equitably resolved. We are grateful to the USAID Supporting Forests and Biodiversity Project for facilitating the discussions and getting some of our land returned.*”

To further assist the Community Forestry members to improve their forest management, the USAID Project has facilitated a series of awareness and management trainings and also assisted to install concrete boundary poles to mark the boundary around the Community Forestry.



Mr. Sao Vanny, Chief of Sandan Forestry Administration Division, points to an overlapping area between Prey Kbal Ou Thnong Community Forestry and CRCK, owner of an economic land concession.



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