



Official Launch of Zero-Snaring in Cambodia’s Protected Areas Campaign – Phase-2

Joint Press Release:

Government and partners call for increased public participation in ending snaring crisis and wildlife trafficking as the Zero-Snaring in Cambodia’s Protected Areas campaign phase-2 is set for kick-off

Phnom Penh, 3rd March, 2023 – With the today’s official launching, the Ministry of Environment and organization-partners are lengthening the campaign to Cambodia’s southwestern region. The aim of the campaign remains focused on increasing public understanding of the consequences of snaring, such as health risks and nature loss, as well as advocating the need for conserving wildlife and natural resources for sustainable development.

The Ministry of Environment will lead the Zero-Snaring Campaign phase-2 and its provincial rallies covering Pursat, Kampong Speu, Koh Kong, Siem Reap and Battambang, Pailin provinces, in partnerships with WWF, USAID, Wildlife Alliance, Wild Earth Allies, Conservation International, Angkor Centre for Conservation of Biodiversity, Maddox Jolie-Pitt Foundation, Wildlife Conservation Society, NatureLife Cambodia, Fauna and Flora International, and RECOFTC Cambodia.

In his opening remarks at the today’s official launch, **His Excellency Neth Pheaktra**, Secretary of State to Ministry of Environment and Chairman of the Zero-Snaring campaign, said that the Zero-Snaring campaign phase-1 was wrapped-up with a proud success.

According to **His Excellency Neth Pheaktra**, the results achieved during the phase-1 can be highlighted as follows: 1) the general public both national and international is increasingly aware of the consequences that snares caused to wildlife and nature, and was fully informed of the actions taken by the Royal Government, Ministry of Environment, all relevant sub-national government entities, and organization-partners, to address the snaring crisis, particularly through strengthening law enforcement and foresting economic development initiative for the local communities. 2) About 5 million people from all different corners of the Cambodian society have given their strong support, both directly through their participation in the campaign activities and indirectly by following and supporting the campaign’s activities on available social media channels. 3) With the increased understanding of the importance and value of nature, people have developed a greater appreciation for the environment and wildlife and become more involved in caring for and protecting nature and wild animals. 4) Impact was made in changing the behavior of wild meat lovers, with more and more people saying no to wild meat, while 52 restaurants in six targeted provinces pledged not to sell all kinds of wildlife food to the public. 5) Cambodia is recognized as the leading country in the ASEAN region for the implementation of the Zero-Snaring campaign. Conservation partners from the region highly appreciate the Kingdom for its efforts and commitment for biodiversity conservation and the protection of natural resources.

His Excellency Neth Pheaktra also stressed that more public participation and the mobilization of more concerted efforts can help achieve our goal to stop snaring and wildlife trafficking. “This commitment has increasingly become a norm for all public and private stakeholders, as well as the local communities who will adopt the commitment in order to protect their own wellbeing, making nature as their ally to build a balanced and sustainable society for the current and future generations,” he said.

Eradicating all types of snare in Cambodia’s protected area is an ambitious goal. This is the reason why the public participation is critical not only to stop snaring but to also be engaged in solutions tackling the root causes of snaring crisis and the illegal trade in wildlife.

“I sincerely appreciate and recognize the joint effort under the leadership of the Ministry of Environment and its partners in solving the snaring problems. Even if, according to the report by WWF representative, only 20% of the total estimated snares in protected areas is removed; but the actual number of removed snare is huge, hundred thousand,” said **His Excellency Khut Chandara**, Member of Parliament and Member of the Commission on Planning, Investment, Agriculture, Rural Development, Environment and Water Resource.

“According to Forestry Law, wildlife is considered as a state property. Therefore, conserving and protecting wildlife is not solely the Ministry of Environment or any other organization’s duty. It’s everyone’s duty and we cannot deny the great participation of our people living adjacent to protected areas.”

“The 1st stage of Zero-Snaring Campaign has remarkably been successfully implemented in 6 provinces, namely, Kratie, Steung Treng, Ratanakiri, Mondulakiri, Preah Vihear, and Kompong Thom. And the 2nd stage of Zero-Snaring Campaign will be executed in another 6 provinces, namely, Kompong Speu, Pursat, Koh Kong, Pailin, Battambang and Siem Reap. I strongly believe that the action of stopping the snaring in the protected areas located in provinces of the 1st stage of Zero-Snaring Campaign still keep going on simultaneously as in the provinces of the 2nd stage of the Campaign.”

Meanwhile, the law enforcement efforts on the ground are continuously carried out. Between 2021-2022 with nearly 46,775 patrol days and nights, the Ministry of Environment and partners removed a total of 96,356 snares, 6,860 chainsaws and 1,416 homemade guns from protected areas across Cambodia. However, the total number of snares remains far greater.

“Snares are not easy to detect. They remain hidden throughout the forests until the next animal-victims become trapped and killed. There’s a need to adopt a more innovative tool to assist our protected area patrol strategy in order to better detect all sorts of snare and monitor other wildlife crime activities in an effective way. More resources are also required to equip our rangers as well as enhancing their skills to support protected areas law enforcement and effectively patrolling inside and outside of wildlife sanctuaries,” said **His Excellency Kim Nong**, Deputy General Director for the General Department of Administration for Nature Conservation and Protection (GDANCP), Ministry of Environment.

Snaring and poaching are a major contributor to the extinction of the iconic Kouprey and Tiger in Cambodia. Snares are also silently driving the decline of some of the globally important wildlife such as Banteng and Indochinese Leopard. Ungulate species such as Guar, Sambar deer, Muntjac also continued to be threatened.

A study series on ungulate populations in the eastern plains by the Ministry of Environment and WWF showed that between 2010 to 2022 Banteng, Muntjac and Wild Pig populations have declined by 89%, 65% and 15% respectively.

“The record of wildlife declines in forest landscapes sends a warning sign about imbalanced natural ecosystems of the areas, eventually causing impact on people’s livelihoods. But it is not too late to turn this situation around to make a difference, by adopting collective actions now to urgently address the root causes of the wildlife decline and to put nature on the path to recovery,” said **Mr. Seng Teak**, WWF-Cambodia Country Director.

Exactly one year ago today, a coalition of government ministries and partners embarked on a multi-stakeholder public advocacy recognizing the urgency to tackle the danger Cambodia’s wildlife faces due to a snaring and poaching crisis, fueled by the consumption and illegal trade in wildlife.

Under the leadership of the Ministry of Environment, and with the participation from WWF, USAID, WCS, CI, NatureLife Cambodia, FFI, and WEA, the effort of phase-1 engaged over three million people both directly and online, including the local communities adjacent to protected areas, increasing their understanding of the consequences of snaring, trading, and consuming wildlife, targeting behavioral change.

As a result, more than 35,000 snares were removed in 2022 across Cambodia’s protected areas, suggesting a decrease of nearly 44% compared to 61,611 snares removed in 2021. In parallel, 52 restaurants in six provinces located northeastern Cambodia proclaimed their commitment to not serving wild meat in their restaurant menus.

However, studies by the Ministry of Environment and partners showed protected areas’ law enforcement only removed 20% of the total estimated numbers of snares in the forests.

Through the implementation of the Zero-Snaring campaign, all stakeholders and partners jointly committed to working together on joint solutions to the crisis in order to achieve the campaign’s goal.

“Wildlife Alliance is happy to be part of Phase-2 of the Zero Snaring campaign because collectively, we can take stronger action on snares. Snares are landmines for wild animals that indiscriminately kill, whether they are common, rare or even near extinct species. Snares can be easily made from cheap materials but can cause irreversible devastation to biodiversity,” said **Dr. Suwanna Gaunlett**, Founder and Chief Executive Officer of Wildlife Alliance.

“Ending the harmful practice of snaring will bring long-term benefits to Cambodia’s wildlife, habitats, and people. Together, we can protect Cambodia’s unique biodiversity and improve community livelihoods and public health, promoting positive change,” said **Mr. Tui Sereivathana**, Wild Earth Allies Program Director.

“The clock is ticking. However, we believe in the power of working together. Among others, collective actions aiming to strengthen law enforcement efforts and implementing environmental education and awareness are equally important to end the snaring crisis,” said **Ms. Christel Griffioen**, Angkor Center for Conservation of Biodiversity (ACCB) Country Director.

“Natural habitats free from snare are important not just to protect the remaining wildlife population, but also to create a safe habitat for reproductive purposes. All living beings are interdependent. Without wildlife, the ecosystem will be disrupted,” said **Mr. Kung Munichan**, Maddox Jolie-Pitt (MJP) Country Director.

Snares are not just a threat to wildlife – they are a threat to public health too. From handling to the consumption of wildlife, snare use and wildlife trade activities increase human contacts with species carrying zoonotic diseases putting public health at risks.

Dr. Yi Sengdoeurn, Deputy Director of Communicable Disease Control Department of the Ministry of Health, expressed his concern that people are not yet aware of the risks they expose themselves to when they come in contact with wild animals. “Adopting One Health measures is important for preventing and responding to future outbreaks of zoonotic disease in animals and people, under a collaboration of ministries of health, environment and agriculture, forestry and fisheries” he said. “We must work together to improve food safety, preventing the purchase, sale, transport and consumption of wildlife species of high risk for zoonotic disease transmission,” he added.

“Conserving biodiversity and wildlife could help reduce health risks to humans and prevent future pandemics. CI Cambodia is working in partnership with the Ministry of Environment, aiming to improve technical capacity for tackling national and transboundary wildlife trafficking”, said **Dr. Jackson Frechette**, Senior Technical Director for Conservation International-Cambodia (CI). “Through this campaign, I hope that the public recognizes their role in helping stopping this destructive practice by saying 'no' to eating wildlife.”

“We believe the Zero-Snaring campaign will encourage more people to participate in conserving Cambodia’s wildlife and biodiversity, and protecting the kingdom’s natural resources. The campaign effort will also demonstrate that poachers, snare-setters, wild meat sellers/traders, and wild meat consumers are becoming the strangers in the society and that their action are not appreciated by the surrounding communities, who promote the value of wildlife protection and nature conservation,” said **His Excellency Neth Pheaktra**.

The Ministry of Environment and partners also work together to provide alternative livelihoods, including agricultural, agroforestry and ecotourism initiatives, to the local people living adjacent to protected areas who are traditionally dependent on collecting non-timber forest products, traditional hunting for meat and trade. The effort will also seek to transform people’s preference and attitude in wildlife consumption in order to protect public health from future pandemic risks.

Specific action plans are prioritized on initiatives that support the economic development of local communities and livelihoods improvements as incentives to continue encouraging the communities to participate in conserving wildlife and protecting natural resources for ecotourism development.

For more information, please contact:

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