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Newsletter

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Protecting fish and forests for the communities and future generation





Ms. Hong Rany is on the boat patrol. © WWF-Cambodia/ Sinapha

A young lady gives her life to save Mekong giants

In the community of Ksach Leav, a woman has become a guardian of the giants that swim in the nearby Mekong River. Ms. Hong Rany, a 26 year-old community fishery leader of Ksach Leav community, mobilized people in her community to regularly do the boat patrol in the Mekong River around her community to protect fish deep pools in which giant species such as giant catfish, giant barb, giant stingray, and rare fish spawners are living and breeding for generations. By protecting these giants, Ms. Hong Rany is ensuring the sustainability of fish stocks that are dependent on the Mekong's fragile food web and abundant biodiversity.

Illegal fishing activities usually happen around and in fish deep pools as there are many big fish there and illegal fishermen usually see that as a golden opportunity to catch large amount of fish for sales. Fishing in the deep pools, however, is illegal and leads to extinction of rare fish species while damaging sustainable fish stock. That is why the role of the community fisheries (CFi) is critical for contributing to the protection of the endangered and are species in the Mekong River.

Rany and her team watch over two of the most critical conservation areas in the Mekong River—Kandor Mouy Roy and Treng fish deep pools located in Ksach Leav commune, Ou Kreang commune, Sambo district, Kratie province. The team do the boat patrol four times per month, following a



Ms. Hong Rany is on the boat patrol with her team. © WWF-Cambodia/ Sinapha

patrolling plan, looking for illegal fishing activities around the community and the two fish conservation areas. Since illegal activities can sometimes be very unpredictable, the patrollers can be called to the river at a moment notice, responding to all illegal activities day and night.

“Usually, there are four to six people going with me on the boat patrol. When we encountered illegal fishermen, we withdrew their fishing equipment, issuing warning letter to them, and asked them to go fishing outside protected areas”, said Rany.

“Before I go on the boat patrol, I prepare life jacket and I prepare my mind. When going on patrol, don't think we cannot do it, don't think it is not appropriate to go with men because we're women, we're weak. For me, I think I can do all the work that men can. When on the patrol, there are many unpredictable risks, but I have to give utmost trust to myself rather than totally depending on my male companies”, she continued.

Besides the patrolling work, Rany regularly attends monthly commune meeting and plans for the next patrolling schedule. At home, Rany helps her parents with household chores, reads books, and spends silent time watching the views of the Mekong's natural beauty.

Uncle Hann Bros, a 53 year-old villager living in Ksach Leav village, said as villagers we have to join hands in protecting the fish deep pools together or the fish deep pools will become the non-fish deep pools. He added “now the most recent and

“*Before I go on the boat patrol, I prepare life jacket and I prepare my mind.*”

dangerous illegal fishing we are facing is electroshocking which drives fish to vanish, so we must get together and stop the illegal fishing at our fish deep pools so that we can keep the fish forever. If we lose the fish deep pools, it is like we lose our life.”



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An indigenous woman fights for the future generation's fish

“I will kill you if I see you next time” is a common threat that Mrs. Ancheus Sam An has been receiving from illegal fishermen. Mrs. Sam An, a 63 year-old indigenous woman whose house is located nearby the Mekong River in Punchea village, Ou Kreang commune, Sambo district, Kratie province, used to go around

borrowing boats and engines (propellers) from her villagers and collected meager money from her patrolling team to buy gasoline for the boats in order to make it to the river for patrolling before her community received support from WWF’s PaFF programme.

She had been just a normal



Mrs. Ancheus Sam An is removing illegal fishing net in the Mekong River. © WWF-Cambodia/ Sinapha

villager, never paying thorough attention about protecting natural resources or doing community work. Then, WWF-Cambodia supported a programme about the development of fishery community at her village, she was inspired to stand for an election for the fishery community committee. She was elected to be a deputy chief of the committee in 2014. She was the only old mom who would walk to groups of drunken men in the village to persuade them to leave their alcohol bottles for boat

patrol. The following election in 2016 got her as the chief and since then she has been leading a dozen of men into a war against illegal fishing activities on the Mekong River, which is home to many endangered species and which millions of people depend on for their livelihoods.

As a female community leader, Mrs. Sam An gathers her community members to join regular patrol as far as 30 km on the Mekong River around Punchea community

day and night, fighting illegal fishing. The river area around Punchea community has been bombarded with excessive illegal fishing activities despite rigorous crack-downs jointly launched by communities, river guards, and authorities.

“The toughest situation was when

the seriousness of the crime they committed. Fearful of being caught, some gangs responded with harsh attack on the patrolling team. To the patrol team, incidents such as sinking boats, getting drown, being punched, receiving spine-chilling threats have become so similar to a big rock hidden under the river surface or a giant swirl pool in the river in front

“*We, indigenous people in this community, mainly depend on fish. If we don't protect our fish, what else can we hope for?*”

the offenders were not afraid of us and fought back. They crushed our boats and we had an intense brawl with the offenders, using hands and legs to fight against them. Luckily, our boats were not sunk and after a brief fight, the offenders escaped”, said Mrs. Sam An. When caught, some illegal fishermen were educated, given warning letter, and told not to illegally fish again in the protected areas, while some were brought to court for punishment based on

of the boat. Mrs. Sam An also recalled when her other community members were attacked at night, their boat crushed and sank, and they had to swim through hundred meters of fast-flowing river in complete darkness, clinging onto water-tree twigs and occasional rocks as tight as they could, trying to reach the river shore for survival. When asked what would be the most horrible situation when encountering the gangs on the river, Mrs. Sam An told us that the gangs



Mrs. Sam An is riding on a patrol boat with her team to guard the river. © WWF-Cambodia/ Sinapha

with the guns would be the most dangerous. Community members do not have any weapon besides hands and legs, so if the gangs have guns, they can shoot and kill the patrollers. Despite the life-risking situations she usually encountered, Mrs. Sam An was never afraid to go out on the regular boat patrol.

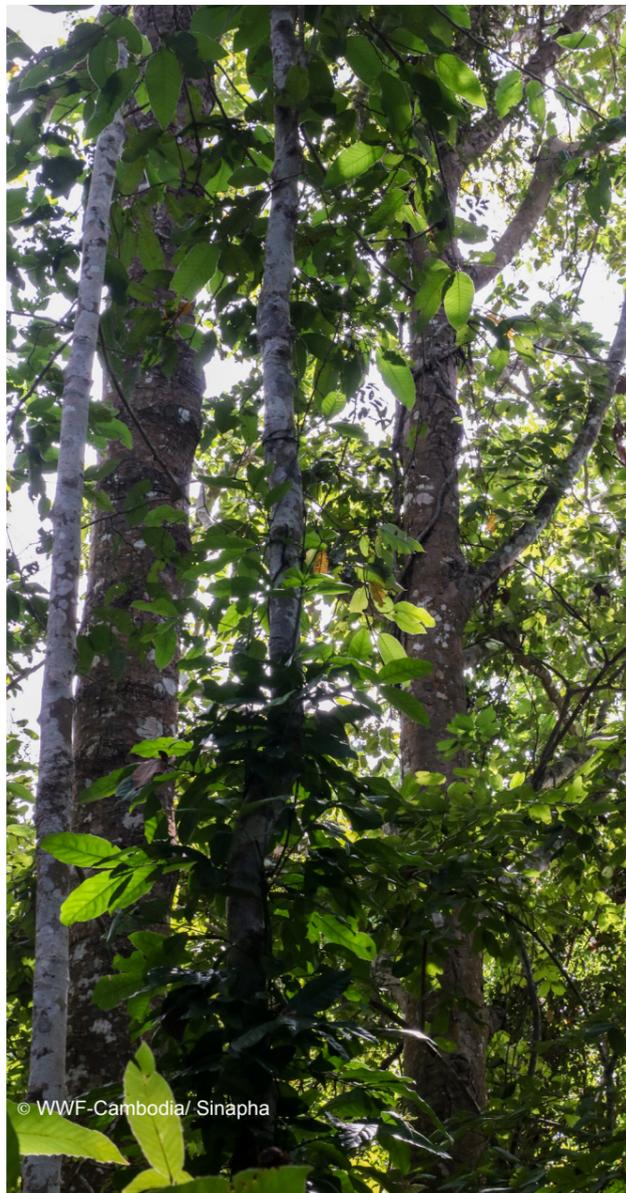
Mrs. Sam An has four children, three sons and one daughter, all of whom got married and are living away from her. Her children are all supportive of her work though they are somewhat deeply worried about her safety each time she is on the boat patrol on the Mekong River. “My children called me and told me: mom, please be careful, the offenders can be very cruel and they can crush your boat and injure you”, Mrs. Sam An kindly spoke of her children.

At home, Mrs. Sam An conducts her daily living like other fellow villagers commonly do such as raising pigs, farming rice, herding buffaloes, and cooking food for everyday meals. Many communities along the Mekong River have been depending on sustainable fish stock and farming for their livelihoods for many

generations. However, fish stock has been impacted by illegally excessive fishing using hazardous fishing gears such as electrocution and dynamite devices. In addition, proposed electro-power dams on the Mekong River also affects the fish stock, farming, and biodiversity downstream.

“We, indigenous people in this community, mainly depend on fish. If we don't protect our fish, what else can we hope for? We all know that our fish resource is vanishing, so we have to protect it for our children and grandchildren so that they will still have enough fish to eat”, said Mrs. Sam An.

Kbal Bey Community Forestry; Community Forestry Credit Scheme eases the forest conservation activities!



Kbal Bey community forestry has a total member of 62 families with around 310 people including 160 women, located in Tippo commune, Santuk district, Kampong Thom province. This community forestry has its long story before it has what is called a “community forestry credit scheme (CF credit)” which has made a success and a hopeful future of sustainable forests.

Prior to 1970, Kbal Bey was covered with a rich diversity of forests and wildlife. From 1975 to 2000, the area was encroached for agricultural land and was heavily logged. Then, in 2001 a total area of 761 ha of Kbal Bey forest was designated as a community forestry under the management of a community forestry management committee. The total area of the community forestry was then classified into four types—reforestation area, conservation area, firewood harvesting areas, and pole harvesting area. In 2014, the community committee and its members in Kbal Bey village planted 27,420 trees on nearly 11 ha of the total area.

On 27th March 2009, Kbal Bey community forestry management committee signed a “community forestry agreement” with Kampong Thom Forestry Administration Cantonment, granting full rights to the community to manage Kbal Bey forest resources. After being

granted with the forest management rights, the committee developed a community forestry management plan under coordination of the Forestry Administration and RECOFTC, which is one of the four implementing partner NGOs of the PaFF programme. After having the management plan, the committee and its members still found it hard to effectively implement the plan as they lacked capacity and financial support, and that was when the credit scheme took its importance.

The credit scheme was initially established in 2012 with the support from the Department of Forest and Community Forestry (DFC) of the Forestry Administration (FA) in Kampong Thom province. DFC provided seed fund of \$500 to the community committee to run the credit scheme, but the scheme did not work well until mid-2014 RECOFTC helped establish credit committee, developed credit regulations and gave support with the implementation of the community forestry management plan by providing capacity building to the credit group and the management committee as well as adding \$1,000 to the seed fund. The credit committee started to operate and comply with new regulation on 27 February 2015.

Through consultation with stakeholders



Mr. Mon and a credit scheme member were doing presentation to visitors at Kbal Bey community forestry. © WWF-Cambodia/ Sinapha



Mr. Mon was doing presentation to visitors at Kbal Bey community forestry. © WWF-Cambodia/ Sinapha

including community forestry networks, NGO partners, Provincial Community Forestry Programme Coordination Committee (PCFPCC) and National Community Forestry Programme Coordination Committee (NCFPCC), the credit scheme was given a new name called Community Forestry (CF) credit support CF management plan implementation. Since then, this CF credit has been functioning well and strictly complying with agreed CF regulation by allocated income from credit interest to support CF management 30% (estimated to be around \$45 per month), increase credit capital 30%, provide incentive to the CF credit committee 30%, and support administrative costs 10%. So far there has not been any conflict arising from the practice of this CF credit scheme as all members respect its criteria and regulations.

By January 2018 the total capital increased to 16,894,000 riels (\$4,223)

and total credit members have increased to 61 households, allowing for the increase of maximum loan that each member could borrow to 1,000,000 riels (\$250). The increase in the capital was not from the credit interest alone but also from charity fund such as a \$250 donation from TWG-FR delegation visiting the community forest in 2016 and a \$1,000 donation from the Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries when he conducted an official visit to the community forest in 2017.

30% monthly contribution from the CF credit does help a lot with this very basic expense that the community patrollers need to pay for food and gasoline while guarding the forests for the whole community and perhaps the whole world as these forests can reduce the impact of climate change because some Community Forestry members who patrol in the forest are still struggle to have three proper meals per day and they usually pool their little money to buy food and share together the food with team while patrolling in the forest. Sometimes, they cannot even afford to buy the gasoline for their motorbikes when riding to protect the

“*I can borrow money from the CF credit when I need to buy fishing nets. It is easier and saves more time than going to borrow money from the microfinance institutions.*”

forests if it was not the little money contributed by community members.

The CF credit not only contributes to sustainable forest management and helps fight climate change but also improves the livelihoods of Kbal Bey Villagers as they can use the loan to buy necessary equipment for fishing and farming or starting small business to make a living. The villagers

are very happy with this CF credit scheme. This CF credit scheme can be a good sustainable financial model for helping forest-dependent communities to play a more effective role in the protection of natural resources.

Mr. Khoun Mon, 53 year-old, the community leader of Prey Kbal Bey community forestry said “Without community forestry, no one will be interested to visit and help our communities as our village is in the remote area and the road condition is poor. Moreover, without the CF credit scheme, we cannot manage our community forestry. Thus, the

CFs and CF credit scheme are supporting each other, which ultimately will contribute to the improvement of the livelihood of CF members”.

Mrs. Kea Ra, Prey Kbal Bey community forestry member, said “I can borrow money from the CF credit when I need to buy fishing nets. It is easier and saves more time than going to borrow money from the microfinance institutions. Borrowing money from the CF credit is able to contribute to the management of our community forest as 30% of the interest has allocated to support CF management activities.”



Kbal Bey community forestry members were posing for a group photo at Kbal Bey community forestry. © WWF-Cambodia/ Sinapha

Eleven days after signing CF agreement, Phnom Ses community ordained 51 trees

“Two years ago I saw hundreds of lesser adjutants perching on a big leafless tree. The tree was so big but all I could see were the birds all over that big tree. But then the tree was cut down, and I rarely see large group of lesser adjutants here now”, uncle Hea Sam Oeurn recalled from his memory while he was at the tree ordination ceremony at Phnom Ses community forest.

Standing with eagerness for describing his feeling about Phnom Ses’s forest and wildlife devastating situation, uncle Hea Sam Oeurn, 45 year-old deputy chief of Phnom Ses forest community, told of the old good times when Phnom Ses forest was abundant with many endangered and rare wildlife and tree species, while emphasizing urgent need to protect the natural resources at Phnom Ses, witnessing current situation of excessive illegal logging almost every day.

“Here, it used to have many kinds of wild animals. But now we lost the elephant, tiger, and guar. Now we only have wild boar, red muntjac, lesser oriental chevrotain, and some bird species such as white-shouldered ibis,

lesser adjutant, green peafowl, and jungle chicken. For wood species, we lost Beng, Thnong, Neang Noun, and Kranhoung, remaining mostly only the raisin trees,. There are only around 100 raisin trees left, and few Srolao, Chheuteal, Trach, and Chambak. Two years ago we also had banteng, sambar, and many bears, but banteng is all gone now and we only have small number of bears because of relentless habitat destruction caused by people”, said uncle Sam Oeurn, while standing near a Srolao tree freshly ordained by Buddhist monks.

Uncle Sam Oeurn with his community members, officials from Kratie Provincial Department of Environment, Provincial Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, Forestry Administration, and local authorities has been working so hard to protect the forest and wildlife at Phnom Ses; however, illegal logging, land encroachment, and



Venerable Hoy Meng Teang was wrapping the sacred Buddhist rope around a big tree at Phnom Ses forest. © WWF-Cambodia/ Sinapha

land conversion are still unabated. “Illegal logging is very anarchic here, though we try our best to protect. We have relevant technical and local authorities, and our community team coming together to crack down on illegal activities here, but we still cannot stop the illegal activities. There are people coming almost every day to cut down the trees, encroach the land, and there are even people coming to grab the land here for sale”, said uncle Sam Oeurn.

Phnom Ses community forest was created in early February 2007. In the community there are 169 families with 387 household members (126 women). This community forest is under the management of a committee consisting of 11 committee members (three women).

Abundant with luxury wood species and being a critical habitat for many endangered species, Phnom Ses community forest covers an area

of 3,081 ha, located in Ou Kreang commune, Sambo district, Kratie province. It is around 110 km away from and northeastern of Kratie town. Surrounded by thousand hectares of rubber plantation, Phnom Ses community forest looks so lost, solitary, and tragic.

Phnom Ses community forest was approved by the Prakas of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) and signed “Community Forest Agreement” with Kratie Forestry Administration on 30th November 2018, allowing the community to have full legal rights to sustainably managing the forests and natural resources within the area.

Eleven days after signing the agreement, on 11th December 2018, WWF-Cambodia, in collaboration with Kratie Forestry Administration (FA) and Provincial Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (PDAFF), Provincial Department of Environment (PDoE), Provincial Department of Cult and Religion (PDCR), local authorities, and community members organized “tree ordination ceremony” which is a traditionally ritual ceremony of the indigenous people who hold belief in Buddhism



Buddhist monks were ordaining a big tree at Phnom Ses community forestry. © WWF-Cambodia/ Sinapha

and deities in Phnom Ses community forest. Twenty five Buddhist monks from six pagodas (four in Kratie and two in Phnom Penh) ordained 51 trees as a symbolic ceremony to protect forests in 51 community forests already established in Kratie province.

The ordination of the tree ceremony was organized to raise awareness about the contribution to the protection of the forests by letting the community people and general citizens know that forests are protected by law, god, and deities. The ceremony also reflected close collaboration among governmental institutions, local authorities, community people, NGOs, and conservation partners in the protection of forests and sustainable use of natural resources.

“I feel very happy to have this tree ordination ceremony because many stakeholders come to this forest and they can see the real situation at the forest by themselves”, Uncle Sam Oeurn expressed his excitement about the event. Among the most enthusiasts about the ceremony was Mr. San Samia, the 65 year-old commune councillor of Ou Kreang commune. “Tree ordination ceremony is important because it reinforces the citizen’s belief and helps prevent people from encroaching the land and cutting the remaining trees”, said the councillor.

In the ceremony, indigenous people in the community performed ritual offerings and prayed to deities for the everlasting protection of the forests, in addition to Buddhist religious walking parade and chanting to enchant Buddhist robes used for wrapping around the 51 trees to be ordained as the symbolic ceremony to protect the forests in the 51 community forests in Kratie province. This tree ordination ceremony was celebrated for the first time in Kratie, and it received strong support from the community people as they believed that such ritual ceremony would help protect the forests, wild animals, and natural resources remaining in Phnom Ses community forest.



Uncle Sam Oeurn, monks and members stood in front of an ordained tree.



protect the trees because people think once the trees are ordained, they can't be cut. We keep the trees to protect animals' habitats and our children and grandchildren."

The tree ordination ceremony was part of WWF-Cambodia's Scale-Up project funded by the Belgium government (DGD-Belgium), supporting eight community forests in Kratie province.

Venerable Hoy Meng Teang, a Buddhist monk from Phnom Penh, who led in ordaining the 51 trees explained that tree ordination ceremony is about the connection between Buddhism and nature as Buddha was born under the trees, got enlightened under the tree, and died under the tree. This is a belief that has been well rooted in Khmer citizens and such ceremony is deeply revered.

"We, indigenous people, believe that trees that are ordained are sacred. Anyone who dares to cut the ordained trees will be in peril." Mrs. Seng Sokheng, 43 years old woman from Ou Preah village avowed. Likewise, Ms. Chhiv Sothea, 29 year-old lady from the same village, who has grown up to feel so connected Phnom Ses forest, was so hopeful about the future of the forest which she used to see many wild animals and trees being in natural harmony. She softly conveyed her hope "I believe this ceremony can



Phnom Ses community forestry members were standing around an ordained tree. © WWF-Cambodia/ Sinapha

In addition, WWF-Cambodia has been supporting forestry and fishery communities in the Mekong Flooded Forest landscape (MFF) through Partnership Programme to Support Forestry and Fishery communities (PaFF) funded by Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) since 2014, reinforcing

the capacity of the communities as well as increasing their livelihoods by sustainably managing natural resources.

On 30th November 2018, eight new community forests (including Phnom Ses community forest) in Kratie province were approved by Prakas from the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) and signed "community forest agreement" with Kratie Forestry Administration in order to get full

“*Here, it used to have many kinds of wild animals. But now we lost the elephant, tiger, and guar.*”

legal rights to sustainably managing natural resources in their community forests.

In total, until now 38 of the 51 community forests in Kratie province were approved by the Prakas from MAFF and signed the "community forest agreement" with Kratie Forestry Administration.



Buddhist monks were ready to begin Buddhist ceremony for the ordination of the tree at Phnom Ses. © WWF-Cambodia/ Sinapha

Eight Community Forestry jointly signed community forestry agreement in Kratie

Through the coordination and support of WWF Cambodia and RECOFTC under PaFF programme, 30th November 2018 was the day that eight more community forestry management committees signed “community forestry agreement”, which marked one of the biggest milestones for forest-dependent communities in Kratie province, one of the provinces in the Mekong Flooded Forest landscape (MFF), which is rich in natural resources.

Besides the 92 Irrawaddy dolphins swimming along 190 km stretch of the Mekong River from Kratie town to the Lao border in Stung Treng province, many valuable bird, wildlife, and wood species around the landscape are under threats and need urgent protection.

The signing ceremony program started with Buddhist blessing ritual which was a traditional way for inauguration or opening of most Cambodian events, following by a report about forestry situation in Kratie, before chiefs of the eight community forest committees and the chief of the Forestry Administration cantonment signed the “community forestry agreement”, providing full legal rights to the communities in protecting and using forest resources sustainably as well as increasing their confidence in managing their community forests.

Signing this agreement is also a part of registering forest



A representative of Kratie Forestry Administration Cantonment signed the “Community Forestry Agreement” with a representative of a community forestry. © WWF-Cambodia/ Sinapha



Mr. Ya Smak was giving a speech at the signing ceremony. © WWF-Cambodia/ Sinapha

“*I am very happy to have this agreement because we have tried so hard to get this agreement since 2011 and only until this 2018 that we managed to get this agreement.*”

resource as permanent state property as well as providing the government’s support to local communities in the form of community forestry.

From that day onwards, the eight community forests—Phnom Ses, Ou Da, Phnom Krung, Baear, Anhchanh, Sre Thom, Sre Tuk, and Prasath Teuk Khmao community forestry—could implement their own community forestry management

plan by closely working with relevant stakeholders such as the Forestry Administration, Provincial Department of Environment, Provincial Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, and partner NGOs.

“I am very happy to have this agreement because we have tried so hard to get this agreement since 2011 and only until this 2018 that we managed to get this agreement. Thus, as the chief of my community forestry management committee, I will try my best to sustainably manage the forest in Changkrong commune, and won't disappoint the government for trusting in us, granting the forest management rights to us”, said Mr. Chit Vuthy, Chief of Ou Da community forestry management committee.

“Signing this agreement is important because this agreement is approved by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries. Hence, it proves that we are a real and functional community, and I'm very happy that the government officially signed this agreement with us. After having this agreement, we will develop a community forestry management plan for our Ou Da community forestry and we will have regular monthly meeting to discuss how to effectively manage the community forestry”, added Mr. Vuthy.

“I am so happy that the ministry granted us this agreement. Since 2000, our community has never been able to be well-established and we never thought that we could have such agreement because we didn't have any support from NGOs at that time, but after many NGO partners have supported us, we now have this agreement. I am so thankful that the government and authorities at all level pay attention on our community forest”, said Mr. Ya Smak, chief of Prasath Teuk

Khmao community forestry management committee, in Tonsoang Thlak village, Kampong Cham commune, Sambor district, Kratie province.

“Prasath Teuk Khmao community forest has wildlife such as guar of around three to four individuals based on the tracks we have seen, around 20 bantengs, monkeys, wild boars, red muntjac, vultures, and lesser oriental chevrotain”, described Mr. Ya Smak.

“As one of PaFF programme implementing partners, RECOFTC's roles with Kratie Forestry Administration are—1) Supporting the community forestry in terms of helping them to follow the guideline of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries; 2) We help those communities to have full legal rights; and 3) We support them with creating community forestry management plans. Today's wonderful event



Women were participating in the Community Forestry Agreement event. © WWF-Cambodia/ Sinapha

is about the achievement of giving full legal rights to the eight community forestry”, explained Mr. Thach Metrey, PaFF Programme Coordinator of RECOFTC based in Kratie province.

Among the roughly 500 participants who witnessed the remarkable event on 30th November 2018 were H.E Heur Siyem, Deputy Provincial Governor of Kratie, Mr. Sia Ra, Deputy Director of Kratie's Forestry Administration, Mr. Seng Teak, Country Director of WWF-Cambodia, police officers, military officers, Forestry Administration officials, and representatives from relevant Kratie's provincial departments, authorities at provincial level, district-level, and commune-level, community people, students, and representatives from partner NGOs.



Kratie Forestry Administration Cantonment officials gave trees to community forestry representatives. © WWF-Cambodia/ Sinapha

Currently, there are 51 community forests in Kratie province, and as of the 30th November 2018, 36 community forestry have been approved by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries (MAFF) and have the “community forestry agreement” with Kratie Forestry Administration Cantonment.



CFI's and CF's representatives were on the forum stage speaking to deputy governors and other participants at the forum in Preah Vihear province. © WWF-Cambodia/ Sinapha

Mekong Flooded Forest Landscape Forum: communities speak, governors listen

Filling up the big meeting room of the Preah Vihear Provincial Hall were a mix of people from five provinces—Kratie, Stung Treng, Kampong Thom, Preah Vihear, and Rattanakiri. Communities, indigenous groups, government officials, authorities, and partner NGOs were listening to some gentlemen sitting on a stage in up at the front, telling stories seemed dear to them. Sooner as it began, they just realized that they were at an ever unprecedented “landscape forum”.

In the early morning of 26th December 2018, the forum was loud with open ideas and questions about how to sustainably manage and protect the natural resources. The forum saw five community representatives speaking and making appeals while the government officials, authorities, and NGO partners sat and listened with amazement.

Rarely does it go that way when a workshop, seminar, or forum was joint by high-ranking officials and authorities. It is usually the other way around: the officials talk, the authorities talk, the communities listen.

But that was the “landscape forum”, which meant the landscape approach was well imbedded into the core of the forum, and thus all participants coming from different spheres of work had to closely work together and solve challenges for the common goal—protection of Cambodia’s natural resources. The five community representatives shared their best practices, experiences, and challenges about sustainable natural resource management at their respective community and appealed for effective solutions from all relevant stakeholders, especially the intervention from governmental institutions such



Deputy governors were listening to community representatives at the forum. © WWF-Cambodia/ Sinapha

as Provincial Department of Environment, Provincial Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, police, military, and authorities at provincial, district, and commune level.

“For today’s forum, I think it’s beneficial for forestry work. I am very pleased to join this forum and I had an opportunity to share ideas and experiences as well as make suggestions to the authorities in regards to effective forest management. It’s very important that we have the chance to give recommendations to provincial authorities and relevant private sectors. Having the chance to speak our ideas in this forum is a good example for all stakeholders working in forestry sector”, said Mr. Khoun Mon, a 53 year-old community leader of Kbal Bey community forest committee in Kbal Bey village, Tipo commune, Santuk district, Kampong Thom province, who was also one of the five representatives speaking on stage.

“In the forum, I shared about our key principles in order to work successfully in forestry work. First, we must love forest. Second, we must be honest. Third, we must be patient,” added Mr. Mon. In his community, his people planted trees in a designated reforestation area, forest gape area, around school boundaries, around a community’s main stream, and around the perimeter of Kbal Bey village. They also have tree nursery farm to produce tree seedlings to be distributed to nearby schools.”

Besides sharing his experiences, Mr. Mon also learnt useful best practices from other community representatives that he could apply in his community. One of such best practices was creating an eco-tourism site in Kbal Bey community forest for its potential to generate more income for his community members. Eco-tourism idea was also one of the most interesting topics among the participants because their communities had plenty of natural resources to attract both local and international tourists. A good example of eco-tourism was about Borey Ou Svay eco-tourism community in Stung Treng province.

After all the outspoken representatives voiced their challenges, best practices, suggestions, and experiences to the nearly 200 participants, especially the deputy governors, government officials, and authorities, it came to an even hotter floor when the five deputy governors took turn on the stage and exposed to open questions from the participants. The questions thrown at the five deputy governors were all about heated issues happening in the communities related to forestry and fishery crimes, and the questioners



Deputy governors were waiting for questions and requests from the forum participants. © WWF-Cambodia/ Sinapha

seemed to demand a truly responsible, accountable, and transparent answers.

In response to the questions, the deputy governors admittedly accepted the issues happening around forestry and fishery crimes while clarifying the unresolved doubts presumably held by the communities for years, by explaining legal procedures and practices for tackling forestry and fishery crimes and by calling for responsible provincial departments and officials in charge of the issues to further provide precise explanation and necessary actions against the crimes so as to clear all skepticism and thus help gain trust and confidence from the citizens.

After the question session, the forum was about to end at 5:30 PM. It was perhaps not the very happy ending but it was clearly a peaceful ending of the forum as it seemed the year-long doubts, mistrust, misunderstanding, wrong expectations, and confusions were finally dissolved. Everyone seemed to go back with a newly refreshed feeling—the feeling of hope, trust, confidence, and closer collaboration.

“*Having the chance to speak our ideas in this forum is a good example for all stakeholders working in forestry sector.*”

Save wild honey, increase money

Income from collecting wild honey contributes to between an average of 30% and 50% of villagers' total annual income. Even though wild honey collection is another main source of income for community, the current threats are unsustainable honey harvesting (killing bee by using fire or sometimes using mosquito killing spray), the loss of wild bee habitat, the use of chemical pesticide and insecticide in agricultural farming contributed to the decrease of wild bee.

Prasat Teuk Khmao Wild Honey Collection Group consisting of 22 members and located in Tonsorng Thlak village in Kampong Cham commune, Sambo district, Kratie province, was established in February 2018 under the facilitation of NTFP-EP through the PaFF programme. The group received a number of training from the NTFP-EP such as sustainable honey harvesting protocol, bookkeeping, sale



A participant testing a tool used for processing honey at a training about how to process honey. © NTFP-EP

and marketing as well as using technology for quality testing. More importantly the training on sustainable honey harvesting has resulted in the change of the community's knowledge and behavior for sustainable honey collection.

Mr. Nan Neat, wild honey collector, said "Before I never knew that we could collect honey comb two or three times in a hive or the impact of killing bee during harvesting. I just cut the entire comb at one time and used fire to kill bee before cutting comb but after I attended the training on sustainable honey harvesting protocol with NTFP-EP, I started to apply what I learned and it has been really effective. Now I could harvest two to three times of one bee hive."



A big honey hive. © NTFP-EP



Mr. Sovanna was holding a picture of wild honey at his home. © NTFP-EP

In 2018, the group collected 1,057 liters of wild honey from the members and earned a total net profit of US\$4,620. With that amount, each member could earn around US\$480 per year and the group was able to contribute to Prasat Teuk Khmao community forestry around US\$243 per year (5% of the group net profit).

"I am very excited and appreciate the additional income contributed to community livelihood improvement through sustainable honey harvesting.", said Mr. Ek Sovanna, Chief of Prasat Teuk Khmao Wildhoney Collection Group.

Wild honey collection group contributes not only direct income to members but also contributes to conservation through honey collectors' extra roles as forest patrollers

during their honey hunting and collecting as well as sharing 5% of their income to community forestry for implementing community forestry management plan. Besides, wild honey collection group maintains the stability of honey price in a way that the pricing is no longer set by the traders.

"On behalf of group members, I would like to express sincere thanks to commune council and forestry administration cantonment for a good cooperation, especially much thanks to NTFP-EP for providing technical and financial support to our group", continued Mr. Ek Sovanna.

“
I never knew that we could collect honey comb two or three times in a hive or the impact of killing bee during harvesting.”

An almost forgotten tree that gives jobs to oldies



Traing seedlings. © NTFP-EP

Talipot palm (*Corypha umbraculifera* or known as “Traing” in Khmer language) grows most flourishingly in Chhaeb district, Preah Vihea province, north-western Cambodia. This plant has provided great benefits to the Cambodia’s rural communities, mainly for those who rely on non-timber forest products (NTFPs) for home construction materials, fence, and kitchen utensils.

Recently, talipot palm in Chaeb District of Preah Vihea province has faced serious threats of extinction due to overharvesting for exporting Vietnam with the lowest price of around 500 riel per kg (equivalent to 0.125USD/kg). Such massive resource extraction has brought big concerns to those forest dependent communities over the resource losses.

To promote the sustainable talipot palm harvesting and to improve the livelihoods of the forestry dependent communities (in Sangkae, Chaeb Lech community forestry, and Chaeb Keut community protected areas), NTFP-EP conducted participatory

Community Livelihood Assessment and Product Scanning (CLAPS) on this plant species in late 2017. With the findings of the abundant talipot resources and potential market for talipot palm-made chopsticks in the local market and through the discussion with those participants, they showed their interests in exploring good options for promoting talipot-based products



A woman was slicing Traing branches to make Traing chopsticks at her home in Chaeb district in Preah Vihear province.

© WWF-Cambodia/ Sina

to the market as well as for future talipot harvesting for livelihood improvement and sustainable resource management.

With such interests of the community on the product development and resource governance, an exposure visit was organized on 28 September, 2017 to visit local talipot palm

handmade chopstick processing in Mon village, Anlong Chrey commune, Thalaborivath district, Stung Treng province.

“Currently, communities harvest talipot palm and sell directly without processing at 500 Riel/Kg price point; however, if it is processed into chopsticks (1kg of talipot palm could produce 10 pairs of chopsticks), it can be sold at 5,000 Riels (ten times more profitable when compared to the selling price of the raw material). I have just realized that through the exposure visit to Mon village, Stung Treng province in September 2017, which was supported by PaFF/NTFP-EP”, said Mr. Hiem Kimhong, community forestry management committee member (CFMC) in Sangkae village, Sangkae Muoy commune, Chhaeb district, Preah Vihea province.

“This is very interesting. I would suggest to NTFP-EP to assist our community to form talipot palm producer group to process talipot palm to be finished product to sell in a sustainable way of resource harvesting”, he continued.



A bunch of Traing chopsticks. © WWF-Cambodia/ Sina

“Realizing that talipot palm is so important for chopstick markets, I will find any opportunity to report to existing platform such as provincial community forestry program coordination (PCFPCC) or other meetings to ask for intervention on the current overharvesting of talipot palm to neighboring country. In contrast, I will lobby those authorities to support our future talipot palm processing group in various means,” said Mrs. Bo Sokhom, community forestry management committee member in Chhaeb Lech village, Chhaeb Muoy commune, Chhaeb district, Preah Vihea province

“*If it is processed into chopstick (1kg of talipot palm could produce 10 pairs of chopsticks), it can be sold at 5,000 riels (ten times more profitable when compared to selling price in the raw form).*”

Young woman who represents Stung Treng community fishery network

Den Volda is a name of a young active woman living in Koh Phnao village, Osvay commune, Thalaborivath district, Stung Treng province. She is 27 year-old member of Koh Phnao community fishery management committees.

In 2016 under PaFF programme phase 1, CEPA collaborated with Stung Treng fishery administration cantonment to formulate a Community Fishery Network (CFiN) as a representative of all community fishery groups in Stung Treng province. The structure of CFiN was separated in to two levels, district and provincial levels. The candidates were selected from CFi management committees, volunteering, high commitment, good relation with other community fishery and CFi members.

Volda was one of the candidates standing for the election of CFiN at district level at Thalaborivath district. During the election of CFiN at district level she won overall trust and was voted to be a chair woman who would represent community fishery (CFi) at Thalaborivath district. Possessing trong commitment and high quality of work, she was voted again to be a chair woman of Stung Treng provincial CFi network in September 2016. After the establishment of CFiN and under the management of the young woman, many things have changed. Concerns, challenges, bad and good practices, and information related the network are now shared to each CFi through group messenger, phone call and their quarterly meetings. Taking up the role of provincial CFiN, she also



Mrs. Volda was presenting the work at her community to visitors in Stung Treng province. © WWF-Cambodia/ Sinapha

represented CFis in Stung Treng to attend other meetings organized by partner NGOs and governments at provincial and national level.

“Even I am a young woman but I am highly appreciated for my work in fishery sector. I would like to profoundly thank all CFis committees who trusted and voted for me”, said Volda.

In the generation before hers, women were not given enough value for their work because people thought women could not do anything beside cooking, taking care of children, and they were not promoted to do what they wanted.

“At the beginning, I was really concerned about my role and responsibilities as I had never been a leader before. However, I started to gain more and more confidence as I began to involve deeply in the management of the CFiN. Finally, I felt very confident to take this role”, continued Mrs. Volda.

“*Even I am a young woman but I am highly appreciated for my work in fishery sector. I would like to profoundly thank all CFis committees who trusted and voted for me.*”

Meet the commune councillor who changed how the protection and conservation of natural resources has been done

Under the canopies of several big raisin trees among other deciduous trees in a forest covering an area of 154 ha in Chong Da village, Tbong Krapeur commune, Santuk district, Kampong Thom province, a clear, loud, and well-phrased voice was mesmerizing a score of people including delegates from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), WWF-Cambodia, RECOFTC, and community members. It was a voice from a 60 year-old man trying to recount a successful journey of the protection and conservation of natural resources in the 154 ha Tbong Damrey community forestry, which was established since 2001 and got a forest agreement from the Forestry Administration until March 2009.

Mr. Kean Sengkey, the 60 year-old commune councilor of Tbong Krapeur commune, Santuk district, Kampong Thom province, was speaking about his commune council's role in supporting Tbong Damrey community forestry committee so that the committee could get enough financial support and be able to function well in the protection of the community forest. Personally and on behalf of his commune council, Mr. Sengkey has been involving with

the community forestry committee and its 548 members (284 women) from 281 families in Chong Da village, by funding the committee using both commune budget and his personal money, and by improving the community forestry (CF) credit scheme.

Mr. Sengkey has been the one outspoken commune councilor who ensured that the conservation of Tbong Damrey community forestry included in his commune development plan and a certain amount of budget allocated for the protection and conservation of Tbong Damrey community forest. Proving his willingness to support the community has been one of his approaches when working with the community. It is so common that community people in rural areas across Cambodia are so distanced from their own local authorities such as commune councilors and district governors. In some cases,



A group of visitors were listening to Mr. Sengkey at the Tbong Damrey community forestry. © WWF-Cambodia/ Sinapha

they also fear and do not really trust the authorities. To rebuild trust and confidence in the mind of the community people, Mr. Sengkey emphasized the responsibility, accountability, and transparency of the local authority.

Mr. Sengkey has been the one commune councilor who speaks for the community members and whom the community members are happy to have as their representative. He was invited to speak about the success of Tbong Damrey community forestry in front of governors and government officials in a landscape forum organized in Preah Vihear in late December 2018.

The forum was facilitated by WWF-Cambodia and other PaFF partners to provide a platform for community members to meet with governors, governmental officials, authorities, and representatives from private sectors to discuss challenges and

solutions in regards to sustainable natural resource management as well as exchanging experiences and best practices by community forestry and fishery members from Kratie, Stung Treng, Preah Vihear, Kampong Thom, and Rattanakiri provinces.

Speaking at the forum, Mr. Sengkey pointed three main steps that his commune council used to support Tbong Damrey community forestry. First, it was about the establishment of and the support to community forestry. Second, it was about getting sustainable fund to manage and protect the forest. Third, it was about looking after natural resources together. "All authorities, not only commune authorities, but all authorities, must think that all citizens are our citizens and we have the responsibilities to protect them, so we must work together to

“*All authorities should join in the discussion and share ideas rather than giving directives.*”



Mr. Sengkey was speaking at a landscape forum in Preah Vihear province. © WWF-Cambodia/ Sina

protect them and we must have the will, the conscience, and not wanting to exploit from our citizens”, said Mr. Sengkey.

“All authorities should join in the discussion and share ideas rather than giving directives. All authorities must have plans! develop the plans! the development plan, the commune investment plan, and allocate a line of commune budget for the protection and conservation of our forestry and fisheries. All authorities, all stakeholders, all sectors have to work together, and not just pointing fingers at each other. The citizens, the communities, and the authorities, we can succeed only when we join hand together”, he added.



Mr. Sengkey was speaking to visitors at Tbong Damrey forest. © WWF-Cambodia/ Sinapha



About PaFF

Partnership for Forestry and Fisheries programme (PaFF), a programme run by a consortium of four organizations including WWF-Cambodia, RECOFTC, CEPA, and NTFP-EP and is supported by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and the partner contributions since 2014, has been giving support to community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) groups in terms of empowering the communities to involve in policy dialogue, improve income generation through community-based enterprises (CBEs) and other alternative livelihood options, and ensure the rights to access and manage their natural resources.

WWF-Cambodia in numbers

62,863 ha

total area of protected areas in Sambo Wildlife Sanctuary and Praek Prasab Wildlife Sanctuary in the Mekong Flooded Forest landscape

27,450 km²

Total area of Mekong Flooded Forest landscape (MFF)

165,600+

number of followers on WWF-Cambodia Facebook page

92

The Irrawaddy dolphin in the Mekong Flooded Forest landscape increased from 80 in 2015 to 92 in 2017, the first increase in 20 years in the history of dolphin survey.

100%
RECYCLED



Why we are here

To stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature.

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