



For Immediate Release

Leading the Change Project Empowers Communities to Safeguard Cambodia's Natural Resources

Phnom Penh, 14 August – The Leading the Change (LtC) project, implemented by WWF-Cambodia and partners, hosted its end-of-project reflection workshop today, celebrating significant achievements in biodiversity conservation, inclusive governance and community empowerment across Cambodia's key landscapes.

Since its launch, the LtC project has adopted strategic partnerships, a rights-based approach and inclusive conservation practices to empower communities. This approach has ensured equitable access to resources and decision-making, promoted social justice and supported sustainable biodiversity protection, delivering benefits for both people and nature.

“The Leading the Change project has shown that when local communities, authorities and civil society organizations work together, we can create lasting change for both people and wildlife,” said Chap Vibol, WWF-Cambodia Country Director. “By empowering Indigenous peoples, women and youth to claim their rights and manage their natural resources, we are building a stronger foundation for Cambodia's future.”

Over the years, the project delivered notable results. It strengthened the institutional, technical and advocacy capacities of CSOs and CBOs through training, mentoring and knowledge exchange, enhancing competencies in governance, gender integration and policy advocacy. It promoted inclusive governance by enabling marginalized communities to engage in participatory decision-making and multi-stakeholder platforms at local, sub-national and national levels, while also advancing dialogue on gender equity in natural resource governance.

Biodiversity conservation and sustainable livelihoods were enhanced through support for community-based conservation initiatives and the introduction of sustainable livelihood practices, such as non-timber forest products (NTFPs) like rattan and bamboo production in Kampot, Koh Kong and Monduliri provinces. The project worked closely with forest-dependent communities to co-develop conservation and development solutions. It also influenced policy and advocacy by supporting CSO-led initiatives that shaped and advanced biodiversity and natural resource management policies, while strengthening the role of duty bearers in environmental governance.

The project emphasized sustained learning and adaptation by capturing lessons from LtC Phase 1 (2018–2023) to inform and improve the ongoing Phase 2 (2023–2025). Across both phases, the LtC initiative provided subgrants to six CSOs and 23 CBOs,



enabling communities to sustainably manage over 55,372 hectares of forest and wetland. Communities received leadership, gender, advocacy and sustainable enterprise training, as well as practical tools such as smartphones to support digital engagement and policy advocacy.

The LtC project is set to continue until September 2025, with partners committed to strengthening community leadership, sustaining biodiversity and ensuring that governance remains inclusive and rights-based.

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Notes to Editors

For more information,
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About the Leading the Change (LtC) project

Funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), WWF-Cambodia's Leading the Change Phase 2 is a global civil society programme aimed at supporting thriving biodiversity and ecosystems, so that all people can enjoy a safe and healthy environment. In Cambodia, we have provided subgrants to five organizations that promote civil society rights in biodiversity protection, support livelihoods development, and influence natural resource development policy.