

Q2 2020

Keo Seima REDD+ Project
Impact Report

**EVER
LAND**



**Wildlife
Conservation
Society**

Community engagement is driving effective conservation in Keo Seima Wildlife Sanctuary (KSWS)

Although some field activities were delayed owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, the quarter nonetheless brought impressive results on the ground. The community's engagement in the REDD+ project was at the center of the work: An additional 14 Community Patrol Teams were established, trained and equipped, while communities have begun to adopt Ibis rice as a value-adding source of income. And the wildlife monitoring team completed their field data collection, walking a total of 1,260 km over hilly terrain in hot weather.

However, the project continues to face a growing challenge as widespread joblessness drives migration throughout the country and puts pressure on all of Cambodia's protected areas. This urgent threat is being addressed in cooperation with the indigenous communities living inside KSWS, and the provincial and national government.

Increased number and capacity of community patrol teams protecting forest and wildlife in KSWS

Communities begin to adopt wildlife-friendly IBIS Rice to improve their livelihoods and protect the forest

Completed field data collection for the 2020 wildlife population monitoring





Increased number and capacity of community patrol teams protecting forest and wildlife in KSWs

There are only 55 government law enforcement rangers in KSWs, responsible for patrolling over 292,690 ha of forest. There are roughly 2,500 families living inside and surround KSWs who depend on the forest. This presents a significant opportunity to involve communities in conservation, and increase community support for effective management of KSWs. These communities are the first line of defence in combating illegal activities.

Having recognized this as a significant opportunity in the previous quarter, in Q2 an additional 14 community patrol teams were established, in addition to the 3 previously operational teams. Each team consists of approximately 15 people, who rotate in and out of active patrol cycles. Each patrol team has a leader, who receives training in law enforcement, while all team members receive training in financial management, collection of SMART data (to monitor illegal activities), and use of GPS. The new teams expect to begin regular patrols in the next quarter.

The three existing community patrol teams received additional training and equipment from Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS). They conducted nearly 450 km of patrolling in the forests around their villages, educating more than 50 people who intended to conduct illegal activities, and confiscating 2 chainsaws and 9 motorbikes. These were handed over to the Provincial Department of Environment rangers to keep at their station.



Highlights



Communities begin to adopt wildlife-friendly IBIS Rice to improve their livelihoods and protect the forest

IBIS Rice is a scheme developed by WCS in northern Cambodia, in which farmers receive a price premium of up to 50% for adhering to conservation rules including no forest clearance and no hunting. In other protected areas in Cambodia, this approach has been shown to reduce forest loss and improve community livelihoods.

IBIS Rice staff have begun to recruit farmers in KSWs to the IBIS Rice scheme. On 2 and 4 June 2020 in O Chra and Pu Char villages, the KSWs team met with the village chiefs. As a result, 33 farmers agreed to join the scheme, and will plant IBIS Rice at the end of June or early July, depending on the weather.

On 5–8 June 2020, IBIS Rice staff facilitated meetings attended by 42 people (of whom 19 were women) to distribute 1,422 kg of IBIS Rice seed to farmers in Pu Kong, O Chra, and Pu Char villages. Three other meetings were held on 9, 10, and 11 June 2020 to map rice fields with 25 participants (of whom 10 were women). Fifty-seven plots (16 residential, 18 paddy, and 23 chamkar) were identified for 18 IBIS rice families in Pu Kong village.

The project teams will work to expand participation in the IBIS rice program, and explore development of additional high-value products that can benefit the community and reduce pressure on the forest. This is a critical long term strategy to decouple sustainable community livelihoods from the forest, and is one of the primary ways in which the Keo Seima REDD+ project is working toward a durable conservation model.





Completed field data collection for the 2020 wildlife population monitoring

Data collection for the 2020 wildlife population monitoring is complete. Although data have not yet been properly analysed, it appears that a previously-documented decline in ungulates has continued, while primate populations remain stable and green peafowl are increasing.

A total distance of 1,260 km of line transects was walked by 5 teams over 6 months. Field conditions are tough, with teams camping for five-days at a time. Much of Seima is hilly, and the monitoring is conducted during the dry season and early wet season, which is the hottest time of year. A total of 2,016 individual animals were recorded, consisting of 11 indicator species. Full analysis of data is underway and results will be reported in the coming months.

Qualitatively, the survey found that populations of species living in trees are doing well, while some ground-based species have shown declines. Generally this appears to be an indicator that hunting with guns is being effectively controlled. Snares also remain problematic, however species such as the Green Pea Fowl (a large ground-based pheasant) are increasing. These findings indicate that hunting with dogs remains the biggest threat to wildlife in the forest.



COVID-19 disrupted field work and has led to increases in forest clearance

WCS has put in place restrictions on field activities due to concerns about COVID-19, however Provincial Department of Environment rangers continued patrols as usual.

As had been anticipated in the previous quarter, large numbers of people were forced to return from work abroad, some of whom moved into the area close to KSWS. These factors have led to an increase in forest clearance.

COVID-19 disrupted field activities

Forest clearance close to the REDD+ project area

The process of Indigenous Community Land Titling (ICT) has been delayed



Challenges



COVID-19 disrupted field activities

The COVID-19 outbreak has affected field activities. As a precaution, WCS put restrictions on large gatherings of people, including village meetings, and WCS staff were required to work from home. This disrupted the work of many field-based teams, including those dealing with human-wildlife conflict, community engagement and law enforcement.

During this time, WCS staff focused on data entry, and provided remote support to the Provincial Department of Environment through phone and messaging apps. Project activities conducted by community members who live in KSWs continued to be supported during the period, in order to get additional conservation-related funds into communities.

WCS will employ village focal points in each village to improve the connection between project staff and the villages. The transition to SMART Connect (the project's digital conservation enforcement management system), and future use of linked camera traps, will help increase the effectiveness of law enforcement and human-wildlife conflict reduction activities, and enable greater resilience when project staff cannot get to the field.



Forest clearance close to the REDD+ project area

As repatriated foreign workers continue to return to Cambodia, and joblessness rises throughout the country, an increasing number of migrants are moving into villages on the edge of KSWs and clearing forest land for cassava and cashew plantations.

Community Patrol Teams are frequently the first to detect illegal forest clearance. Community members in several villages have reported these cases to law enforcement rangers, many of which are complicated and need rapid follow-up from government rangers.

All parties recognize that this is a broader issue about how to address the urgent livelihoods needs of hundreds of thousands of people, and not a situation that can be resolved simply through law enforcement.

A task force has been established to address these issues, chaired by an Undersecretary of State from the Ministry of Environment and the Provincial Governor of Mondulkiri, which is empowered to take immediate action on these cases, and which is also attempting to address the problem of finding land in suitable places for people who need it. The project team continues to engage deeply with Governmental partners at the national and provincial level to help address this crisis, which is affecting all protected areas throughout Cambodia.



The process of Indigenous Community Land Titling (ICT) has been delayed

During the zonation work associated with the land titling process, WCS ensured that the provisional ICT areas were zoned appropriately so that ICTs could be granted.

However, during the public display period of the indigenous land titling process there have been requests for individual land titles made by outsiders in the provisional ICT areas. WCS staff have supported the indigenous communities to lodge official complaints regarding these requests for individual land titles.

In recent weeks, the Cambodian Prime Minister announced that people living within protected areas would be eligible to receive title to that land; the Government had previously set forth criteria for this, indicating that only those who had been living in the protected area for at least ten years prior to 2015 would be eligible. The project believes that this may help speed up the process of granting the ICTs in the pipeline and also empower communities in their efforts to protect their land rights in order to safeguard their culture and the forest of KSWs.



Impact Over Time



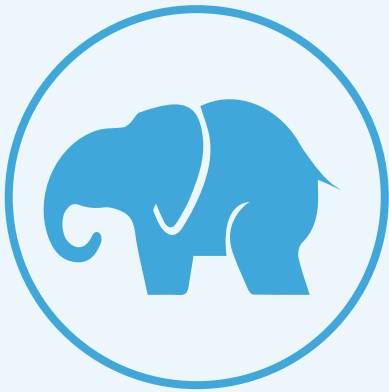
Forest Impacts



- ✓ **25,000** hectares of deforestation avoided since 2010
- ✓ **21,817** Community members trained on a wide range of sustainable natural resource management skills, including NTFP collection and bamboo harvesting, ecotourism service provision, and community patrol team skills



Wildlife Impacts



- ✓ **Highest** number of wildlife species recorded in any protected area in Cambodia
- ✓ World's **largest** stable populations of several charismatic primate species
- ✓ Cambodia's first data-driven zonation process, with more than **40** spatial data layers



Impact Over Time

Community Impacts



- ✓ Preserved cultural identity and natural resources for over **2,500** households
- ✓ **1,624** jobs created through the project (law enforcement and community agents)
- ✓ Indigenous community land titles for **7** Bunong communities, **6** more under review by MoE and **4** in process
- ✓ Established the Jahoo Gibbon Ecotourism Camp, bringing more than **\$14,000** annually in community income



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