

Keo Seima REDD+ Project  
**Impact Report**

**Q1-Q2  
2022**



**EVER  
LAND**



# Keo Seima

## REDD+ Project



 Cambodia

**Developer:** Wildlife Conservation Society  
**Key Partners:** Royal Government of Cambodia

**Standards:** VCS, CCB  
**Region:** SE Cambodia along Vietnam border

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The annual wildlife data collection has been completed as part of the KSWs REDD+ project's long-term biodiversity monitoring program; with observations spanning > 1600km. The IUCN Red List endangered species, Eld's Deer, was caught on a camera trap for the first time in KSWs. More funds are available for community benefits sharing, with villages prioritizing educational activities. The national REDD+ nesting process has been delayed, but validation and verification of new credits are underway.

Keo Seima Wildlife Sanctuary (KSWs) is home to more than 950 wild species, including 75 globally threatened species. It is also the ancestral home of the indigenous Bunong people, whose unique culture and beliefs are inseparable from the forest in which they live. Originally designated as a protected area in 2002, KSWs is managed by the Royal Government of Cambodia's Ministry of Environment, with technical and financial support from WCS Cambodia.



**16.4**  
MILLION  
tCO<sub>2</sub>e emissions  
avoided to date

*through the protection  
of 166,000 ha of  
tropical rainforest*

**75**  
IUCN REDLIST SPECIES  
under strict protection measures  
through regular patrols

*including Asian elephant,  
Malayan pangolin, Yellow-  
cheeked gibbon*

**>3600**  
community members  
co-developing new  
economic opportunities

*including ranger enforcement  
programs, eco-tourism and  
agricultural intensification*

# Highlight 1

## 2022 Wildlife Data Collection season complete

One of the strengths of the KSWs REDD+ is a high-quality, long-term biodiversity monitoring program. Part of this program produces key species population and distribution estimates for 11 species every two years. These estimates can be used to confirm successes, and highlight areas that need additional work to improve upon.

Data collection for these estimates involves around six months of hard fieldwork for the Biodiversity Monitoring Team. The teams are composed of Bunong, Khmer, and international WCS staff, supported by members of the local communities. Each field season these teams walk a combined total of more than 1,600 km across the protected area, recording observations of wildlife. With the use of statistical models, these observations can be used to estimate the number of individuals of each species found across the protected area. Data collection for the 2022 period has been completed, and analysis will be conducted over the coming months



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Yellow-Cheeked Crested Gibbon



# Highlight 2

## Communities prioritizing education for their REDD+ revenue share

Education is a key part of many Bunong communities' own development plans. Benefit sharing revenue provided to communities has been used by those communities for various education support programs.

Ten villages have distributed materials to schools and pupils, such as notebooks, pens, and backpacks. School enrollment at the start of each semester is important, but sometimes forgotten or not prioritized. In Sre I, O am, and Sre Preah villages, an enrollment campaign was carried out in January 2022 by the project team, raising awareness of the upcoming enrollment deadline, and encouraging families to register their children for the coming period, as well as providing materials to students.

Two villages, O Rona and O Chrar have used their REDD+ funding to provide scholarships to poor students who would otherwise not be able to afford school fees. In Gati village, REDD+ funding has been used to provide a free school meal program, ensuring kids are well-fed and able to concentrate during class, and also encouraging attendance for poor families who struggle to provide meals at home. O Chrar village has purchased bicycles for some schoolchildren, for them to use to ride to school each day.



# Highlight 3

## Eco-schools program launched in KSWs



The KSWs project has partnered with Y.E.A Catalyst Co. Ltd, who has provided them with a REDD+ subgrant to implement an eco-school program in Keo Seima Wildlife Sanctuary. Y.E.A Catalyst Co. Ltd is a consulting agency providing services in design and awareness raising campaigns. Eco-schools are an ASEAN initiative developed in 2011, defining a regional standard for environmentally friendly model schools in the ASEAN region.

Cambodia's Ministry of Environment and Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport initiative developed national guidelines, launched in 2016. This initiative supports schools that have environmentally friendly teaching modules, learning activities, policies, infrastructure, and that implement environmental sustainability practices that benefit the school and surrounding communities.

Four schools (Sre I, Pu Haim, O Am School and Sre Chhuk Secondary School) have been selected for eco-school support, and MOUs between Y.E.A Catalyst, Department of Education Youth and Sport, Department of Environment, and the schools are being processed. Once in place, Y.E.A Catalyst will support the schools to develop environmental curricula, and improve the sustainability of school infrastructure.



# Opportunity

## Eld's deer caught on camera trap for the first time in KSWS

The KSWS REDD+ recently captured the first image of Eld's deer (*Rucervus eldii*) on a camera trap in KSWS after the mammal had not been observed in the area for almost 20 years. The image below shows three young Eld's deer grazing in the forests of KSWS captured by camera in April 2022.



36 C 29.62 inHg

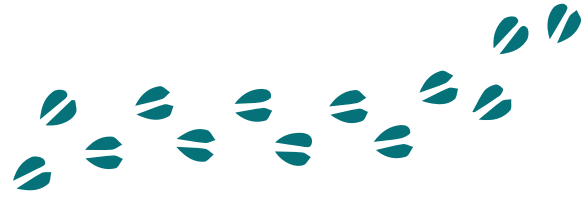
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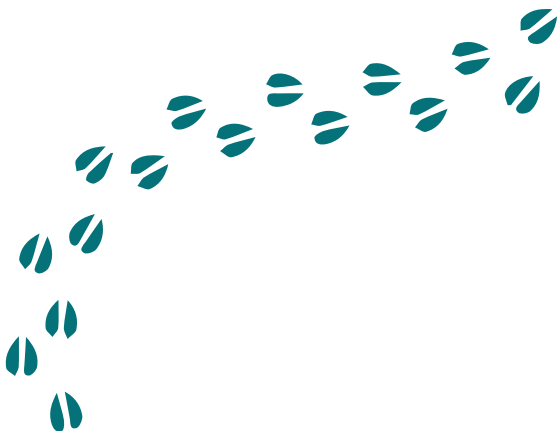
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# Eld's deer (*Rucervus eldii*)



Eld's deer is classified as endangered on the IUCN Red List and is one of Cambodia's rarest large mammals, with their population declining sharply across Cambodia at an alarming rate. They are only found within a few localized areas in Cambodia and Myanmar. They are under threat from continued loss of habitat through settlement and transportation development, agricultural expansion as well as poaching for consumption, traditional medicine and the animal trade.

While these images confirmed Eld's deer are still present within KSWS, it is hard to ignore the significant threats Eld's deer face, such as snaring, loss of habitat, trophy hunting and dog hunting. Without urgent conservation measures, Eld's deer are likely to be extinct across Cambodia soon. However, it is not too late to bring the Eld's deer back from the brink of extinction within Cambodia, though it is likely a captive breeding program will be needed alongside these actions.



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# Challenge 1

## Legal agreements for community benefit sharing being redeveloped



The amount of funding for benefits sharing is increasing as the price for VCUs continues to rise. Currently, approximately \$200,000 USD has been allocated annually to the villages (\$10,000 per village on average). The quantity of funding each village receives is directly related to how successful they are in conserving the area - in zones of low deforestation and poaching, the communities receive more funding, adding a dose of healthy competition. To ensure this is fair (avoiding high risk areas from being penalized regardless of effort), there are other factors that are considered including community engagement.

The benefits share will be increased to \$600,000/year following the recent sales cycle. However, there is a challenge in how that funding is spent. Current capacity in the villages to govern this amount of money is limited so WCS will hire a position to assist and help the community scale up their ambitions.

Agreements used between the REDD+ KSWs project and local communities previously included annual expiration dates, and often funds provided from REDD+ credit sales were not fully spent within that period. This required multiple extension agreements to be developed and signed. This was a large administrative burden for project staff, as well as for communities.

Agreements are being redrafted, with a longer agreement period, and with greater flexibility for minimum spend requirements before providing more funds. This should reduce the amount of administrative work needed, and allow teams to focus on supporting communities to implement their development plans.



# Challenge 2

## Delays with the national REDD+ process

Although Cambodia has publically committed to moving towards a jurisdictional and nested REDD+ program, there have been several long delays with program development. As such, KSWs REDD+ has extended their baseline for an additional two years, as it was previously assumed the project would nest into the national program at the time of the forthcoming verification.

Delays are thought to be political, but an upcoming cabinet reshuffle will hopefully help to address this challenge. The verification and validation process is underway for a new issuance of VCUs, set to be available in early 2023.

