

Keo Seima REDD+ Project **Impact Report**

**Q3-Q4
2021**



**EVER
LAND**



**Wildlife
Conservation
Society**

Keo Seima REDD+ Project

📍 Cambodia

EVER
LAND

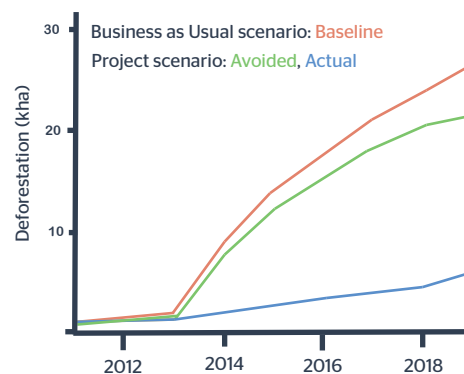
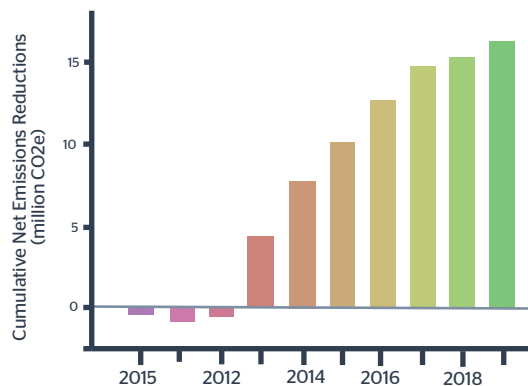
Developer: Wildlife Conservation Society

Key Partners: Royal Government of Cambodia, Ministry of Environment

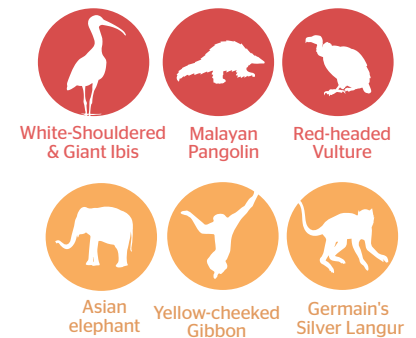
Standards: VCS, CCB

Half year summary

With carbon credit sales made throughout 2021, the project has expanded its impact and scale through the distribution of grants to selected partners with sector-specific expertise for strategic activities, accelerating implementation versus developing new internal teams to address these activities. Community benefit sharing is also expanding, with more than 100 community-led development activities funded by REDD+ during this period. Core project activities continue to make progress, with another community awarded legal rights to 872 ha for management as a Community Protected Area.



IUCN Red List species protected



About the Keo Seima REDD+ Project

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.

16,378,529 tonnes of CO₂ emissions avoided to date



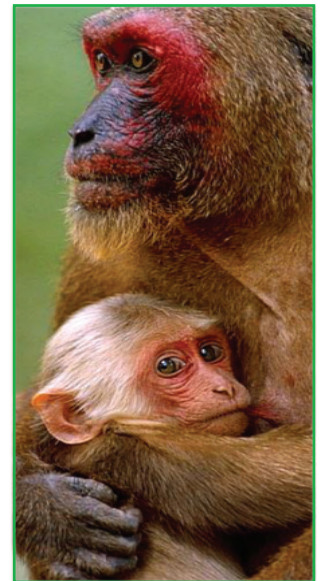
Impact Highlights

REDD+ funds granted to partners to maximise impact

Following a successful year of sales in 2021, the Keo Seima Wildlife Sanctuary (KWS) REDD+ project is ready to rapidly expand its impact and maximise its conservation and community impacts. By partnering with local NGOs and civil society organisations, the project will leverage their capacity and sector-specific expertise to implement specific aspects of the KWS strategy. This will also allow the project to ramp up activities much more quickly than by bringing on new staff.

Ten grants were offered through a competitive bidding process, covering activities including education, ecotourism, sustainable agriculture, vocational training, biodiversity research, and human-elephant coexistence. A total of six successful applicant organisations across seven activities were selected, with grants having a total value of \$420,000, including:

- ✔ Eco-tourism hospitality training and capacity building support for indigenous community members at Jahoo Gibbon Camp
- ✔ Long-term passive-acoustic monitoring survey of gibbon groups in collaboration with academic partners
- ✔ Develop and implement agroforestry and agricultural program (including rice and cashew)
- ✔ Establishment and operation of home vegetable gardening, livestock raising and aquaculture groups in KWS
- ✔ Implementation of eco-school and environmental awareness program for primary and secondary schools
- ✔ Provide targeted vocational training and capacity building to Bunong people to enhance their employment opportunities
- ✔ Develop and implement activities to reduce human-elephant conflict



The IUCN Red Listed vulnerable stump-tailed macaque

This grant process will be repeated and expanded over time, supporting local organisations with sector-specific expertise to implement activities that fall within the project's overall theory of change, expanding impacts beyond WCS and Ministry of Environment (MOE) capacity.



Mobile health clinics benefit 500 community members

500 residents in 5 indigenous villages in Keo Seima Wildlife Sanctuary benefited from mobile clinics over the last two quarters. Administered by the Italian Association for Aid to Children in Cambodia (CIAI), with the support of the Provincial Health Department, the mobile health clinics were selected as high priority actions by the 5 participating villages (Pu Tang, Pu Keh, Gati, Pu Char and Pu Nhav), who funded the clinics with their REDD+ benefit sharing funds.

The mobile clinics each have a doctor, a midwife and a nurse who provide consultations and health check-ups, treating basic ailments in place, with more serious conditions referred to the provincial hospital.

Many villages in KSWs are remote and travel to clinics can be very difficult - especially for the elderly or unwell - and some treatments can be prohibitively expensive. Providing “free at the point of use” healthcare on-site in each village has significant positive impacts on the well-being of these communities, while also addressing an underlying driver of deforestation: medical debt.





Pu Nhav village receives legal rights to their community forests

Following a process of coordination and facilitation from the KSWs REDD+ project, the community of Pu Nhav has been officially awarded legal rights to manage a Community Protected Area called O Mpheuk Lvie. Signed by the Minister of Environment, the Prakas awards the community the right to manage and use an area of 872 ha to support their livelihoods. *Prakas* is a Cambodian term meaning declaration, in this context signifying an official ministerial sign-off legally binding the rights to the CPA to the community members.

Formal recognition of land rights is a crucial part of supporting communities to protect and maintain areas they have stewarded for generations. These ancestral forests are particularly important to the indigenous Bunong community for spiritual and burial purposes as well as for traditional botanical medicine and sustainable extraction of non-timber forest products. The deforestation frontier that is expanding in the region continues to add pressure to the southern area of the KSWs. Without formal recognition of their land, communities are vulnerable to land grabbing and displacement.



A total of seven KSWs REDD+ target villages have Indigenous Community Land Titles (ICTs), formally recognizing the legal land rights of the indigenous Bunong people who live within the project area. Pu Nhav's recognition now brings the total number of Community Protected Areas to three.

“The Bunong believe that nature is populated by spirits, both good and bad, and that these must be obeyed and appeased. No spirits are more powerful than those of the Spirit Forests. My village has three Spirit Forests. We never cut a single tree in these areas.”

- Chok Marel, grandson of Bunong elder Moe Cha





Challenges & Opportunities

Despite COVID related reductions, community ecotourism has second best year of all time

Although COVID-19 related restrictions in Cambodia have gradually lifted, international tourism remains suppressed. This has impacted ecotourism that relies on international visitors, such as the Jahoo Gibbon Camp in KSWs. Jahoo Gibbon Camp is located in an ideal place to observe wild primates in Cambodia, housed in KSWs it is a community-run ecotourism enterprise providing environmentally-friendly tourism options and employment opportunities.



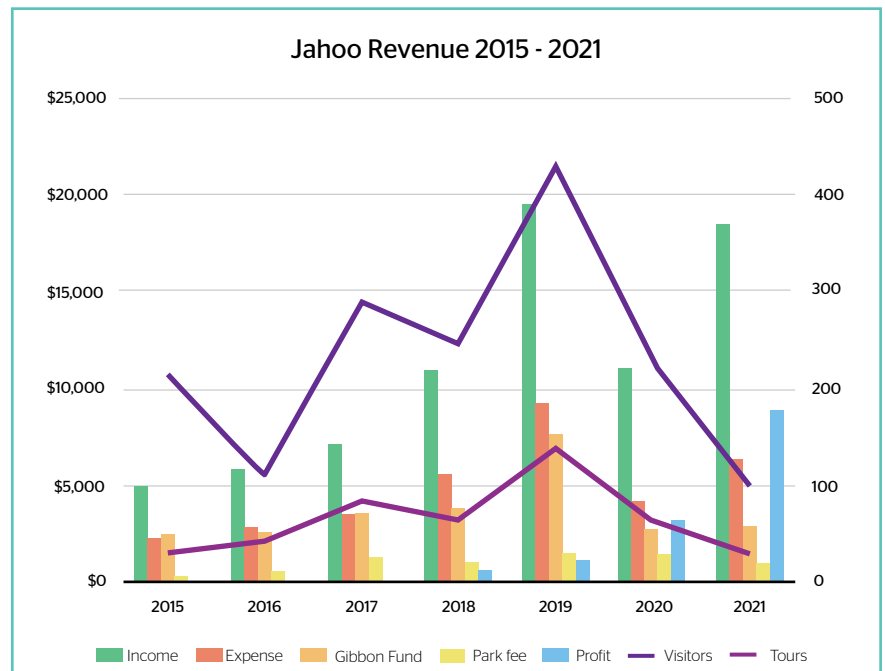


Despite COVID related reductions, community ecotourism has second best year of all time



Learning from impacts in 2020, this year the community and World Hope International (WHI), who support them, diversified Jahoo's activities to be less dependent on this single income stream. Partnering with the Pasteur Institute (IPC), the Jahoo project has provided the forest and wildlife expertise of the Bunong guides to collect wildlife faecal samples to support the IPCs' important work in identifying emerging disease risks.

This, combined with additional marketing to national and foreign tourists from Phnom Penh, has led to the second highest annual income of all time for this initiative. In turn this has allowed significant funds to be given to the community Gibbon Fund, for use on community development and conservation activities. In 2021, more than \$10,000 was spent from the communal Gibbon Fund on 152 actions, including land protection and patrolling, elder health support, community cultural events and banking. This success shows the resilience of the project and community, and positions them well for the future.





Cambodia releases 2050 carbon neutrality plan

11 globally threatened bird species with almost 4000 nests are currently being protected in the Northern Plains by WCS and the Ministry of Environment



On December 30, 2021 the Royal Government of Cambodia submitted its Long-Term Strategy for Carbon Neutrality (LTS4CN) to the Secretariat of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), becoming one of the 49 UNFCCC Parties and only the second least developed countries to do so.

A major part of this strategy to reach carbon neutrality by 2050 involves the reduction of deforestation to 50% by 2030, and stopping deforestation entirely by 2045. This plan is ambitious, and depends on international climate finance heavily within the first decade. It further cements Cambodia's commitment to addressing deforestation, along with Nationally Determined Contribution commitments and national policy.

The success of the KWS REDD+ project demonstrates that reducing deforestation is possible, and that it can be sustainably financed through the REDD+ process. In turn, the LTS4CN shows the Government's support for the project, and the continuation of the national REDD+ process. The Wildlife Conservation Society are expanding their portfolio to the Northern Plains REDD+ project alongside numerous other REDD+ projects in development in Cambodia, providing an ideal foundation for the expansion of the REDD+ initiative hosted within a national nested system.





Scaling up of community benefit sharing continues

Directly funding communities to implement their development activities is a core part of the KSWs REDD+ model. To date, more than \$400,000 has been provided to communities, who have used funds for clean water systems, mobile health clinics, school feeding programs, community meeting halls, repairing bridges and roads, and sanitation. Following successful sales in 2021 - with an 80-fold increase in sales between 2020-2020 - significantly more funds are available to communities.

In the context of KSWs, distribution of funds to communities has required extensive capacity building in preparation: Supporting communities to complete the legal registrations needed to open bank accounts, identifying individuals to be signatories on accounts, opening accounts with banks, building financial management capacity within community leadership, and establishing administrative and bureaucratic processes to ensure transparent use of funds.

The scale of community projects is typically small, and highly targeted. Whilst this has benefits, it limits the scale of funding that can be distributed to communities, and communities may miss out on the benefits from larger scale activities, such as piped water systems, or larger infrastructure developments. The project continues to support communities in the spending of these funds, supporting ambition whilst ensuring that processes are in place to ensure effective management.



Students receiving COVID supplies and sanitation training



Community members providing feedback on benefits sharing priorities