

# Impact Spotlight

Keo Seima REDD+ Project  
Q1 2021

**EVER  
LAND**



**Wildlife  
Conservation  
Society**





# Young Indigenous woman takes on leadership role as village's Indigenous Community Council Chief



Defending the traditional rights of Indigenous Bunong people by securing community land titles is a core conservation strategy of the Keo Seima REDD+ project.

The Bunong people, a minority community with an animist spirituality linked closely to the forest, are the most vulnerable group in the Keo Seima Wildlife Sanctuary. Their traditional lands are at risk of land grabbing by outsiders, threatening farmland and forest areas that are important for traditional livelihoods and culture.

The project continues to strengthen tenure rights and reduce landlessness by supporting Indigenous communities to register their traditional land, with efforts now being led by a young Indigenous woman, Danh Salon.



TARGET 10·2



PROMOTE UNIVERSAL SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL INCLUSION

TARGET 16·7



ENSURE RESPONSIVE, INCLUSIVE AND REPRESENTATIVE DECISION-MAKING





## Supporting Indigenous communities to secure their traditional land

The Land Law of 2001 has allowed the Keo Seima Wildlife Sanctuary REDD+ project to support Indigenous communities to register Indigenous Communal Land Titles (ICT). This is a complex process involving four different ministries.

After having received land tenure security, the capacity of the community is strengthened to manage land and natural resources by exercising their land rights and natural resource rights to jointly protect and manage the Keo Seima Wildlife Sanctuary.

The Indigenous Community Council (ICC) Chief plays a key role in the decision making and on-going management of these communal titles.



## Milestones: Indigenous community land rights



- ✓ 6 villages successfully obtained Indigenous Communal Land Titles (ICT) from the Ministry of Land Management, Urban Planning and Construction (MLMUPC).
- ✓ 8 villages are in the process of registration - 4 of which received pre-approval from MoE; 1 awaits pre-approval from MoE; 3 are preparing preliminary land use map and internal rule to be submitted to MLMUPC communal land registration.

✓ Management committees in 6 granted ICT communities have been strengthened and empowered to manage communal land and natural resources.

✓ The ICT of O Chra recently elected a dedicated young woman Danh Salon as leader, who will lead the community in joint action to protect and conserve their natural resources.



## Danh Salon successful in helping her community to secure their land



A recent Proclamation by the Prime Minister of Cambodia on granting private titles to occupied lands in protected areas has put ICTs in the Keo Seima Wildlife Sanctuary at risk.

The Proclamation aimed to provide legal rights to people occupying land that was previously

cleared in protected areas nationally - with a goal of providing rights for smallholders who have been in the protected area for many years. However, this process is vulnerable to corruption and areas of communal land might be lost if the land is individually demarcated for outsiders who illegally grab and settle within community boundaries.

Danh Salon was recently selected in a democratic process as the Indigenous Commune Chief and through her leadership, her community was able

to prevent any private demarcation within their communally held land, representing a great success for the community.

After taking on her new role, Salon brought her community together to discuss the risk of their communal land ownership and encouraged them to stay united in efforts to protect their community land from being grabbed through the land demarcation process. She coordinated the submission areas that were claimed illegally by non-ICT members to the commune chief, Park Director and Provincial Department of Environment along with documents such as land certificates, communal land maps and internal rules.

Mapping disputes can become a big problem in themselves, and by working with her community to clarify very quickly what to do for the mapping process and by efficiently coordinating their titles, she was able to ensure that this conflict never took place.







## The future: increasing the number of women in leadership roles



Continued support for obtaining Indigenous Communal Land Titles is key to secure traditional tenure land rights and increase community ownership to manage their collective land and natural resources.

This is an important first line of defence for protecting the Keo Seima Wildlife Sanctuary. Increasing the number of women in management and leadership roles and ensuring the active participation of women from the community is critically important to protect and manage these natural resources.