Southern Cardamom REDD+ Project Q3-Q4 2021



Southern Cardamom REDD+ Project © Cambodia

Developer: Wildlife Alliance **Key Partners**: Royal Government of Cambodia, Ministry of Environment **Standards**: VCS, CCB

Half year summary

Targeted infrastructure projects have been initiated across Chi Phat, Sovanna Baitong, Bak Angrut, O'Som and Chomna villages, including the provision of new roads, bridges, water wells, schools and a medical centre. Additional funding has been allocated to support higher education opportunities, establish a tiger recovery centre and address the snaring crisis through the expansion of the ranger and Community Anti-Poaching Unit programs.



About the Southern Cardamom REDD+ Project

The Cardamom Rainforest Landscape is one of the last unfragmented rainforests remaining in Southeast Asia and is a critical part of the Indo-Burma Biodiversity Hotspot. This area is globally significant for ecosystem servicing, wildlife conservation, and community livelihoods and serves as the region's most important watershed, climate regulator and carbon sink.

27,605,489 tonnes of CO_2 emissions avoided to date

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Impact Highlights

18 water wells distributed to over 2300 beneficiaries: Forest rewards Koh Kong community members for conservation

Water resources in the Cardamom rainforest landscape have been drying up over the past decade as a result of climate change and deforestation. Families in some communities have to travel up to 5-km to collect safe drinking water from one of the few operational wells as the only other safe alternative is purchasing very expensive bottled water (\$15 USD for 3-4 days consumption). Some community members have even resorted to collecting nearby river water, which is very often tainted by chemicals originating from upstream plantations.

"I am very glad to see that the water wells are built in my village as I have never had enough clean water to use. During the dry season, I have to pay around \$25/month to purchase clean water from a water seller. In addition, I also pay \$37.5/month for electricity to get the water from the pond to water my vegetables".

- Mrs. Mann Sinourn (Trapeang Cheu Trav village, Thmor Bang district)

"I am so happy and excited to have fresh water well from REDD+ project. Before, I drove Koyun about 5 km to get water from a water hole near the mountain in the dry season. We thank the Wildlife Alliance, REDD+ and the Ministry of Environment for helping us"

- Mr. Yai Ra (Romeang Sor Village, Oral district)







Forest rewards Koh Kong community members for conservation

Through the project's benefit sharing program, 18 solar-powered water wells have been distributed to 423 families over the past year with a further 25 wells scheduled to be completed in 2022. These wells have and will be distributed through 7 communes in 11 villages in and around the SC REDD+ project area (see map).

On September 15, the SC REDD+ Community Development Team organised a ceremony in Koh Kong province to inaugurate the handover of the first water wells in 5 villages to 2,359 people. The ceremony was presided over by representatives from the Ministry of National Defense, Koh Kong Provincial Administration, Wildlife Alliance and Koh Kong Provincial Department of Environment.





Higher education funded through conservation of the Cardamoms

The SC REDD+ scholarship award program was launched in 2021, resulting in the distribution of five full scholarships to universities in Phnom Penh, including the Royal University of Phnom Penh, the Royal University of Law and Economics and the Royal University of Agriculture. The awarding of scholarships entails a detailed process, including an essay writing test, an assessment of socio-economic status of the applicant, an interview with the student and family, and an evaluation of academic potential.

The family interview is a very important aspect of the scholarship selection process, as families often prefer to have their children stay close to home to assist with running family businesses. This stage provides an avenue for the SC REDD+ team to discuss the importance of education and the long-term benefits to the community.



The awardees will be studying a variety of majors, including environmental science, tourism and agriculture - all of which will directly benefit their home communities. These scholarships include four years of annual tuition, school materials, accommodation, food stipend and health insurance, totalling \$6,852 per year. Wildlife Alliance rented a house in Phnom Penh especially for the students to live and has hired a trusted woman to serve as their supervisor and mentor. Plans are in place to also hire an English tutor to teach the awardees at their house on a daily basis.

Limited education in the SC project area is directly correlated with increased deforestation due to the lack of alternative, sustainable livelihood opportunities. Once educated at the university level, these students will be able to raise awareness on forest conservation and establish new business ventures for their home communities, thereby reducing pressure on the SC rainforest.

"I think REDD+ is a wonderful project because it provides more employment opportunities to the people in the village, as well as protecting the forest and wildlife. This program also provides a chance for youth to get higher education. I want to preserve the forest to be more beautiful and to protect nature, which is the lifeline of people and animals."

- **Mr. Tith Sure** (Koh Kong High School graduate in 2020)

"I have decided to study [tourism] because I want to become a professional tour guide for the Chi Phat Community in order to share the knowledge and beauty of this beautiful place to national and international tourists and to promote the economy in my community"

- Ms. On Soknoem (foundation year student in Tourism)

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Construction of new roads and water drainage systems launched



The roads connecting villages within the SC REDD+ zone have been a major obstacle limiting regular travel between communities. Many of these roads were previously built as logging access trails, but have since been heavily eroded due to regular flooding and limited upkeep.

The 18-km stretch of road from Por Boeung to Sre Ambel is very challenging during the rainy season due to a lack of drainage culverts; it is particularly dangerous in times of strong water currents making passage impossible. In response to an appeal by community members, this road is being completely reconstructed at hiaher elevation with a new drainage system, allowing villages to access the Sre Ambel marketplace, district health facilities and the local secondary school. Consultations with the communities continue to set priorities for further road retrofitting and culvert installation, with the aim of completing the next phase of construction by the end of the 2022 dry season.



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Challenges & Opportunities

Addressing the snaring crisis

Snares were a considerable challenge in 2021 as poaching activities were ever present across the SC REDD+ project zone and surrounding protected areas. Based on recent research¹, there has been a significant increase in snaring activities in Cambodia as a result of COVID-driven declines in socio-economics of local communities.

Patrolling activities have been enhanced over the past year to deal with this snaring crisis. The SC rangers have removed 18,955 snares, and a further 773 snares were removed by the Community Anti-Poaching Unit (CAPU) from Q3-Q4 2021. 41 live animals were also rescued from snares over the period. This snare removal represents an increase of 55% in 2021 (1.1 snares per patrol-hour) compared to the previous year (0.5 snares per patrol-hour in 2020)¹.



are globally threatened and highly vulnerable to the growing snaring epidemic in Cambodia. Here, a Wildlife Alliance vet is administering vital antibiotics to a snared gaur found within the SC REDD+ zone.

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To address this crisis, the Ministry of Environment has introduced a new policy, banning the possession of materials which could be used to make snares from anyone travelling or living within core protected areas. This provides an opportunity for the SC REDD+ rangers and CAPU to methodically remove materials before the snares are even produced or distributed in the forest.

1. Gish, E.D., Leroux, N. & Marx, N. (2021) Snaring epidemic threatens an Endangered banteng Bos javanicus population of global conservation significance in southwest Cambodia. Cambodian Journal of Natural History, 2021, 40–52.



The Ministry of Environment has been so impressed by the efforts of SC REDD+ rangers that they have invited the team to collaborate on Cambodia's Proposed Priority Actions for Tiger Recovery (2022-2024). Together they submitted a detailed plan at the Asian Ministerial Tiger Conference in January.

In the meantime, the team in SC continues to construct the tiger reintroduction station, which includes ponds for swimming, wild pig enclosures for tiger prey, workers house and a veterinary station. By 2023, the Indian government will begin the reintegration process by donating at least 10 tigers, giving them the opportunity to roam free in SC's dense rainforests under the legal protection of SC REDD+ rangers. The network of protected areas from SC to Tatai and Phnom Samkos wildlife sanctuaries represents an ideal landscape to implement the national tiger recovery program; the first of it's kind to be initiated in Cambodia.

Cambodia's Proposed Priority Actions for Tiger Recovery (2022-2024) submitted to the Southeast Asian Tiger Recovery Action Plans at 4th Asian Ministerial Tiger Conference: 19-21 Jan 2022

