

Keo Seima Wildlife Sanctuary REDD+ PROJECT SUMMARY

Nested between two important ecoregions within the Indo-Burma Biodiversity Hotspot - the Annamite Mountains evergreen forests, and the lower Mekong dry forests - the 167,000 hectare Keo Seima Wildlife Sanctuary (KWS) is home to more than 950 wild species, including 75 globally threatened species, and is the ancestral home of the indigenous Bunong people. The Project has defended the traditional rights of over 12,000 Indigenous Bunong and Stieng people from 20 villages within the Project Area by helping the indigenous communities to secure the first Indigenous Community Land Title in Cambodia. The Project is paving a path toward sustainable prosperity for forest communities through the REDD+ Benefit Sharing Mechanism. KWS plays a vital role in the preservation of the region's important and vulnerable wildlife, including the world's largest populations of endemic primates.

Developers

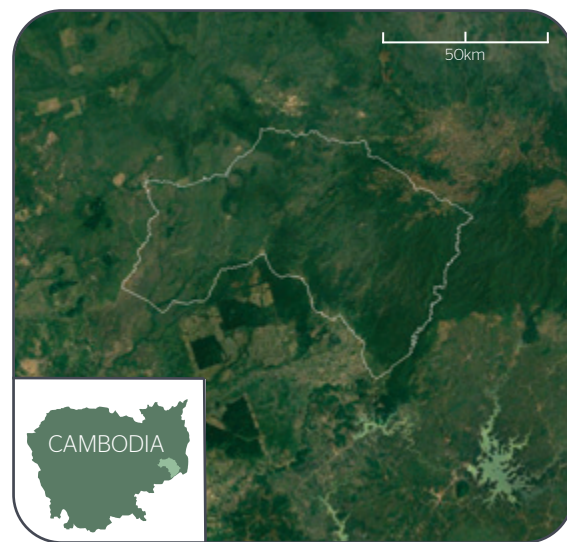
Wildlife Conservation Society & Royal Government of Cambodia

Key People

>12,000 Indigenous Bunong & Stieng people

Standards

VCS & CCB Gold Level



ORIGINS

Most of the population within the 20 villages of the Project Area (then almost entirely made up of Bunong families) was relocated elsewhere as a consequence of the Khmer Rouge regime. During this time, episodes of large scale mechanized logging occurred by Khmer forces and Vietnamese-backed teams, resulting in the development of roads and logging trails - making the previously isolated forest readily accessible.

1970s

The Khmer Rouge regime survivors and their children progressively returned to the area as security improved, re-establishing their lives on their ancestral lands.

1980s



Bomb craters demonstrate landscape effects of the Khmer Rouge regime across the region.

1994-1997

Despite the return of many community members, the Project Area was converted to a logging concession. The concession only operated for three years until a moratorium on Economic Land Concessions was announced.

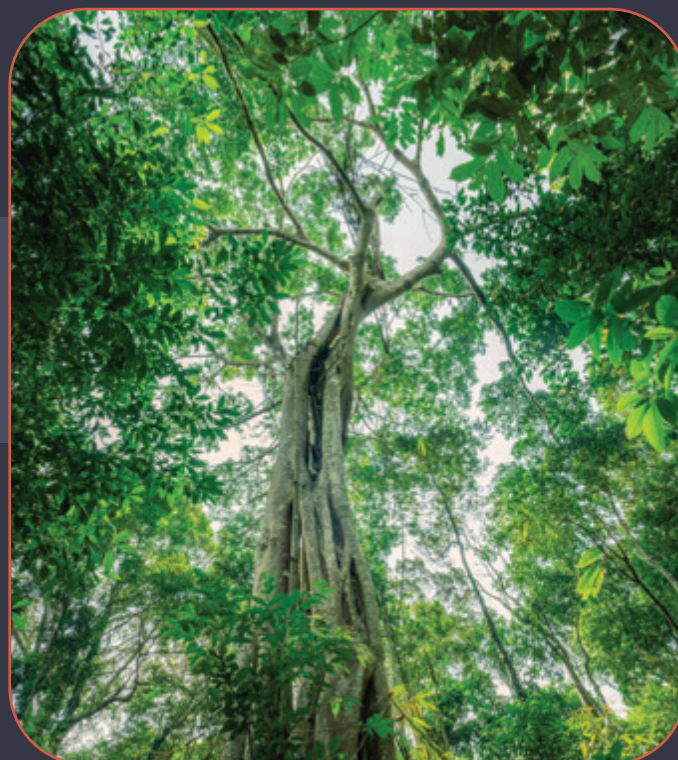


The Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) became active in Cambodia and began providing conservation support for the region. The Project Area was established as the Seima Biodiversity Conservation Area and eventually a Protected Forest in 2009. To both conserve and restore the biodiversity values, and to protect the livelihoods of the local people, WCS worked with the government to develop an adaptive management plan for the Seima Protection Forest.

1999-2009

Following a forest and field mapping campaign, the Keo Seima REDD+ Project (KSRP) was announced and the first indigenous communal land area was demarcated for tenure security. The historical levels of non-REDD funding in KSRP have been enough to achieve partially effective conservation, but fell well short of the level required for full protection and effective management.

2010



2016

The protected area management was transferred from the Forestry Administration to the Ministry of Environment (MoE) as part of a national jurisdictional transfer of all protected areas to MoE management. At the same time, it was officially upgraded to a higher protection status - now named the Keo Seima Wildlife Sanctuary with a focus on maintaining, conserving and restoring its irreplaceable species and habitats.



THREATS

The Project Area is under threat from accelerating forest clearance for agriculture together with unsustainable resource extraction (including poaching, logging and fishing); harming both biodiversity and local forest-dependent livelihoods. These threats have recently been exacerbated due to improved road access, land speculation and tenure disputes, population growth, weak law enforcement and governance frameworks, limited recognition of biodiversity value and rising market demand for luxury wood, agricultural products and high value wildlife. This is particularly relevant as the KSRP shares a border with Vietnam, a significant buyer of high value timber.

These drivers could result in the conversion of native ecosystems from a natural forested land cover to a non-forest or agricultural state, as demonstrated in adjacent protected areas. Significantly, the adjacent Snuol Wildlife Sanctuary was de-gazetted in 2018 following the movement of the agricultural frontier into the protected area - resulting in 73% of the forest area being lost in the past two decades. Given these threats, protected areas in Cambodia such as the Keo Seima Wildlife Sanctuary could exist as a 'paper park' - in name only, without adequate funding to secure the forest and wildlife therein.



INTERVENTION MODEL



Through the establishment of the rigorous community-based ranger enforcement program, arrests and convictions rise, increasing the risk and cost of illegal forest conversion and wildlife poaching. Rangers are well-equipped, trained and financially supported, providing alternative livelihood opportunities to local communities. The project area becomes clearly zoned and demarcated, with robust long-term management plans in place and land titles secured for the local indigenous communities, limiting over-harvesting and forest conversion. Wildlife Conservation Society continuously works with high levels of the government and develops partnerships with the private sector to ensure protected area zoning remains in place over other more profitable alternatives (e.g. mining).

By protecting the biodiversity within KSRP, sustainable wildlife-centric economic opportunities (including eco-tourism) become viable - providing a long-term source of income. However, as wildlife thrives within the landscape, human-wildlife conflict becomes more prevalent - abated through the action of rangers, sensitization outreach workshops, the installation of wildlife-proof fences/deterrents and the establishment of a compensation scheme.

KSRP carbon funding is further utilized to introduce new sustainable agricultural techniques (including IBIS Rice), fund education, supply the community with basic needs (education, healthcare, clean water) and the means to prosper going forward. 25% of the VCU revenue is set aside in a reserve as contingency cash for future operating expenses beyond the project lifetime, strengthening the permanency of the project interventions.

IMPACT HIGHLIGHTS*

CUMULATIVE TO DATE



ECONOMY

1,500 wildlife-friendly farmers benefiting from premium prices for organic jasmine rice through the Ibis Rice Initiative.



WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

3,900 females have improved skills and knowledge through Project training and technical assistance programs.



HEALTH & WELL-BEING

Over **3,600 people served in project-supported medical facilities**. In 2021, 500 residents in 5 indigenous villages in Keo Seima Wildlife Sanctuary benefited from mobile clinics.



COMMUNITY BENEFIT SHARING

\$400,000 invested into communities for clean water systems, mobile health clinics, school feeding programs, community meeting halls, repairing bridges and roads, and sanitation.



FOREST GOVERNANCE

7 Indigenous Community Land Titles (ICTs) secured. Community-based patrols established in local villages, working alongside Department of Environment (DoE) rangers, as well as military police, to conduct patrols and crackdown on illegal logging, poaching, and land grabbing.



WILDLIFE

Reduced threats for 63 IUCN Red List animal species (13 of which are critically endangered) and 22 plant species. More than 80% of local species trends matched or improved with global trends. With world-class biodiversity monitoring, the project features the highest number of species recorded for any Cambodian protected area, with **20 species new to science**.



CLIMATE

>20 million tCO2e emissions avoided to date**.

*CCB verified (up to 2019)

**pending 2020-2021 verification

EVER LAND