

# Southern Cardamom REDD+

## PROJECT SUMMARY

The Cardamom Rainforest Landscape is one of the last unfragmented rainforests remaining in Southeast Asia. It is a critical part of the Indo-Burma Biodiversity Hotspot, facing threat from relentless illegal logging and poaching. 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. Using a unique approach for forest protection and community development, the Southern Cardamom REDD+ project protects 497,000 hectares of this crucial tropical rainforest ecosystem in Southwest Cambodia.

### Developers

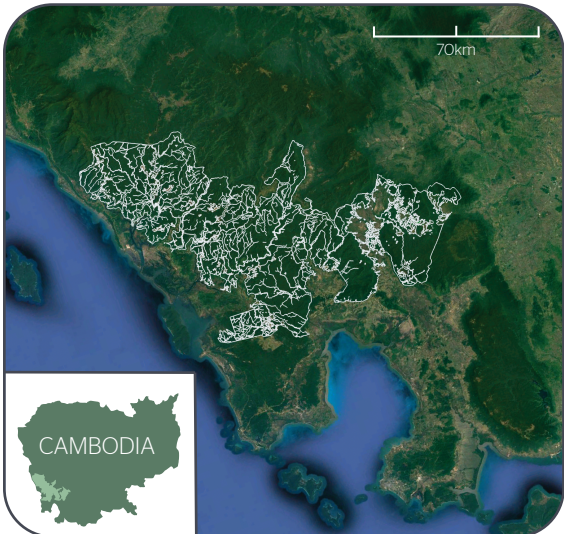
Wildlife Alliance & Royal Government of Cambodia

### Key People

>16,000 local people in 21 villages including an indigenous community in Chhay Arieng

### Standards

VCS, SD VISTA & CCB Double Gold Level



## ORIGINS

At the start of the 2000s there was a tiger and elephant hunting crisis in the Cardamom Rainforest Landscape, where 29 tigers and 39 elephants were poached as a result of the construction of a new highway. At the same time, slash and burn cultivation was destroying thousands of hectares of the forest area, leaving the Cardamom Rainforest on the brink of destruction. Tigers became entirely extinct from the landscape during this time.

2000-2002



Tiger (*Panthera tigris*) from Wildlife Alliance's Phnom Tamao Wildlife Rescue Centre, listed as "Endangered" on the IUCN Red List. Extinct from Cambodia, with the last sighting in 2007

The Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) sought the help of Wildlife Alliance (WA) to conduct emergency interventions. Core activities initially included securing the forest through the establishment of an extensive patrol network. This built on previous WA work in Cambodia and other threatened landscapes, including the establishment of the country's first Wildlife Rapid Rescue Team in 2001.

2002



Wildlife Alliance implemented a long-term Protected Area Management Plan with RGC to safeguard the Cardamoms.

To further confront the drivers of deforestation, WA initiated activities in the Cardamom Mountain landscape to generate sustainable livelihood alternatives to slash and burn cultivation for the communities, including agricultural development, community-based eco-tourism and environmental education units. However, these programs remained small in scope due to limited funding; thus, WA began exploring the establishment of a REDD+ project through initial carbon stock assessments and a series of feasibility studies.

2004-2010

The risk of illegal deforestation and poaching was rising at an alarming rate, with Economic Land Concessions (ELCs) being granted across previously isolated forest landscapes, including in protected areas. Wildlife Alliance continued to combat these challenges, successfully working with the highest levels of government to obtain a cancellation of 34 ELCs that would have destroyed significant areas in the Cardamoms, developing a National Ranger Training Center and initiating a Wildlife Release Station. However, the expansion of activities required to match the growing threats remained limited by the lack of consistent funding.

2011-2014



National highways have been established across the country in recent years, intensifying the threat of illegal deforestation and poaching



2015

WA's wildlife protection and community development activities were historically sustained by a single major funding source, with smaller amounts coming from grants, income or other sources. With these funds now depleted and no longer able to financially support the Project, the Southern Cardamom REDD+ Project (SCRP) was established to ensure a sustainable stream of financing for the continuation and expansion of targeted conservation and community activities in the coming decades.

## THREATS

The primary drivers of deforestation include unsustainable agricultural practices, illegal logging and land allocation for commercial concessions (ELCs), resulting from uncontrolled migration, land speculation, land tenure disputes, and mismanagement of community protected areas. These drivers resulted 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.

Wildlife poaching through snaring is a significant threat in the area, due to high demand for meat and the wildlife trade, as well as the fact that the Project Area contains globally significant mammal diversity. The high economic rewards, low risk of prosecution and poor appreciation of biodiversity value all contribute to this threat.



24/7 on-the-ground patrolling has resulted in the removal of >175,000 snares and confiscation of >5000 chainsaws\*.

## INTERVENTION MODEL



Through the establishment of the rigorous boots-on-the-ground ranger enforcement program, arrests and convictions rose - 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 is now clearly zoned and demarcated, with robust long-term management plans in place and titles secured for local communities. Wildlife Alliance continuously works with high levels of the government to ensure protected area zoning remains in place over other more profitable alternatives (e.g. mining).

By protecting the biodiversity within SCR, sustainable wildlife-centric economic opportunities (including eco-tourism) have 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.

SCR carbon funding is also utilized to introduce new sustainable agricultural techniques in previously degraded areas, fund education, provision business loans and establish infrastructure (e.g. new roads, water wells, medical clinics) to supply the community with basic needs and the means to prosper going forward.

## IMPACT HIGHLIGHTS\*

### CUMULATIVE TO DATE



### ECONOMY

>22,000 international and domestic tourists visited the project's eco-tourism sites, generating nearly \$1 million USD in revenue since 2015.



### EDUCATION

Over \$360,000 in bursaries distributed through The Southern Cardamom REDD+ scholarship award program.



### HEALTH & WELL-BEING

82,548 people experiencing improved water quality and/or improved access to drinking water as a result of the installation of water wells throughout the Project Area and Buffer.



### COMMUNITY BENEFIT SHARING

Of the minimum 85% carbon revenue allocated to on-the-ground activities: nearly 50% was allocated for the protection and enforcement of Southern Cardamom, 15% for wildlife rescue and rehabilitation, 8% each for countering wildlife trafficking activities and alternative livelihood development and the final 4% for environmental education.



### FOREST GOVERNANCE

Boots-on-the-ground enforcement through more than 24,000 patrols has resulted in: 27,721 logs seized, 5,624 chainsaws confiscated, 175,534 snares removed and 3,058 live animals rescued.



### WILDLIFE

442,870 hectares of land area benefiting from improved conservation measures, reducing threats and improving landscape connectivity for 35 IUCN Red List species



### CLIMATE

27.6 million tCO2e emissions avoided to date.

\*Based on 2015-2021 cumulative CCB monitoring & verification reports, 2015-2020: CCB verified, 2021: CCB verification in progress