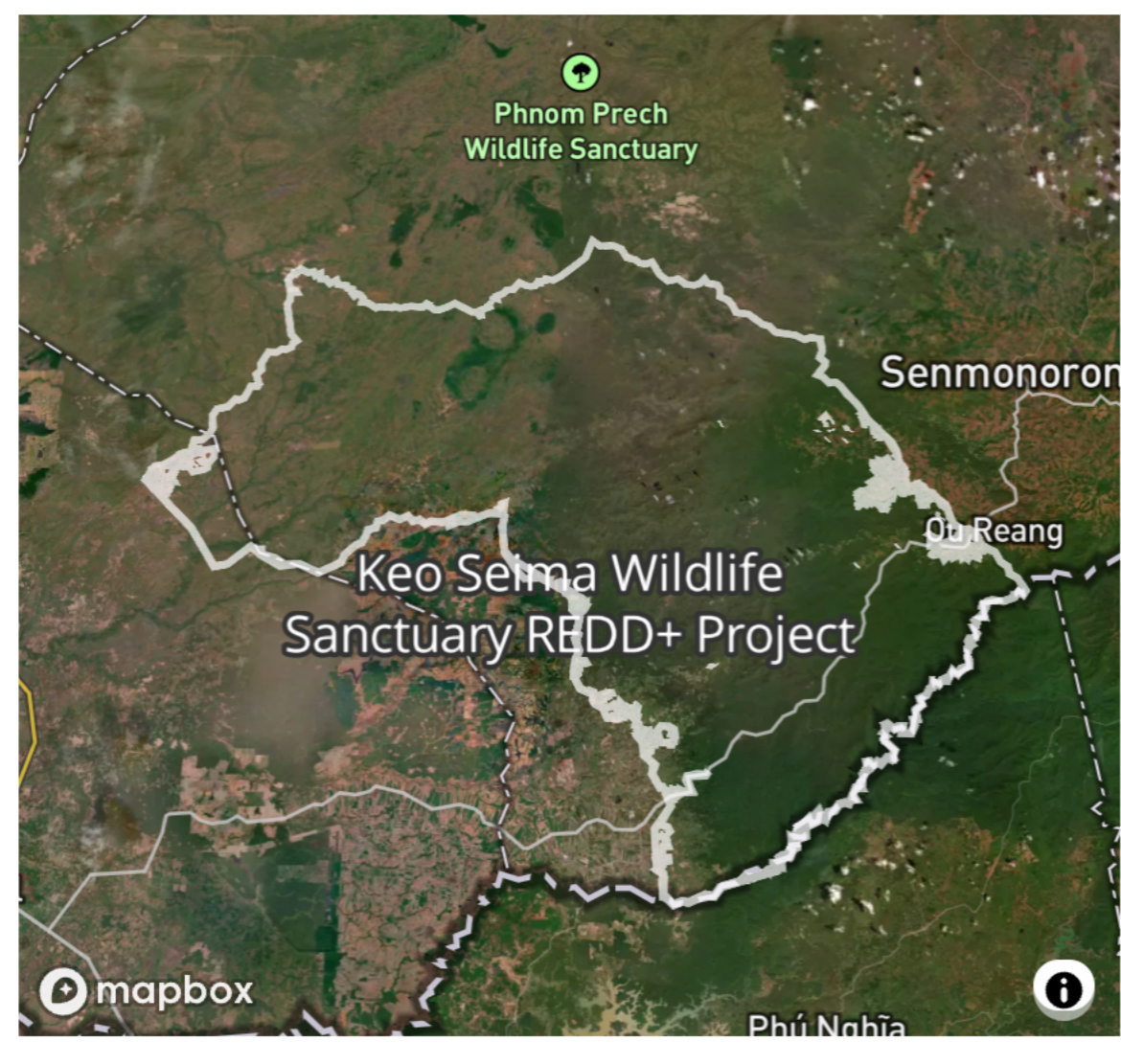


HALF YEARLY IMPACT REPORT

KEO SEIMA WILDLIFE SANCTUARY REDD+ PROJECT
Q3 - Q4 2022



Summary



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.

Self-identification of land tenure has been completed in Bunong villages across the project area, cementing their legal rights to their ancestral land. Land plots have been demarcating to protect against illegal land clearance by outsiders. Hundreds of community members participated in biodiversity education events. New eco-tourism spots are being scouted in the project area, but expansion has been challenging.

HIGHLIGHTS

Securing Land Tenure for Bunong Villages Through Self-Identification Certification

In the more remote corners of the KSWS REDD+ project area, six Keo Seima Wildlife Sanctuary (KSWS) villages have officially received certified self-identification – a crucial step in legally cementing their claim to Indigenous communal land titles. This achievement is a complementary and legally-necessary procedure to the Indigenous Communal Land Titles (ICTs) obtained since 2012.

This accomplishment demonstrates the KSWS REDD+ project's dedication to protecting the rights of Indigenous communities and promoting sustainable development. The project's philosophy centers on recognizing the rights of Indigenous communities and other forest-dependent people, and fostering a more equitable distribution of benefits. The certification of Indigenous self-identification for these six villages represents a significant step forward in safeguarding the rights of the Bunong communities and ensuring the permanence of their land tenure.

For the Bunong people, this achievement holds immense cultural significance, as it recognizes their distinct culture and heritage and completes a multipart legal process for securing their land tenure. The process of obtaining ICTs in Cambodia usually involves three steps: examination of cultural criteria, self-identification, and certification by the government—but for six villages in the Keo Seima Wildlife Sanctuary, the self-identification process occurred out of order after the certification of the ICT.

"This is a significant achievement for our project and the Bunong communities despite the delay. Our team has been working closely with the village leaders to ensure that the process is as smooth and efficient as possible. Qualifying self-identification is a critical step in securing the land tenure rights of the Bunong people, and it is an honor to be a part of this important work."
- Sreyleak Veng, the community liaison for the KSWS REDD+ project

The Forest Plan Pillars



Sustainable Development Goals



Twenty villages, united in conservation: Representatives from each community gather to sign benefit sharing agreements with the KSWS REDD+ project in Mondulkiri province.



KSWS REDD+ ICT Team member, Sreyleak Veng.



Project biodiversity team members educating the next generation at a local primary school, teaching about the importance of key wildlife species and the role they play in maintaining the ecological balance of Keo Seima Wildlife Sanctuary.



Project biodiversity team member, Cain Agger.

Balancing Conservation and Development: KSWS REDD+ Initiative Educates Local Communities on Biodiversity

The KSWS REDD+ project has launched a major initiative to educate local communities, particularly students, about the importance of biodiversity and wildlife in the Keo Seima Wildlife Sanctuary (KSWS). The initiative, implemented over the last half year, has seen over 350 residents participate in interactive workshops designed to raise awareness about the population numbers, critical declines, and threats facing the wildlife in the sanctuary.

The project's biodiversity team seeks to instill a sense of respect and connection to nature and its wildlife in future generations, building upon the traditional reverence and connection that many of the local communities, especially the Bunong, have always held for the natural world. However, these traditional relations to nature have been disrupted in recent generations by displacement, land grabbing, changing farming and livelihood practices, and other economic priorities. The initiative promotes the interconnectedness of our shared fates and the importance of maintaining a balance between human development and conservation while highlighting the importance of preserving and revitalizing traditional ways of life that honor and sustain the natural world.

The biodiversity team at KSWS REDD+ has developed educational materials and activities for local schools and community meetings designed to engage students and foster a sense of connection to the natural world. The interactive and hands-on approach has been particularly effective in increasing understanding and appreciation of wildlife and its role in the ecosystem.

"Education and awareness raising is essential in producing a conservation impact, as community members are becoming more aware of the importance of biodiversity and the role they can play in protecting it." – Cain Agger, technical advisor for biodiversity monitoring.

This initiative is crucial for conserving KSWS wildlife and promoting sustainable development in the region. Biodiversity supports the livelihoods of local communities, and by centering biodiversity in its approach, the KSWS REDD+ project can balance conservation and human development effectively. Furthermore, the project hopes to instill a sense of respect and connection to nature in future generations, laying the foundation for a more sustainable future where the well-being of the environment and people are inextricably linked.

The Forest Plan Pillars



Sustainable Development Goal



CHALLENGES



The KSWS REDD+ ICT team discusses land demarcation with O Chrar villagers, using maps and GPS technology to ensure legally recognized boundaries for the community's land.

Addressing Agricultural Land Clearance through Community Engagement

Despite the progress in protecting the Keo Seima Wildlife Sanctuary, small pockets of agricultural land clearance still occur. One of the main reasons for this land clearance is population pressure and economic insecurity in the region. As more and more people move into the area, they are forced to clear land for agriculture and other forms of development. This short-sighted clearance is not a sustainable solution and puts both the environment and the community at risk.

To address the small hotspots of agricultural land clearance in Keo Seima Wildlife Sanctuary, the KSWS REDD+ project has implemented several strategies. One of the most effective has been the work of our ICT team, who have been demarcating land plots across KSWS. In total, 29 local participants joined our team in demarcating 38 land plots in the last half of the year. This provides a clear and legally recognized boundary for the Indigenous communities and their land.

The project has also made a concerted effort to work closely with local communities to establish appropriate grievance and reporting mechanisms. This has included regular meetings with community leaders to discuss land use and conservation issues, as well as training sessions on how to use the demarcation tools and maps provided by the project.

"It's important that we continue to work with the community to find sustainable solutions," said ICT team leader Rathana Snguon. *"Through education and supporting sustainable agriculture, we can ensure the unique biodiversity of Keo Seima is protected for future generations."*

In light of this isolated challenge, the KSWS REDD+ project remains committed to protecting the land tenure rights of Indigenous communities and promoting sustainable development in the region. Through community engagement, land demarcation, and targeted interventions, the project is working with communities to find solutions that balance the needs of people and the environment.

The Forest Plan Pillars



Sustainable Development Goals



OPPORTUNITIES



A lush and beautiful community farm plot in Srei Village, supported by C4C funding, providing a sustainable source of food for local residents.



KSWS C4C team member, Rathana Snguon.

Scaling Up for Community Impact: C4C's Approach to Identifying and Funding Local Projects

The Q3 impact report for KSWS REDD+ highlighted a challenge in maximizing touchpoints with communities and having the capacity to identify unique investment opportunities tailored to specific communities. These are often smaller projects that can have a significant positive impact on individual community members but are only sometimes the traditional infrastructure projects commonly funded by Cash for Communities (C4C).

To address this challenge, the project has made a strategic effort to increase the size of its community team. This has allowed them to expand their reach and have more direct interactions with community members, which has led to a greater understanding of their needs and aspirations. As a result, the team has already been able to identify and implement projects in 2023 that have a direct and measurable impact on the lives of community members.

One example is the fish and chicken farm projects established in Pu Gnourl and Sre Andao. These projects have provided a sustainable food source for the community and income for local farmers. Additionally, expanding several home gardens with C4C funds in the area has helped increase food security and improve community members' overall health and well-being.

In nearby Pu Keh village, C4C has also funded a sustainable wild honey group that provides revenue to purchase locally-sourced honey from wild collectors. This project not only supports the local economy but also helps to conserve the natural environment and protect wild bee populations.

While the community team is encouraged by the progress made through its community engagement and project funding efforts, they recognize that sustainable development is a continuous process. Therefore, the community teams in KSWS will continue working closely with communities to identify and fund projects that address their unique needs and strive to impact their lives and the environment positively.

The Forest Plan Pillar



Sustainable Development Goal

