



Reduced Emissions from Degradation and Deforestation in Community Forests –

Oddar Meanchey, Cambodia

2013/2014 Project Update - October 15, 2014

The 13 communities of the Oddar Meanchey Community REDD+ Project continue to address threats of deforestation from illegal logging and the presence of military activity in the province with the support of the Forestry Administration of the Royal Government of Cambodia. The largest community forestry group, Sang Rukhawan, the Monk's community forestry group, manages 18,000 hectares, or 30% of the project. The group reports on continued implementation of key activities that reduce the presence of deforestation in their forest areas. During the last year, they have improved demarcation of community forest areas through installation of boundary posts and digging of large boundary ditches. These are critical activities that ensure that outsiders are aware of when they are encroaching on land controlled by the project's community groups. Better awareness of boundaries, as well as active patrolling on almost a daily basis, have led to the confiscation of tractors and chainsaws used to illegally deforest, as well as multiple arrests and even jail for repeat offenders, supported by local police. While implementation funds have been limited for the project, other project communities, including Chhouk Meas, Samki Sangkrous Preychheu, and Phnom Dangrek Somrek Prey Srors, have implemented similar activities, prioritizing sign posting and patrolling to control illegal loggers.



Figure 1. Community-based Tree Measurements provide data in GHG emissions

One of the key project goals focuses on improving forest health to increase biodiversity alongside improving local livelihoods. To enhance biodiversity, the communities are combatting illegal hunting of wildlife with impressive results. Over the last year, they have removed over 3,000 wildlife traps (see picture insert), captured photos of 195 species in the project areas. The cameras have captured photos of some endangered species in the project area. These have included the Giant Ibis (*Thaumatibis gigantean*) which is IUCN Critically Endangered, found primarily in northern Cambodia, and without protection of forest habitat in the project areas will continue its extremely rapid decline as due to hunting, disturbance and deforestation. There has also been citing of the Wild Banteng (*Bos javanicus*) which is IUCN endangered due to largely because of the unrestrained bushmeat trade and of hunting for the trade in horns, which is combatted in the project areas through patrolling and arresting illegal hunters. The project also had a program to release key endemic species into the project areas to improve



Figure 2. Illegal traps confiscated by patrollers



biodiversity. The community groups have built dedicated ponds for wildlife to further enhance the quality of forest habitat.

While the full workplans for tree planting, assisted natural regeneration, and small scale agricultural intensification will be undertaken as additional revenue is generated from emissions reduction sales, multiple communities have undertaken small scale tree planting to provide sustainable sources of fuel wood.

One of the challenges facing the project is its proximity to Thailand, resulting in the ongoing presence of the Cambodian military in the province. Without clear community forest boundary demarcation and agreement between community groups and the soldiers, community forests remain at risk when military camps are established. In May, the Oddar Meanchey Community Forestry Network, with the support of the deputy governor Hing Hoeurn of the Banteay Ampil district, held a meeting with the military to raise concerns about deforestation in the province generally, and specifically in the Oddar Meanchey community forestry areas. This meeting was successful in reaching a cooperative agreement between the military and the community forestry groups, in which the military agreed to respect community forest areas and limit deforestation.



Figure 4. Tree planting celebration promoting forest health and sustainable fuel wood



Figure 3. Meeting between the Oddar Meanchey Community Network and military leaders

In September 2014, the NGO Forum on Cambodia, together with the civil society REDD+ network in Cambodia, organized a two-day study trip to the REDD+ Project in Oddar Meanchey. The trip was intended to allow participants to share experiences from the Oddar Meanchey Project, build capacity with other community groups, and share ideas about challenges and solutions among 16 local community leaders in attendance. The experience proved valuable for all involved. Participants included individuals from the Seima REDD+ project, REDD+ Consultation Group, and indigenous communities, as well as Prey Long, Kampong Thom, and Rattanakiri - three other provinces with key community forest areas. During the trip, participants explored and shared their experiences with the participatory process and the implementation of community-based forest carbon conservation, particularly with regard to forest monitoring and the participation and grievance mechanisms.

The project is scheduled to prepare and undergo its 2nd verification of its GHG emissions this year. Small initial sales of credits were recently made and the funds distribution mechanisms are being operationalized and workplans activities prioritized to deploy these initial proceeds.

The leadership of the Oddar Meanchey Community REDD+ Project, the world's first project to complete verification of emission reductions under the Verified Carbon Standard (VCS) with a triple gold Climate, Community and Biodiversity (CCB) accreditation for emission reductions, provides important lessons learned and a benchmark for how governments and communities can work together to improve biodiversity and rural livelihoods while simultaneously delivering high quality emission reductions to corporations who are committed to carbon neutrality.