



Livelihood Improvement through Generation and Ownership of Forest Information by Local People in Products and Services Markets

In what is a big step towards commercial community forestry, Cambodia's Forest Administration, in partnership with RECOFTC, and with technical assistance and funding, from the Wildlife Conservation Society, began pilot testing in 2008 community-based production forestry in the Seima Biodiversity Conservation Area. It is an innovation unlike any other in the region in which communities are allowed to set up forest-logging operations in buffer-zone forest. The goal is to create a model for the legal trade of responsible forest products that will restrict encroachment and conversion while improving livelihoods and reducing poverty among the people living near the forest.

BACKGROUND

The Seima Biodiversity Conservation Area in Cambodia's eastern Mondulokiri province is one of the few protected areas in the country but the only one administered by the government's Forest Administration. Covering around 305,000 ha of mostly intact second-growth tropical evergreen and semi-deciduous forest, the Seima conservation area was created from a logging concession in 2002 as an experiment in flexible rules on forestry and farming activities.

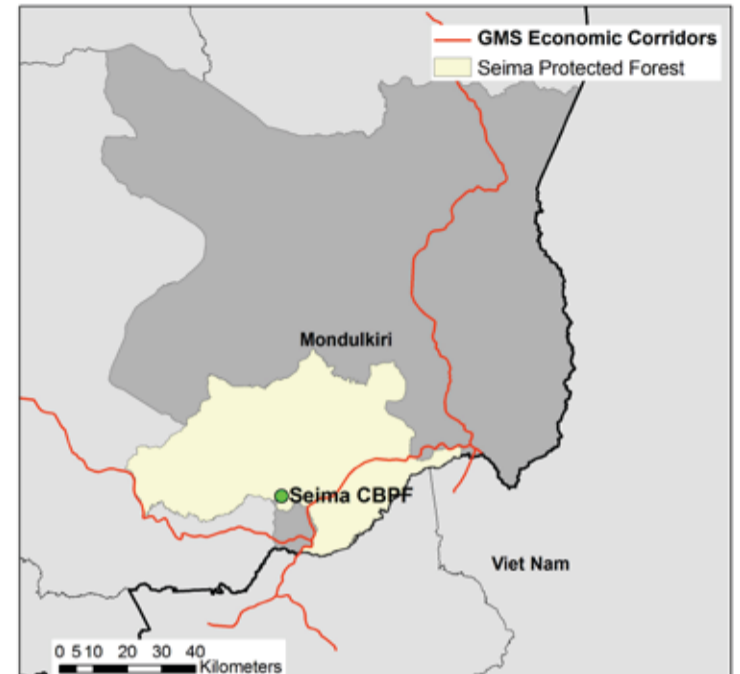
Most protected areas, administered by other government agencies, have strict limits on their uses. The pilot project involves agreements on land-use zones and regulations with the many indigenous villagers living within the forest or the boundary fringe of settler communities. Approximately 155,000 ha within the Seima conservation area were reserved as core forest and 150,000 ha as buffer zone to be managed for sustainable production. A 2003 sub-decree on community forest management allows timber to be harvested sustainably – mainly from the dry evergreen forests, which have an average standing volume of more than 120 m³ per hectare and an expected harvesting rate of 0.5 m³ per hectare per year in the 6,000 hectares of well-stocked forest. The agreements cover village-level land use planning and the development of communal tenure and involved participatory research, legal support, mapping, community organization and conflict-resolution activities.

The point is to test sustainable forest management plans and harvesting practices and secure greater forest protection while incorporating opportunities to improve livelihoods among communities.

APPROACH

RECOFTC's ForInfo works in partnership with the Wildlife Conservation Society to help communities generate all the information they need for the commercialization of community forestry and for developing management plans; and establish forest-management groups who will harvest trees and engage in primary processing activities. The RECOFTC technical experts work with communities, researching inventory methods that include photogrammetric volume analysis of evergreen trees and sampling of Sralao (*Lagerstroemia* sp.), biomass estimations and stratification of the community-based forests using remote sensing to determine what specifically is in the forest, what can be used, what are the species and how much are present and when is the best time to harvest forest resources. Additionally, RECOFTC has been training villagers how to analyse the data and determine how much timber can be sustainably harvested and on safe timber-harvesting techniques.

The project generates information on: i) timber and non-timber forest products and carbon inventory data; ii) grading and pricing of logs and processed timber; and iii) the raw material supply chain between villages and traders or processors. Initial estimates indicate the project can create daily wage levels of at least \$10 in most cases, which is comparable to rural incomes. Forthcoming trial harvests of 60 hectares will enable tests of the harvesting plan, harvesting operations, log processing and grading, transport and timber sales.



Partners

1. Forest Administration, from the local to national levels
2. Wildlife Conservation Society
3. Rainforest Alliance
4. Private sector partners in the timber value chain

Project duration:

3+ years or 3 years 6 months

Location:

Seima Biodiversity Conservation Area, Sre Preah commune, Mondulokiri Province, Cambodia



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About RECOFTC

RECOFTC – The Center for People and Forests is an international organization with a vision of local communities actively managing forests in Asia and the Pacific to ensure optimal social, economic, and environmental benefits. Headquartered in Bangkok, Thailand, RECOFTC works throughout Asia and the Pacific. Learn more at www.recoftc.org.

PROJECT OUTPUTS

1. Management plans are in place that cover the total forest area of the targeted three villages and guarantee the sustainable supply of at least 2,000 m³ of timber per year.
2. Harvesting levels are below increment rates, enabling a potential REDD+ project for the buffer zone.
3. Appropriate harvesting technologies are determined and are within the financial reach of the community user groups.
4. An income of at least \$500 per year per participating family or respective inputs in community development funds are realized by improved harvesting and processing methods (such as chainsaw log squaring).
5. Incidence of land conversion in the buffer zone and illegal logging have decreased against the 2011 baseline.

Baseline	Targets
To date, no timber under control of user groups is harvested legally	Communities harvest up to 2,000 m ³ per year, based on sustainable forestry management principles
Operational costs to harvest timber are very high (\$190 per cbm) for sawed timber delivered to Phnom Penh	Timber harvesting costs are reduced through the improvement of operational efficiency, thus increasing the profits of community enterprises

PROJECT OUTCOMES & IMPACT

A sustainable supply of timber from harvesting natural stands in the buffer zone contributes significantly to income generation and the maintainnce of the forest resources as well protection of the Seima Biodiversity Conservation Area.

1. Community forest agreements that give communities management rights for a period of 15 years, renewable for another 15 years and subject to compliance with the original agreement.
2. Sustainable harvesting in accordance with an approved management plan, sale of timber and non-timber forest products, based on agreed royalty fees, five years after the signing of the agreement.
3. *Information generation:* Communities collect data and generate forest information of the type and accuracy that is valued by external actors.
4. *Information management:* Locally generated information is pooled, managed, recorded, transferred via innovative technologies and audited transparently.
5. *Information ownership:* Communities have control over the dissemination of forest information, can use it to enhance their livelihoods through improved resource management and are rewarded financially for its use by other actors, with whom they share the information.



About ForInfo

ForInfo is a 2 million euro project funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland working with communities in Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand and Viet Nam to link them with existing and new markets, such as ecosystem services, and help them sustainably maximize their profits. ForInfo's work generates information with communities to improve their access to markets and achieve stability in their livelihoods while using their forests sustainably and efficiently. Learn more at www.recoftc.org/site/resources/ForInfo/



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