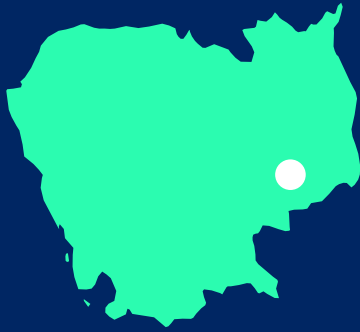


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Natural Climate Solutions in Action

Keo Seima Wildlife Sanctuary

Project/Program Type	Keo Seima Wildlife Sanctuary REDD+ generates carbon credits through avoided deforestation. Its credits are verified by Verra using VCS standard VM0015.
Description	Keo Seima Wildlife Sanctuary REDD+ protects the unique biodiversity of eastern Cambodia and supports local indigenous communities in securing legal tenure and management rights to ancestral lands.
Location	The project area runs along Cambodia's eastern border with Vietnam and encompasses a variety of habitats, including open, dry deciduous forest and higher-elevation rainforest.
Scale	The project accounting area covers 166,983 hectares within the Keo Seima Wildlife Sanctuary. The entire sanctuary covers 292,690 hectares and benefits from improved management and other project activities.
Number of Credits Issued to Date	18.8 million VCUs from 2010–2021 (14.5 million verified and 4.3 million currently undergoing verification)
Project Proponent	Ministry of Environment, Royal Government of Cambodia with Wildlife Conservation Society as lead technical and implementing partner.



Impacts

Impact To-Date

The project has avoided 25,000 hectares of deforestation and more than 20 million tons of carbon emissions. It has also secured Indigenous land titles for seven villages, expanded access to clean water for 2,200 people, and has established three community protected areas with four more underway. Populations of endangered primates like the black-shanked douc langur and the yellow-cheeked crested gibbon are stable.

Projected Longer-Term Impact

The project is currently assisting an additional eight villages in securing Indigenous land titles. By improving the livelihoods of local Indigenous people, halting deforestation, and protecting the region's wildlife, the project will help build a local economy centered around the conservation of Keo Seima's unique cultural and natural capital.



How a Carbon Project Is Safeguarding Cambodia's Endangered Species and Indigenous Rights

Growing up in an Indigenous Bunong community in eastern Cambodia, Kroeung Navy learned to gather wild fruits, mushrooms, bamboo and flowers—but never from her village's sacred forest. It was important to respect the spirits residing in plants, animals, rocks and water: They could help the village in times of need. Kroeung prayed with her neighbors in the sacred forest whenever someone fell ill; and left small food offerings to thank the spirits for their recovery. "If we lose our spiritual and burial forests, we would lose our identities as Bunong," she says.



Olly Griffin
Forest Carbon
Technical Advisor
WCS Cambodia

Traditionally the Bunong had very few formalized land rights.

Deforestation in Cambodia is dire. The country has lost more than 2.6 million hectares of forest—an area larger than the country of Rwanda—over the last two decades. The Khmer Rouge regime abolished land titles in the 1970s, leaving Indigenous people—including the country's 37,000 Bunong citizens—without the legal or financial resources to protect their land. Projections in 2010 from the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) showed that, without intervention, large areas of the Bunong homeland in eastern Cambodia would be deforested or degraded within a decade by agricultural conversion and logging—much of it illegal. As the forests of the Bunong homeland shrank, so did local populations of some of Southeast Asia's most spectacular wildlife, including Asian elephants, yellow-cheeked crested gibbons, green peafowl and black-shanked douc.

"Traditionally the Bunong had very few formalized land rights," says Olly Griffin, the Forest Carbon Technical Advisor for Keo Seima Wildlife Sanctuary REDD+ (KSWs REDD+). "If someone else claimed their land, they had very little recourse."

Since 2010, the KSWs REDD+ project has helped seven Bunong villages in and around the Keo Seima Wildlife Sanctuary—including Kroeung's village, Sre Lvi—secure land titles and designate spiritual and burial forests, as well as areas for agriculture and residential development. Not only has the project helped the Bunong people safeguard their forests and traditions, but it has also created new economic lifelines for Indigenous communities.

The KSWs REDD+ project quantifies the amount of carbon stored in local forests and sells carbon credits to companies seeking to mitigate their greenhouse gas emissions. Some of the revenue is used to protect and manage the protected area. Another portion of the revenue is given to communities to invest in projects like healthcare and clean water systems. The project is managed as a partnership between the Royal Government of Cambodia and the WCS, with local communities playing a key role. Eight additional Bunong villages in or on the border of the Keo Seima Wildlife Sanctuary are in the process of receiving land titles with support from the project.

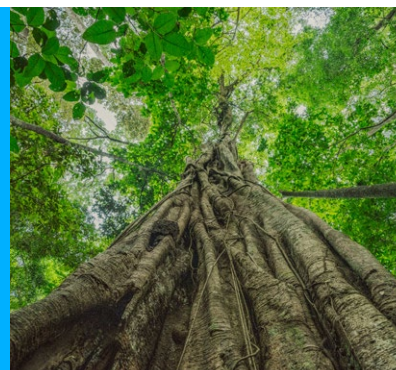


Kroeung Navy
REDD+ village focal point
for Sre Lvi village
Keo Seima Wildlife
Sanctuary REDD+

If we lose our spiritual and burial forests, we would lose our identities as Bunong.



>20 million tonnes of avoided emissions



Access to clean water for **2,200 people**

Secured Indigenous land titles for **7 villages**



Home to **13 critically endangered species**

Follow the progress





In total, 12,000 Bunong people live in 20 different villages within and around the project area, as well as 8,000 people from other ethnic backgrounds. "In Keo Seima, we have higher levels of indigenous tenure inside the protected area than outside the protected area due to the resources made available by REDD+," Griffin says. Twenty-one percent of Cambodia's Indigenous Collective Land Titles are in or around KSWs, despite the protected area covering less than 2 percent of Cambodia's total land.



Kroeung Navy
REDD+ village focal
point for Sre Lvi village
Keo Seima Wildlife
Sanctuary REDD+

Before the REDD+ project, we were doing no patrolling in the forest. Now we have financial support to patrol.

Villages have used some of the revenues from REDD+ to support community-led forest patrols that enforce the village land titles and protect spiritual and burial forests from illegal encroachment. As a result, deforestation within the project area has slowed dramatically compared to outside regions. The adjacent Snoul Wildlife Sanctuary, which lacks a REDD+ program, saw three-quarters of its forest cover disappear since 2010 and lost its status as a protected area in 2018. Within the KSWs REDD+ area, by contrast, the loss of forest cover has been only 0.57 percent per year. To date, the project has avoided the loss of more than 25,000 hectares of forest that would have otherwise been destroyed.

This has made KSWs a safe haven for wildlife. The sanctuary includes nearly the world's entire population of black-shanked douc langurs, as well as the world's largest population of yellow-cheeked crested gibbons. The populations of both these endangered species are stable within Keo Seima. So are the populations of four other primates and the green peafowl. Several species of ungulate—the main targets of illegal poachers hunting with snare traps and dogs—are declining more slowly inside Keo Seima than outside the sanctuary, as well.

"Before the REDD+ project, we were doing no patrolling in the forest," Kroeung says. "But now we have financial support to patrol the forest to observe wild animals and whether there's any illegal activity."



Olly Griffin
Forest Carbon
Technical Advisor
WCS Cambodia

The plan is to expand the project's forest conservation impacts, whilst also increasing protections to biodiversity and the support we provide to local communities.

The project's benefits can be seen not just in the forest but also in streets of Bunong villages. A portion of the project's carbon credit revenue is distributed to participating villages after deducting project costs, transaction costs, and paying a share to the Ministry of Environment. Over the lifetime of the project, 50 percent of the net revenue after these costs will be directed towards community support. The smallest amount earned by a village in the latest annual assessment was \$13,000—which is still more than twice a village's annual disbursement from the national government. The best-performing village earned more than \$50,000. Since the beginning of the program the villages have received more than \$1 million, and the annual payments are expected to grow as the project continues and the voluntary carbon market matures.

An elected council from every community decides how to spend the money to meet its needs. One of the main priorities, across all 20 villages, has been expanding access to piped water and building covered wells. As a result, 2,200 people have improved access to clean water. Some villages have bought bicycles for children to ride to school. The project has also offered vocational training to support local entrepreneurs and craftsmen, including auto mechanics and hairdressers. Kroeung now works directly as a "community focal point" for Sre Lvi village for the KSWs REDD+ project, helping to coordinate activities between the project and the village, and making sure that her neighbors benefit from the project. "I wanted to take part in reducing deforestation and also in improving the living standards of people in my community," she says.

As the carbon market has grown in recent years, so has Griffin's hope for Cambodia's forests. "We can scale up the project," he says. "The plan is to expand the project's forest conservation impacts, whilst also increasing protections to biodiversity and the support we provide to local communities."



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About the NCS Alliance

The NCS Alliance (NCSA) conveys the voice of businesses, NGOs and solution providers on the need to mobilize a high integrity demand for high quality Natural Climate Solutions (NCS). The Alliance focuses on identifying opportunities and barriers to investment in the NCS voluntary carbon market and serves as a forum for knowledge sharing and technical capacity building to ensure natural climate solutions reach their full potential in abating climate change, while also tackling nature loss and socio-economic issues. NCS in Action was established to showcase how NCS are making a real difference in the world today.

For more information visit www.naturalclimatesolutionsalliance.org and follow us on [LinkedIn](#).



Statement of Acknowledgment

The NCS in Action are testimonials designed to highlight the benefits for people and nature associated with NCS projects and programs financed through the voluntary carbon market. The NCS Alliance strongly believes that the voluntary carbon market is necessary for financing NCS projects and programs. It is critical however that it rests on the integrity of the climate benefits, i.e. the ability of credits to truly represent real and verifiable carbon reductions.

The NCS Alliance recognizes the importance of staying up-to-date with the latest science and best practices as carbon-crediting programs evolve. We acknowledge that there have been challenges with certain methodologies and that improvements have not always been made as quickly as necessary. However, we believe that this is a valuable learning-by-doing process and that scaling up NCS is crucial in achieving global 1.5C goals. In support of this, the NCS Alliance will continue to highlight projects and programs in this space while also advocating for consistent improvement in standards and methodologies. For more information about how and when these methodologies are updated see [Verra](#), [Plan Vivo](#), [ACR](#), [ART](#).

NCS in Action is made possible with generous funding support from the We Mean Business Coalition.

Disclaimer

Inclusion of an NCS project or program in the NCS in Action program does not imply a recommendation to purchase, trade or retire credits associated with the project or program.

The NCS Alliance and its members take no responsibility for the purchase, trade or retirement of credits from these projects and programs. Instead, it recommends that individuals, companies and other organisations procuring credits as part of their climate strategies conduct their own independent due diligence to validate the quality and environmental integrity of their purchases.

The NCS Alliance secretariat in no way benefits financially or by other means from the selection.

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