



Issue No. 25 + 26  
October '22 - March '23

## Introducing WCS Cambodia's REDD+ Roundup

We are delighted to welcome you back to the revitalized REDD+ Roundup, our quarterly newsletter dedicated to bringing you the most recent news and updates from our REDD+ projects, including Keo Seima REDD+ and soon from Northern Plains REDD+. In this special double issue, we'll cover developments in Keo Seima Wildlife Sanctuary (KSWS), highlighting our progress and sharing the exciting stories that matter most.

Join us as we reconnect with our community and biodiversity teams, exploring their impact on the ground. We'll also bring you up to speed on the latest developments in benefit sharing agreements, whisk you away to a breathtaking waterfall that could be Cambodia's next sought-after ecotourism destination, and so much more.

Warmly,

WCS Cambodia REDD+

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March 2023

### Strengthening Land Tenure Rights: Official Certification for Bunong Villages' Self-Identification



In the more remote corners of KSWS, a significant milestone has been reached for six Bunong villages. The Ministry of Rural Development has officially approved their self-identification, a formal recognition of their unique Indigenous identity that bolsters the legal protections they've already obtained through their Indigenous Communal Land Titles (ICTs). This milestone was reached following the provincial ministry's recognition of self-identification in January, underscoring the importance of their distinct cultural heritage and land tenure rights.

Behind this achievement, our government partners, village leaders, and the dedicated Keo Seima REDD+ ICT team have tirelessly championed Indigenous rights in Cambodia. Their efforts illustrate the power of collaboration and determination and their unwavering support for Indigenous communities.

👉 🍇 To witness the inspiring online reaction, especially from the Bunong communities, and to delve deeper into the story, click below to see our Facebook post.

[Discover More](#)

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October 2002

## Empowering Communities: New Benefit Sharing Agreements Protect Forests and Invest in the Future



A defining moment unfolded as we signed new benefit sharing agreements in October with twenty REDD+ villages. These agreements foster collaboration between communities and our project, working together to safeguard natural resources and preserve forests. With phase three Cash for Communities (C4C) funds distributed, investments in sustainable development projects like healthcare, education, and infrastructure are already taking shape.

Our project's impact extends beyond direct cash payments to villages. We've also focused on strengthening communities' financial and management capacity through training, workshops, and technical assistance. This training forms the C4C program's backbone, equipping communities with the knowledge and skills to make informed decisions, ensuring the long-term sustainability of their natural resources.

These signed agreements signify a crucial step in conserving KSW's forests and empowering local communities, aligning with our commitment to Indigenous and forest-dependent peoples' rights.



Click below to check out more photos from the ceremony and learn about this achievement in our Facebook post.

[Learn More](#)

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October - November 2022



## Deepening Connections to Nature: Our Biodiversity Education Initiative Goes On Tour



Keo Seima REDD+ launched an exciting educational program for local communities, especially students, to understand the importance of biodiversity and wildlife in KWS. With over 350 residents participating in interactive workshops, awareness of wildlife populations, critical declines, and threats has grown.

The biodiversity team aims to cultivate respect and connection to nature for future generations, building on the traditional bond local communities, particularly the Bunong, share with the natural world. Cain Agger, our Technical Advisor for Biodiversity Monitoring, highlights the initiative's significance: "Through education and awareness-raising, we're enhancing community members' knowledge of the importance of biodiversity and their vital role in protecting it, leading to a greater conservation impact."

This initiative plays a key role in safeguarding wildlife in KWS and promoting sustainable development, working towards a future where the environment and people's well-being are tightly intertwined.

  To see more photos and reactions to this inspiring initiative, click below to have a look at our Facebook post.

[Learn More](#)

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February 2023

## Unlocking Sustainable Development Opportunities: Community-Led Ecotourism





Keo Seima REDD+ recognizes the potential of ecotourism to promote sustainable development in the sanctuary. The success of the [Jahoo Gibbon Camp](#), founded by WCS Cambodia and now managed by World Hope International, has inspired the project to replicate this model by launching community-led ecotourism ventures that showcase the natural beauty and rich culture of KSWS.

To achieve this, our team and the Provincial Department of Environment are working closely with community members in Andoung Kraloeng to identify new ecotourism sites, such as the Leng Kao waterfall pictured above. We have held meetings to plan how REDD+ funds can be invested in these ventures, including funding for signage, maps, and trail construction. This collaborative approach ensures that the initiatives are community-led and truly benefit the local people.

Samnang Khiev, our Private Sector Engagement Specialist, says, "Ecotourism can bring significant benefits to local communities while promoting conservation and wildlife protection, but it's important that these ventures are community-led and truly benefit the local people." As ecotourism gains popularity in Cambodia, Keo Seima REDD+ will continue to work closely with communities to develop attractive, sustainable destinations for nature tourists.

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#### Staff Spotlight



## Meet Nev Heap: A Champion for Indigenous Rights



Nev Heap, an ethnic Bunong from Purapet village, has dedicated himself to supporting Indigenous communities. His passion led him to work with WCS as our Indigenous Community Land Title Coordinator, where he gained extensive knowledge of Indigenous rights and a strong desire to protect them, particularly within the Keo Seima REDD+ project area.

After training with the Bar Association of the Kingdom of Cambodia, he began providing legal training to Indigenous people and joined the R&L law office in 2022. He opened his office in Mondulhiri Province, offering legal services to the Indigenous Bunong community.

In 2022, Nev participated in a pilot land inventory project in O Chrar and Andoung Kraloeng villages, building trust and confidence in resolving land disputes in and out of court. Nev believes the Indigenous Bunong cultural identity is multifaceted and distinct, crucial for ensuring community tenure safety and improving existing legal framework implementation. Nev's essential work continues here at WCS Cambodia to protect Indigenous people's rights.

  Click below to read the full write-up and see more photos of Nev at work.

[Read More](#)

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REDD+ Rewind

“The existence of the forest and our beliefs are intertwined; the forest’s presence allows our beliefs to persist.”



Introducing REDD+ Rewind, where we share Community Voice videos straight from our communities. This issue features Ly Sareoun, an Indigenous Bunong woman from Pu Reang village, who shares her people's profound spiritual connection to the forest.

For the Bunong community, forests provide sustenance, resources, and sacred spaces that shape their spiritual beliefs and traditions. They're a lifeline connecting them to their ancestors and preserving their cultural heritage.



Don't miss Ly Sareoun's inspiring story – click below to watch the video and more Community Voice content.

[Watch Now](#)

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We hope you enjoyed this edition of REDD+ Roundup. We'll see you here again this summer.

**Want to keep your colleagues up to date?** Click the button below to share this issue.



Forward



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