

CONSERVING BIODIVERSITY AND BUILDING COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

Tonlé Sap, Cambodia

Most villagers around the Tonlé Sap lake rely on fishing activities to make a living and they depend heavily on the seasonally flooded forests for fresh water, food, fuelwood and other essential natural resources. Overfishing and extreme weather conditions eroding the forests are threatening the survival of these communities, who are at risk of further marginalization.

Since 2007, to stem overfishing, fisherfolks have received trainings on how to use fish catch monitoring methods and improve their fishing practices. Communities were also trained on how to process fish following standardized hygienic practices to increase the commercial value of their product. Capacity building and support helped to establish Fisheries Coordination Teams (FCT), which facilitate engagement of fisherfolk with the provincial government, by providing a platform for discussion. Whilst the FCT's primary function is to address fisheries issues, they can also discuss matters regarding to education, health and other community needs. While the management of the local community fisheries is the responsibility of the Community Fishery Committees, through the FCT mechanism committees lobby the government to provide support to their activities. Through an FCT, community issues are raised and collaboratively solved via technical assistance and funding from relevant stakeholders supporting community fisheries management. FCTs engage members to meet regularly and come up with an action plan, detailing roles and responsibilities for moving forward, to which members are held accountable.

Through collaborative engagement, the overall management of community fisheries has improved tremendously. Increased levels of environmental protection and restoration driven by the local communities have resulted in protection of 6,000 ha of fish sanctuary area; preservation of 25,000 ha of flooded forest; and re-establishment of fish stocks. Illegal fishing has decreased thanks to enhanced engagement of community committees in governance. Economic resilience of target communities and especially of women has also increased, thanks to collective action and cooperation.



<https://www.conservation.org/projects/Pages/tonle-sap-lake-conserving-cambodia-fish-factory-mekong.aspx>

Conservation International

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