

PARTICIPATORY MONITORING AND EVALUATION FOR COMMUNITY FORESTRY

Kampong Thom, Cambodia

After the civil war, Cambodia has experienced high deforestation rates caused by illegal logging and unsustainable practices. Community forestry, a model of forest management that puts local communities at the centre of decision making, can accelerate reforestation. However, local people often lack adequate incentives and direct benefits from such engagement, and institutional bias against allocating high-value forests to communities persist. Community management of forests is a journey, which requires policy and legislative reforms. The Center for People and Forests (RECOFTC) has been working with Khoun Mon, the community leader and other Community Forestry Management Committees (CFMCs) on a participatory monitoring and evaluation system that allows local communities to capture their progress and report back to key stakeholders, ensuring transparency. The tool enables communities to demonstrate their ability to manage forests and communicate this effectively to Government and other stakeholders.

Under the guidance of an RECOFTC facilitation team, 10 different participatory tools were piloted by CFMCs between 2017 and 2018, including baseline tools, planning tools, and progress monitoring tools. Each CF group was encouraged to adapt the tools and the overall system to their specific needs. CFMCs, as the primary users of the technology, were made responsible for the use of the tool, and for sharing outcomes with group members, forest department officials and other appropriate stakeholders, and collect their feedback. Forest dependent households were facilitated in recording non-timber forest products harvested from the forest area, consumed at home and sold in the market. Once the data was updated, CF members would be presented with the result to increase transparency and accountability, placing communities at the centre of the monitoring system. The tools were well received by the communities as they brought along a sense of unity, transparency and accountability.

While specific data is not yet available, the monitoring results indicate that communities feel that forest cover and the availability of non-timber products has significantly increased since the introduction of the tool. The tool has created a framework for CF members to observe changes and define trends within their CF, enabling them to plan activities for the upcoming years. Thanks to the monitoring system, communities have been able to effectively communicate these changes to relevant stakeholders, such as the Forestry Administration and local authorities. Given the successful results, the Forestry Administration Cantonment of Kampong Thom has requested that the monitoring system be introduced to all community forests within the province. By helping local communities document their resource, the tool has increased their access to information and has promoted learning and knowledge sharing.



The Center for People and Forests (RECOFTC)

<https://www.recoftc.org/stories/spark-citizens-monitoring-toolbox>

<https://www.recoftc.org/stories/citizens-monitoring-community-forestry-governance-tools-local-people>

Jeffrey Williamson, RECOFTC: jeffrey.williamson@recoftc.org

