



Multi-Function Forest Restoration and Management of Degraded Forest Areas in Cambodia



O Soam and Tbeng Lech Community Forests — Benefits Generated from Degraded Forests

The Institute of Forest and Wildlife Research and Development, Forestry Administration of Cambodia, has been implementing the project “Multi-Function Forest Restoration and Management of Degraded Forest Areas in Cambodia” (hereafter referred to as the “project”) since December 2011. The project is funded by the Asia-Pacific Network for Sustainable Forest Management and Rehabilitation (APFNet). The project aims at building the capacity of local communities on forest restoration in two community forests (CFs), Tbeng Lech and O Soam, in Siem Reap and Kampong Thom provinces, respectively. Tbeng Lech was established in 2000 with the assistance of Forestry Administration (FA) and FAO while O Soam CF was established in 2004 with the assistance of FA and non-government organizations (NGOs).

The project established one nursery in each community forest and has provided on the job trainings to community members and local FA on seed collection, seed treatments, raising of seedlings and forest restoration. After two years of practicing in forest restoration, the CF committee members claimed they acquired practical knowledge on the technical aspects of forest restoration. Many of the community members who received training from the project have shared their knowledge with the members from other community forests.



Since the forest restoration activities have just started in 2013 in the two community forests, it is still too early to notice the results. However, the forests are in the process of recovery and the project’s interventions resulted in some positive impacts. There are no signs of illegal cutting and land encroachment in the areas. The project has further motivated the communities to conserve the community forests and utilize them in a sustainable manner.

Forest benefits

Even if the community forests are in the degraded state, they are sources of a number of NTFPs that support the livelihoods and income of local communities. Some members of the communities depend on harvesting of NTFPs to provide their entire livelihood and income.



The harvested NTFPs are sold mostly in crude form, as there is little value-adding that is being conducted. Some of the important products collected in the two community forests are wild fruits, edible insects, fuel wood, resins, mushrooms, fish, vegetables, rattans, wild potatoes, honey and thatching materials. Potential enterprises that may be developed in the area include the trading of honey and processing of rattan.



Income from edible spiders. Mr. Chhin Sath collects mushrooms, wild fruits, fuel woods and spiders from O Soam community forest. Most of the spiders are sold to a local dealer. He collects about 120 spiders and earns about \$75 per season.



Income from wild fruits. Ms. Khim Phien lives in Salavisay Village and Commune, Brasath Balang district, Kampong Thom province. She gets several benefits from the community forest, such as collection of wild fruits, such as “kuy”, which is abundant in O Soam CF. Most of the wild fruits collected are sold in the local market or delivered to a broker in the village. Some brokers come to her house to pick the wild fruits. She earned approximately \$7.5 from the fruits per season. There are approximately 10 families in O Soam CF who collect wild fruits. In general, Ms Phien collects about 15 kilos of kuy per fruiting season. She observes that wild fruits are more abundant today compared to three or four years ago because the forest has been well protected. She suggests that the community forest should be protected and restoration conducted in degraded areas.



Ms. Oeum Soch is a resident in Tbeng Lech village, Tbeng Commune, Banteay Srey district, Siem Reap province. She collects some NTFPs from the community forest (Tbeng Lech) such as vines, mushrooms, wild fruits, wild potatoes and fuel woods for subsistence and income generation. She sells the wild fruits to the brokers in the village. In a fruiting season, she collects about 15 kilos of wilds fruits from the community forest.

Income from honey collection. Ms. Sar Sopheap is a resident in Salavisay Village and Commune, Brasath Balang district, Kampong Thom province. She engages in the buying and selling of honey collected by members of the community forest. She trades about 150 liters of honey and earns approximately \$750 per year. The production of honey has been increased in recent years. This could be due to the improvement of the forest conditions which provide food to the honeybees. The buyers sometimes come to her house to buy the honey products. Beside honey, she also collects mushrooms and wild fruits from the community forest for consumption.



Income from rattan. Ms. Sin Hean collects several forest products from O Soam CF such as rattan. She collects



rattan shoots for consumption and the canes for selling and producing a variety of products such as baskets and containers. She is one of a few members of O Soam CF who collects and processes rattan for income generation.

Most of the products are sold to an NGO which place orders in advance. Ms. Hean, on the other hand, earns about \$30-40 per month from her business. It is expected that the population of rattan will increase considering the community's rule for harvesting of rattan and effective protection of the community forest. The CF members also plant commercially important species of rattan under the APFNet Project. Ms. Hean suggests that in order to support the livelihoods of local community, rattan planting should be intensified in the community forest.

While the community forests contribute income to the community members, they also provide forest products that support the subsistence needs of the community members.

Community visions

Vision of O Soam CF: *"A forest comprising of big trees of high-value timber species that support the construction needs, with abundant NTFPs and creeks with fishes that support the livelihoods of the community"*

Vision of Tbeng Lech CF: *"The community forest is recovered and the biodiversity is restored that can provide forest products for home consumption, income generation and support the ecotourism industry of the community."*

Gaps between the vision and the current condition of the forests

There are still some areas that are sparsely vegetated and most of the forests are composed of young trees of less-



valuable, pioneer tree species. The NTFPs that support livelihoods of local communities are very limited. There is an apparent need to enhance the production of NTFPs through forest restoration and increase the value of the forest products.

Directions towards attaining the community vision

To achieve the visions of the communities, the forests must be well protected and forest restoration will be conducted. The project has a target to restore about 10% of the forest areas of the two community forests by the end of 2014, which is 30 ha in O Soam and 20 ha in Tbeng Lech. Several species have been planted in the two community forests: 1) Short term plants, such as pineapple, introduced thru an agroforestry system, to meet the immediate need of local communities; 2) Medium term species, such as rattan, bamboos and fruit trees; and 3) Long term species, timber trees, such as *Dipterocarpus alatus*, *Hopea odorata*, *Dalbergia cochinchinensis* and *Pterocarpus macrocarpus*, to meet the construction needs of the community members.

The project produced a forest restoration plan which guides local communities on where and how to restore the forests. Some parts of the community forests do not require planting trees, but natural regeneration will be a sufficient method of bringing back the forests. This will work if the community can protect the forest from illegal cutting and land encroachment. In the long run, to achieve forest restoration, local communities need support from concerned agencies, particularly on forest restoration and protection. Communities also need support to expand markets for wild honey and rattan products. Other options of livelihood improvement should be provided to the two communities, such as a rice seed bank. In this manner, farm productivity will be sustained and will reduce the pressure on the community forests.

Seeds and seedlings are available for sale at the nurseries of O Soam and Tbeng Lech. Please contact the following persons:

Ms. Sar Sopheap, Tel: 097 9 724 761 (O Soam CF)
Mr. Mao Nga, Tel: 097 9 124 265 (Tbeng Lech CF)

Go green - support our community forests!

For further information, please contact Mr Ma Vuthy at 088 8 766 676.