

## Progress towards indigenous land titling in the Seima Protection Forest, Mondulkiri

*Briefing note May 2011<sup>1</sup>*

Seima Protection Forest (SPF) was recently declared by subdecree; it was formerly the Seima Biodiversity Conservation Area, lying within a suspended logging concession in Mondulkiri and Kratie provinces. SPF is managed by FA with long-term technical and financial support from WCS and a range of donors.

The objective of the SPF is to conserve a critically important community of endangered species, the forest landscape they inhabit, and the livelihoods of the indigenous ethnic groups that live there. A central aspect of the management strategy is to assist all villages who wish it to obtain communal land titles, thereby strengthening their ability to participate in conserving their own resources, and to collaborate with the FA in co-management. SPF is a national pilot site for the production of avoided deforestation carbon credits using the REDD+ framework - this approach will strengthen the protection of community rights in several ways.

The right to communal land titles was first provided by the land Law (2001) and the enabling subdecree was eventually passed in 2009. The initial focus of community work in Seima was on Participatory Land-use planning (PLUP) and as part of a forestry project, in 2003-4 GTZ funded the very early stages of this in Andoung Kraloeng (AK) village. AK was the first village in the province to attempt PLUP and went on to be adopted as the only pilot village in Mondulkiri for testing the legal framework on communal titling. Over the years it has been visited by many delegations from government agencies<sup>2</sup>.

In 2005 AK completed its PLUP with support from the provincial authorities and began to implement protective measures in cooperation with FA and WCS. Since this time the village committee and elders have grown stronger and more effective, and have successfully repelled many attempts by outsiders to grab land and damage other resources in the village. In 2007 the village became one of the first three to be registered at Ministry of Interior (MoI) as a legal entity eligible to hold a communal title, with its own 'Indigenous Commission'. In 2009 national legal development was finalised and in November-December 2009 physical demarcation was completed, essentially the final step before full registration. AK is the first village in Cambodia to reach this stage - a historic achievement.

WCS, FA and the Ministry of Land Management (MLMUPC), together with three local NGOs<sup>3</sup>, have encouraged many neighbouring villages in SPF to consider titling their lands in the same way. Twelve others have expressed strong interest (see Table below) and four have expressed insufficient interest<sup>4</sup>. Of the interested villages, to date six have made strong progress, forming their own commissions and holding a public village congress prior to registering with MoI, and six have begun the process but remain at an earlier stage. Two of these six will hold congresses during 2011; the others are constrained by lack of funds.

Eventually it is hoped to work with all other interested village around the reserve. In summary there is potential for more than 20 villages in and around SPF to undertake communal titling, and so far 13 have at least begun the process.

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<sup>1</sup> For further information contact Tom Evans [tevans@wcs.org](mailto:tevans@wcs.org) and see [www.wcscambodia.org/saving-wild-places/seima-forest/land-tenure-mondulkiri.html](http://www.wcscambodia.org/saving-wild-places/seima-forest/land-tenure-mondulkiri.html)

<sup>2</sup> Community work has been conducted by an FA-led team with involvement of provincial Department of Land Management Urban Planning and Construction, Department of Environment and Department of Agriculture. Funds have been received from a wide range of donors - currently the Multi-donor Livelihood Facility (MDLF; Danida/Dfid/NZ Aid), the McKnight Foundation and the MacArthur Foundation are dominant.

<sup>3</sup> My Village (MVI), Development and Partnership in Action (DPA) and the Elephant Valley Project (ELIE)

<sup>4</sup> O Am, Sre Preah, Pu Haim and Pu Rang

The table and map that follow summarise the status of the villages that have begun titling.

Village	Commune	District	Year started	MRD	MOI	MLMUPC	Lead NGO supporters	Notes
Andoung Kraloeng	Sen Moronorm	O Rang	2003	ok	ok	ok	WCS	Pilot. Demarcated; await final subdecree
Ou Rona*	Sre Khtum	Keo Seima	2005	ok	ok	...	WCS	PLUP done.
Gati	Sre Preah	Keo Seima	2007	ok	ok	...	WCS	PLUP underway
Sre Khtum	Sre Khtum	Keo Seima	2008	ok	ok	...	MVI	PLUP underway
Sre Lvi	Sre Khtum	Keo Seima	2008	ok	ok	...	WCS/MVI	PLUP underway
Ou Charar	Sre Preah	Keo Seima	2009	ok	ok	...	DPA/WCS	PLUP underway
Pu Kong	Sre Preah	Keo Seima	2009	ok	ok	...	DPA/WCS	PLUP underway
Pu Trom	Romonea	Sen Monorom	2009	ok	...		ELIE/WCS	Congress funding in hand.
Chneng*	Sre Khtum	Keo Seima	2009	ok	...		MVI/WCS	Congress funding in hand.
Chakchar	Sre Chhuk	Keo Seima	2009	ok	...		WCS	
Khmaom	Sre Chhuk	Keo Seima	2009	ok	...		WCS	
Sre Andaol	Sre Chhuk		2009	ok	...		WCS	
Sre Khtong	Sre Chhuk		2009	ok	...		WCS	

Key:

\*Excludes non-indigenous parts of the village

MRD = Approved to proceed by Ministry of Rural Development

MoI = Registered as a legal entity (Indigenous Community Commission) by Ministry of Interior

MLMUPC = Land claim and internal rules assessed and accepted by Ministry of Land Management

#### Other key agencies/groups in the process of communal land titling

- the provincial Department of Land Management (DLMUPC) and the Working Group on Indigenous Communal Land Registration
- the Commune Councils, district and provincial authorities
- the MoI team led by Mr Chhin Seng Nguon and, more recently, staff of MRD
- ILO

FA has consistently provided institutional support to this approach, and recognises its value as a way to stabilise and manage the use of land by indigenous communities in this landscape. Since 2003 the FA/WCS team has been led by Phet Phaktra, from the Community Forestry Office.

The key contact on the DLMUPC side is Mr Kun Samana, who has also worked with the field team since 2003.

WWF and WCS cooperate to support a Provincial Conservation Planning Advisor, who deals with community NRM and broader land-use planning issues across the whole province. He is called Moul Phath and he sits in the Sala Khet compound, providing support to a sub-committee of Excom called the Provincial Conservation Planning Working Group.

## Current status of registration of indigenous communal lands in Seima Protection Forest (SPF)

