



FACTSHEET

OCTOBER
2012

Livelihoods

NON-TIMBER FOREST PRODUCTS

The rich natural resources of the Eastern Plains Landscape (EPL) in Cambodia and the livelihoods of the people dependent on them are increasingly threatened.



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Changing livelihoods; conserving forests

WWF is working to conserve the forests of the EPL in northeast Cambodia, whilst enhancing the livelihoods of the people living there, helping ensure their access to natural resources and spreading awareness of the importance of sustainable forestry.

Many local communities living in or around protected areas in Cambodia rely heavily on non-timber forest products (NTFP) for their sustenance and income. For example, resin is one of the most important NTFPs collected, with almost 18,000 families in Cambodia directly dependent on it¹. Deforestation for agro-industrial expansion, migratory land acquisition and unsustainable harvesting practices threaten the future of these important forest resources. Since 2007, WWF and partners have been working to help communities harvest NTFPs more sustainably, to add value to the products through simple processing and to support creation of small enterprises based on natural products.

Whilst NTFPs alone will not meet all the food and finance requirements of forest communities they do make an important contribution to many households' overall security and, in combination with other livelihood interventions, can help improve their well-being.

Home to critical biodiversity

The EPL sits within Mondulkiri province which is still largely covered by forest. In particular, the region is typified by dry deciduous forest with its open canopy and grass under-storey but there are also substantial areas of semi-evergreen forest and mixed deciduous forest. The forests are home to many endangered species like Asian elephant, wild cattle species and Eld's deer plus a large number of bird species. It is also recognized as having the highest potential in the country for tiger recovery.

Facing troubles

Some 65,000 people live in Mondulkiri, over 70% of whom are Phnong, Toumpon, Kroeung, Kraol and Charay, indigenous groups with their own language, culture and traditions. They live close to or in the forests, sustaining themselves through subsistence agriculture and natural products harvested from the wild. In Mondulkiri things are changing fast with infrastructure development, in-migration and the large scale allocation of land for plantation crops or mining. As the forest area shrinks and the human populations increase, so the forest products they have long relied upon face greater pressures from unsustainable harvesting.

¹ Prom Tola (2009) Beyond subsistence - trade chain analysis of resin products in Cambodia. NTFP-EP, Phnom Penh

Improving their own lives

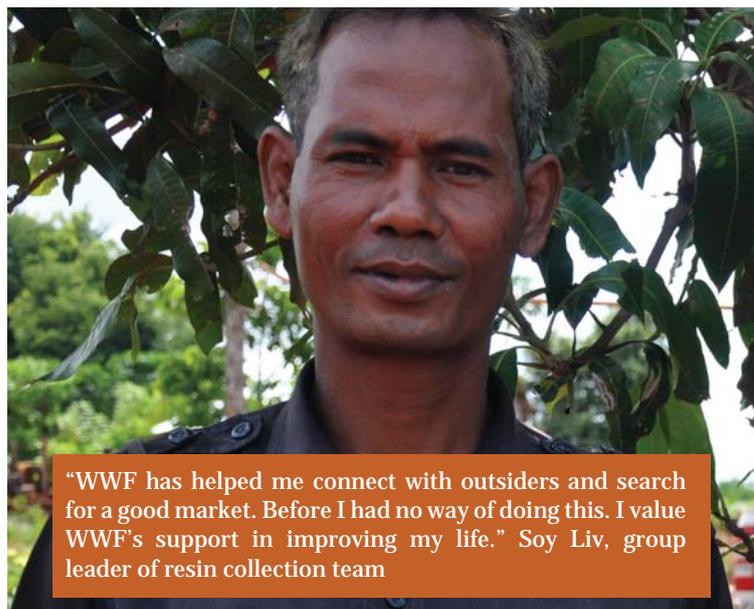
WWF and partners are working to engage communities in the conservation of their forest resources. This approach recognizes and promotes the rights of communities to access traditional natural resources, to establish community-managed forest areas and to make clear how both the people and forests benefit. WWF works with partner communities in the following ways:

1) Environmental/resource management e.g. resource mapping, forest resource protection and monitoring and NTFP harvesting improvements

2) Social-cultural component e.g. organizational development; leadership training and confidence building; community to community networking through sharing of knowledge, techniques and practices in NTFP harvesting; and information dissemination at village level

3) Economic component e.g. formation and strengthening of community-based NTFP enterprises including membership development and expansion; business planning and business management training; marketing and promotion support

4) Policy related component, e.g. establishing Best Practice guidelines, public awareness on links between forest conservation, sustainable livelihoods and development, and addressing land and resource conflict issues especially in the project areas.



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“WWF has helped me connect with outsiders and search for a good market. Before I had no way of doing this. I value WWF’s support in improving my life.” Soy Liv, group leader of resin collection team

Resin is tapped from a variety of hardwood trees (*Dipterocarpus* species) and is used in the production of varnishes, adhesives, incense and perfumes. Resin trees occur singly within the forest and are widely dispersed but each is owned by individual community members who have traditional rights that allow them to tap their own trees. In Mondulkiri Protected Forest and Phnom Prich Wildlife Sanctuary, there are at least 7,000 trees belonging to 225 families.^[2] WWF and partners are working with 115 of these families to help protect their resin trees from deforestation, training them in sustainable resin tapping methods and assisting them with accessing markets. The resin itself is valuable generating an average of \$700 per year to resin tappers who can own up to 150 trees each. Unfortunately the wood of these trees is also highly valuable and so trees are often cut by those involved in the illegal timber trade.

The strychnine tree, *Strychnos nux-vomica*, known locally as sleng is valued for its seeds. These are exported to Vietnam for medicinal purposes, and it is a major source of cash income for villagers. The large-scale demand for the seeds has put great pressure on this species because of unsustainable harvesting practices and lack of agreed management. In many cases, the trees are simply chopped down to collect the seeds from the canopy, killing the tree in the process. A sleng seed collectors group has been formed to help find more sustainable ways of harvesting and then processing the highly toxic seeds in ways that do not harm the environment or the harvesters.

Wild honey has long been part of the rural Cambodian’s lifestyle; used often for its medicinal value as well as its taste. Demand for the uniquely flavoured Mondulkiri honey is high. To meet this market demand in Sen Monorom and Phnom Penh, WWF has supported 2 honey groups to improve traditional honey harvesting techniques, access markets, write business plans and develop equitable profit sharing mechanisms. With only 17 members in 2007, the groups now have around 100 and for those members who harvest up to 150 litres per season their annual income has gone from \$300^[3] to \$900^[4] in only five years. The forests are perfect habitat for two honey bee species, *Apis dorsata* and *A. florea*, and the honey is harvested from wild hives. These hives are relatively common with a density of ten *A. dorsata* colonies per square kilometre in good condition forests.

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|  | <p>Why we are here To stop the degradation of the planet’s natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature.</p> <p>WWW.panda.org</p> |
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² Resin survey study by Khou Eanghourt for WWF (2006). WWF internal report

³ Honey Feasibility Study (2007). WWF internal report

⁴ Income from honey alone based on current price of \$6 per litre

For more information
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