

Project Update: December 2017

Objectives/Achievements so far:

1. Environmental education sessions conducted in three villages involving at least 150 community members
Partially achieved - three sessions have been conducted in two villages. It is hoped that this can be completed by the end of February 2018 with the cooperation of the Provincial Department of Environment
2. 175 days of community patrols conducted over a period of 1 year (resulting in confiscations of chainsaws, transportation equipment, weapons and prosecutions)
Partially achieved - Original budget for patrols with four persons for 175 days (700 person-days). The exchange rate was poor and target not quite reached as of December 31st 2017 with only 562 person-days on patrolling. Remaining 80 days in the budget (factoring in the low exchange rate) should be completed as of end of February 2018.
3. Report on key animal species encountered during patrols and database contributing to biodiversity study
Partially achieved - Camera trapping and observation/reporting were made throughout the period. There were some issues with camera traps failing – at the beginning of 2017 we had 11 camera traps but by June, about 50% had various malfunctions. Report still to be prepared but data is available.

Difficulties:

By the end of 12 months, the funding supplied was not entirely expended. This resulted partially from major change in partners made effective in the middle of the year:

Community education sessions were initially to be implemented in partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry Administration (MAFF/FA) however by mid-year the Government had changed jurisdictions for the conservation area that we are working in and thus our new partner ministry became the Ministry of Environment (MOE). A Memorandum of Understanding was signed in July 2017 with the MOE and details are still being worked out. This meant that the education sessions were not conducted as planned (originally it was to be done early in the year however the MAFF/FA were not as committed to the process or certain about their conservation work generally due to the uncertainties posed after all the changes were instigated. Currently, the MOE has committed to helping us to complete these education sessions within the next 2 months.

Outcomes so far:

Community patrolling activities conducted throughout the year resulted in the following:

- Reduced logging significantly – chainsaw logging within the original 6400 ha area has almost completely ceased. We estimate only nine to 12 live trees

were cut in the last 12 months by chain saw and two to three with axes. This is down from 10-20 trees per day in 2015 plus the trees destroyed by clearing more than 20 ha that year. (2016 proved less destructive than 2015 but there was still significant forest loss that year too).

- Hunting, especially by snaring was greatly reduced in 2017. A similar number of snares were confiscated in 2017 as in previous years, but the difference was that most of the snares this year were freshly laid and had not had opportunity to catch any wildlife when they were picked up. Another important thing is that most of the snares this year were not laid in the core zone but rather on or very near the boundary. This represents far less threat to the wildlife as these areas are not primary habitat for endangered species. While far less rifles were confiscated in 2017 than 2015-16, this was because there were very few poachers willing to risk hunting in the protected area knowing that there was almost always a patrol team out and about.
- The local communities have begun to accept that this protected area really is a protected area and those working to protect it are serious about it. This may be the most important outcome of all, and it has come from a combination of community education and the rangers that have been patrolling day and night to let poachers know that we are serious about long term conservation and we are not giving up. Thus, the habit to hunt in this area has been replaced with a habit of going elsewhere which, if maintained should lead to positive results in the long term. Hopefully with the new attitudes, we will be able to achieve the same results with less man power in the future.

Patrolling activity resulted in the following:

- Chainsaws confiscated: 14. Of these, eight were later redeemed after negotiations with local authorities and specific situation.
- Hand tractors and oxcarts confiscated (logging): 15. These are also all redeemed after negotiations with local authorities. All perpetrators sign agreements to stop the illegal activities.
- Homemade guns confiscated: 15.
- Detained poachers: 2.
- Snares collected: 1,079.
- Battery fishing stopped: 7 events.

Wildlife Report Summary:

- Presence of following endangered species confirmed by photos or direct observation in 2017:
 - Banteng (camera traps).
 - Silvered langur (direct, photos)
 - Pileated gibbons (direct, photos).
 - White-winged ducks (thought extinct in the area but sighting reported of five individuals).
 - Pangolins (camera trap photo).
 - Green peafowl (direct, photos, camera traps).
 - Otters (not endangered but previously not present – three sightings).

- With the current MOU signed with the MOE, other organisations are able to partner with us including Angkor Centre for Conservation and Biodiversity who have made two sets of animal releases here including pythons (reticulated and Burmese), a leopard cat, slow loris, monitor lizard and two serpent eagles and one changeable hawk-eagle.

Community involvement:

The local community members have done most of the patrolling work. Furthermore, most of the community members have contributed by NOT hunting and logging in the protected area. It is significant that the majority of the hunters encountered this year were from outside the local area. This is a positive thing as they are much easier to deal with than local villagers. Local villagers have been able to continue collecting NTFPs such as resin and mushrooms, to name a few, as a source of income. Also, more income from the ecotourism was allocated to community development rather than spending all of it on patrolling. Approximately \$4,000 of tourism earnings was allocated to fix 3 km of road as well as plant 1500 rosewood seedlings.

Continuation:

We are here in this area working to preserve the environment for the long term and will continue patrolling and working to educate the community.

Another major change that has validated our work here has been that the MOE in September 2017 created a new Wildlife Sanctuary around and including the Community Forest where we are working. This is 42,000 ha of mostly forest land needing significant protection. We are trying to work in the original 6,400 ha of Community Forest (now named Community Protect Area under the MOE's guidelines) however this enlarged area is needing more assistance.

The results from 2017 will be reported to the Ministry of Environment and reports made to the community.

This report covers January to December 2017 however as funding and activities are not complete, we request an extension of 2-3 months to finalise all activities and spend remaining funds.