

WILDLIFE ALLIANCE

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March 13, 2025

To: JERRY SEAGER
SENIOR DIRECTOR, PROGRAM QUALITY
VERRA

Subject: Notice of Submittal of Southern Cardamom REDD+ Project Twelve-Month Progress Report

Dear Mr. Seager,

On behalf of the Southern Cardamom REDD+ Project (the "Project"), I am pleased to present the comprehensive Twelve-Month Progress Report. This complies with Verra's Review Report (March 13, 2024), taking into consideration Verra's recommendations (September 20, 2024), which were in response to the Project's submission of the Initial Response to the Review Report (May 21, 2024) and Three-Month Progress Report (June 13, 2024).

This report provides detailed evidence demonstrating the implementation of actions required by Verra.

I am proud to highlight that the Project has made significant progress towards three critical areas:

- Human rights, safeguards and protection;
- Community engagement and participatory processes; and
- Indigenous people's rights recognitions and advancement.

Through a comprehensive review and update of Project policies and practices, our team has reaffirmed its commitment to and fostering a practice of continuous improvement.

We remain dedicated to upholding the highest standards of accountability and transparency, and we are confident that these efforts will contribute to the long-term success of the Project.

Kind regards,

DR. SUWANNA GAUNTLETT
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
WILDLIFE ALLIANCE

Southern Cardamom REDD+ Project

Project Improvement Measures 12 Month Report

Introduction

This report documents the status and efficacy of improvement measures implemented by the Southern Cardamom REDD+ Project (“SCRP” or the “Project”) in direct response to Verra's Review Report dated March 13, 2024. Following receipt of the Review Report, the Project conducted a thorough and systematic evaluation of all its practices, grievances, and community consultation processes. This evaluation, combined with Verra's required actions, has led to the development and implementation of improvement measures and safeguard mechanisms that aim to mitigate risks across all Project operations. The improvements outlined in this document demonstrate our commitment to protecting human rights including those of indigenous people. Each section of this report details specific actions, supported by evidence of implementation.

The SCRП has undergone three successful verification processes confirming its compliance with multiple standards: the Verified Carbon Standard (VCS), Climate Community and Biodiversity (CCB) Standard, and Sustainable Development Verified Impact (SD Vista) Standard. Although the Project met all these standards, Verra required further improvements to be implemented outside the verification process. In response, SCRП implemented additional measures that go beyond compliance with the standard. These improvements were specifically designed by the Project to respect the unique cultural and societal context of the indigenous peoples and local communities living in the Cardamom Forest Landscape.

Almost all the required actions have been fully implemented within the twelve-month timeframe. The Project has implemented significant improvements to strengthen its commitment to general human rights, community engagement, and indigenous peoples' rights. These key achievements include:

In respect to improving human rights policy and practices, the Project improved protection measures including extended eviction notice periods (by 60 to 90 days), guaranteed access to *pro bono* legal services, and implementation of human rights training for all 204 Cardamom Forest Protection Program (“CFPP”) rangers and staff. A new Conservation Communication Officer (“CCO”) position was created to facilitate dialogue between communities, the Project, and forest protection activities.

The stakeholder consultation process has been substantially enhanced through revised Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) practices. These improvements include separate meetings with indigenous communities, implementation of secret ballot voting, and establishment of commune-level open forum meetings. The grievance redress mechanism has been strengthened with the election of community focal points and an increase from 7 to 29 grievance boxes, strategically placed within communities.

Traditional practices and land rights have been further supported by the Project, with formal recognition by the Ministry of Environment of communities' rights to collect Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFPs) for household use and a strong effort to support systematic land registration for Chong indigenous people. The Project completed measurements for 1,432 land parcels in Chomnoab commune and 1,537 parcels in Pralay commune. Furthermore, the Project is supporting the registration of Chong indigenous communities and communal land titling through facilitation of

consultation workshops.

A robust benefit-sharing framework has been established with a Southern Cardamom REDD+ Project Carbon Fund (the “Carbon Fund”), across 29 villages. The framework places spending in the hands of elected Local Development Committees and Indigenous Communities, with 5% of the Carbon Fund reserved specifically for Indigenous cultural projects. The development of the Project's benefit sharing framework is intended to create meaningful and long-lasting positive changes, empowering community-centered governance. Extensive consultations with all 29 beneficiary communities across the Project area are currently ongoing, including elections in support of Local Development Committees (LDCs) and Community Focal Points. As such, the implementation of this Project improvement activity has extended past the date of this report this report, with five out of thirteen LDC committees established to date. The remaining eight LDCs are expected to be elected and established by May 2025.

Local Development Committees offer communities a self-governance framework for Project benefit sharing. The committee members are democratically elected and represent a range of stakeholders within a representative Commune. Once in place, the LDCs will be responsible for the allocation of the Carbon Fund financed by the Project in proportion to VCU sales. This implementation process includes several phases:

- Facilitation of community open air meetings
- Transparent committee elections
- Drafting of LDC by-laws
- Appointment of a representative to the LDC board
- Election of representative as the Feedback and Grievance Redress Mechanism community focal point

The Project aims to ensure that the decision-making authority regarding REDD+ benefits appropriately represents community will, fostering long-term sustainability and alignment with local development priorities.

Capacity Building for *Pro Bono* Attorneys, going beyond Verra's requirement to provide access to *pro bono* legal services, the SCRP has initiated a capacity building workshop for practicing *pro bono* attorneys in Cambodia. The workshop Action Plan and curriculum are currently being revised by legal experts. This initiative will enhance legal practitioners' foundational knowledge of the Cambodian Code of Environment and Natural Resources, with particular emphasis on its application within forest protection operations.

The aims of the workshop are to:

- Strengthen legal expertise in environment protection frameworks
- Contextualize legal practices within forest and indigenous communities
- Facilitate more effective legal representation
- Build a sustainable partnership between legal professionals and communities

The workshop will also include a discussion and review of current community utilization of *pro bono* legal services. This approach will provide critical insight into barriers to legal access, and areas of improvement for legal support infrastructure. This Project-initiated improvement is expected to be fully implemented by May 2025.

Status of Improvement Measures - Allegation 1

HRW's report alleges several forced evictions and violations of property rights. The report details a range of offences including: the forcible eviction of Chong Indigenous families and community members from farmland they customarily relied on; the arrest of community members who were then detained without trial; the arrest and mistreatment of community members for collecting sustainable forest products in the project area; the arbitrary search of homes of community members; and the burning down or destruction of huts and crops of community members.

Improvement Measures, Action 1

Identify and hold accountable WA and Cardamom Forest Protection Program (CFPP) staff implicated in alleged human rights abuses, including through internal disciplinary proceedings that may lead to permanent removal of that staff.

The allegations against CFPP reported by Human Rights Watch (HRW) could not be reliably investigated due to insufficient detail and evidence. HRW has not supplied further information on the time or location of the alleged violations. Therefore, and until such information is provided, the Project cannot implement improvement measures in response to this specific allegation.

Improvement Measures, Action 2

Design and implement mitigation measures to ensure that forced evictions resulting in loss of livelihoods for residents in the project zone do not occur in the future.

The Project has instituted a framework of mitigation measures designed to safeguard livelihoods during the eviction processes. All affected individuals now receive a minimum of 60 days' notice before any eviction deadline, with an option to extend this period to 90 days in specific cases requiring additional time. This extended timeframe ensures affected individuals can systematically plan transitions without loss as they can facilitate practical livelihood planning. Individuals are able to return to plots to harvest crops within the season following eviction that were planted prior to eviction notification.

The Project has also revised policies and practices to ensure all those accused of violating the Code on Environmental and Natural Resources have access to *pro bono* legal services, providing economic protection against legal fees. Additionally, the SCRP Conservation Communication Officer (CCO) has implemented an awareness-raising program focused on educating communities about the Code on Environmental and Natural Resources, particularly regarding illegal settlement in Protected Area. This averts future livelihood loss by helping community members make informed decisions about settlement and land use. These comprehensive measures collectively address livelihood protection.

Supporting Documentation:

- [Standard Operating Procedures](#) - The third edition implemented in November 2024 includes updated eviction guidelines in Part 4. Evictions (page 73).
- [Open Air Meetings with Conservation Communication Officer](#) – Supporting documentation of

community outreach initiatives since March 2024. The folder includes the qualifications of CCO Bou Sina, a list of trainings received by the CCO, and official approval letters from Provincial Authorities to conduct community open air meetings.

- [Pro Bono Legal Services](#) - The Project ensures *pro bono* legal access through two Pro Bono legal networks
 - Samdech Techo Volunteer Lawyers (Royal Government of Cambodia decision no. 001/19)
 - Ministry of Justice Prakas no. 1584 List of Pro Bono Lawyers

Improvement Measures, Action 3

Review current practices and procedures and make updates to ensure just and fair compensation should there be any involuntary relocation of activities important to the livelihoods and culture of communities

The Project is committed to supporting lawful activities important to the livelihood and culture of local communities. These include harvesting NTFPs for family use and the traditional practice of shifting agriculture. Local communities are permitted to collect NTFPs under the Code on Environmental and Natural Resources. The Code however prohibits the *commercial* collection of NTFPs without a permit and requires harvesting for household use to be done in a sustainable fashion that does not lead to the destruction of forest. Conflicts arise when unlawful and unsustainable harvesting methods are employed, such as cutting down entire trees to collect forest fruits or harvesting NTFPs for commercial purposes without an official permit. If an individual is falsely accused of harvesting NTFPs outside of the authorized guidelines provided under the Environmental and Natural Resources Code or if the Project accidentally damages an individual's lawful NTFP harvest, the Project is committed to compensate the individual in full for NTFPs affected.

To support activities important to the livelihood and culture of communities, the Project has committed to work more closely with indigenous people in the Project Area to facilitate the registration of communal land titles. In total, 11 workshops providing an overview of the Communal Land Titling process were held in Areng Valley. Results from these workshops are provided in the supporting documents below. In addition, the Project facilitated open air meetings with communities led by the newly established CCO to raise awareness of the Code on Environment and Natural Resources as it pertains to the collection of NTFPs.

Supporting Documentation:

- [Summary Report on Indigenous People Communal Land Titling Consultation](#) - Consultative workshops on communal land titling were held with indigenous communities living in Areng Valley.
- [Open Air Meetings with Conservation Communication Officer](#) - Documentation of community outreach initiatives since March 2024.

Improvement Measures, Action 4

Provide ongoing training for CFPP staff, government rangers, and WA staff on WA's responsibilities in accordance with the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights

The Project has implemented a comprehensive human rights training program aligned with UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights for all CFPP staff, including government rangers. This training was conducted in both English and Khmer languages:

- 1) An English-language training to all 18 CFPP conservation advisors in March 2024 on the "Human Rights Through REDD+". This training incorporates information from international frameworks including the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the Chitwan Declaration (2019), and the International Ranger Federation Ranger Code of Conduct (2020).
- 2) A Khmer-language version for all 204 CFPP government rangers in June 2024 on "Human Rights through REDD+".

The Project has implemented performance criteria for both government rangers and conservation advisors to ensure adherence to the guidelines presented during these trainings.

Supporting Documentation:

- [Human Rights Through REDD+ Training Documentation](#) – a detailed account of the delivered trainings

Improvement Measures, Action 5

Engage an international human rights law expert along with local indigenous peoples within the Project (and potentially including an external Indigenous Peoples' organization) to evaluate the organization's current policies and practices and help develop a human rights policy and code of conduct to be enforced across all of WA's operations in the context of the Project.

The Project has demonstrated a long-standing commitment to human rights through its comprehensive policy framework, inherited from Wildlife Alliance and first established in 2002. The Project strengthened its Human Rights Policy by incorporating the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights following recommendations from Human Rights Watch. Under the guidance of human rights attorney and expert, Gare A. Smit, the Project implemented substantial policy improvements.

In April 2024, WA developed its Values and Ethics policy (WAVE) in collaboration with Stephan Bognar, WWC Director of Sustainability Asia Pacific, and indigenous people's organization Peoples Forest Partnership. WAVE serves as the code of conduct for all Project staff, reinforcing core principles of Wildlife Alliance's Human Rights Policy in more actionable language. This comprehensive framework emphasizes fundamental values including respect for nature and people.

It provides clear guidelines for staff interaction with communities, ensuring consistent ethical practices across the organization's operations. The Project recognizes the importance of implementing policies

and practices that ensure conservation advisors and CFPP government rangers adhere to the highest standard of ethical conduct. With this intention, the Project has introduced measures and policies detailed in the documents below to guide field staff. These documents complement and support the Project's Human Rights Policy and WAVE.

Additionally, to ensure the policies are thoroughly reviewed and strengthened, the Project is collaborating with the Community Legal Education Center (CLEC), which is an NGO promoting rule of law, justice, and democracy in Cambodia. CLEC focuses on providing legal training to empower marginalized communities to understand and exercise their rights.

[Supporting Documents linked here include:](#)

- Park Station Rules
- Vitamin B+ Building a Team
- Vitamin D Ten Golden Healthy Safety Rules
- Human Rights Wrongdoing Form
- Strengthened Human Rights Policy under guidance of attorney Gare A. Smit
- CFPP Code of Conduct
- CLEC Service Contract
- WAVE Policy

Status of Improvement Measures - Allegation 2

HRW alleges that the stakeholder consultation process, particularly with Indigenous peoples, was flawed and failed to obtain free, prior, and informed consent from affected communities, including Indigenous communities and customary rights holders. Further, HRW alleges that the grievance redress mechanism is inadequate because it has not been sufficiently accessible in neutral public spaces, and stakeholders have not been confident to use it and fear retaliation.

Improvement Measures, Action 1

Implement improvements to the ongoing stakeholder consultation process to ensure that international human rights standards and best practice are upheld in relation to the right to free, prior, and informed consent, including by enabling residents to revisit the existing design, boundaries, activities, and implementation of the project.

The FPIC process has undergone significant modifications, including introduction of a secret ballot voting system rather than public show of hands. Also, meetings are now scheduled annually, rather than a minimum of once per monitoring period.

The FPIC meeting agenda has been expanded to include human rights, the benefit sharing process, the Feedback and Grievance Redress Mechanism (FGRM), and the anti-retaliation policy. Separate FPIC meetings are now held specifically with indigenous community members for culturally relevant discussions. To remove the financial barriers to taking time off from work and perhaps distant travel to the meeting site, the Project has implemented a meeting stipend of 10,000 Khmer riel, equivalent to

\$2.50. This stipend is not contingent upon participation in the secret ballot system, and is fair compensation for the time of attendees.

The Project has increased the availability of information materials during meetings, providing large format maps displaying the project boundary for each village, informative visual diagrams of the benefit-sharing plan, and comprehensive documentation on rights and procedures.

In addition to conventional FPIC meetings, the Project has instituted commune-level open-air meetings facilitated by the Conservation Communications Officer (CCO). The meetings offer villagers the opportunity to engage directly in an informal setting with community staff, local authorities, and conservation advisors to discuss various aspects of the Project.

Supporting Documentation:

- [Free, Prior, and Informed Consent Meetings Documentation](#) – All FPIC meeting minutes are endorsed by village or commune level leadership ensuring their authenticity and accurate account of events.
- [Open Air Meetings Conservation Communication Officer - Documentation of community outreach initiatives since March 2024.](#) – Open air meetings have been organized by the Project CCO

Improvement Measures, Action 2

Review current grievance redress mechanism, and, where needed, implement improvements to its grievance redress mechanism which shall take into account ensuring the following:

- *Alignment with the Verra program rules (referenced above) and the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights' effectiveness criteria.*
- *Inclusion of anti-retaliation policies in consultation with community members.*
- *Establishing, as needed, alternative and complementary community engagement and conflict resolution methods that are culturally appropriate.*
- *Sufficient number of grievance boxes in public locations.*
- *Enabling the anonymous filing of complaints; and*
- *Protecting the confidentiality and identity of complainants.*

The Project has improved its grievance redress mechanism following extensive community consultations and evaluation by human rights expert Stephan Bognar to ensure compliance with UN Human Rights Frameworks.

A network of elected representatives will serve as the Project's community focal points, responsible for documenting and addressing community grievances. The community focal point will also be a member of their respective Local Development Committee. The network of community focal points will receive training on conservation, community-centered governance, and other areas of Project operations. This process improvement is currently ongoing with an expected implementation completion date of May 2025. A short report detailing the establishment of five community focal points elected thus far is included among the supporting documents below.

A Project-wide anti-retaliation policy has also been implemented to protect community members who may put forward complaints. The anti-retaliation policy was presented to communities during FPIC and is to be further revisited as a discussion topic during open air meetings facilitated by the Project's CCO.

The physical infrastructure for collecting grievances has also been improved. The Project has increased the number of grievance boxes from 7 to 29. These boxes have been repositioned to more discreet locations, away from publicly-visible areas, and placed in sites trusted by the community to members to file their feedback and grievances without fear of retaliation. All boxes have been clearly labeled as "Grievance Boxes" to ensure their purpose is unmistakable.

Supporting Documentation:

- [FGRM Community Focal Point Election Process](#)
- [Conservation Communication Officer reports](#)
- [Grievance Boxes placement documentation](#)
- [Anti Retaliation Policy](#)

Improvement Measures, Action 3

Provide regular and ongoing training to rangers and WA staff in relation to the design and implementation of the grievance redress mechanism.

The Project implemented training for all 204 CFPP rangers and staff. The training module constituted (1) comprehensive human rights training program aligned with UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, and (2) a detailed overview of the grievance redress mechanism for all staff. The FGRM was developed by community engagement Project leaders and in consultation with community members. The FGRM was tailored to fit the unique cultural and societal context of communities living in the Cardamom Landscape. Consultation with community members identified four mechanisms to log grievances; the Project Hotline, messages on Facebook, community focal points, and grievances boxes. Rangers and WA staff are familiar with this framework, and in the event they receive a grievance it is appropriately funneled through the right channels so that the grievance can be addressed. Rangers have a directive to log grievances in an honest and timely manner.

The training was conducted in two distinct phases throughout 2024. In March 2024, the first phase provided specialized training to 18 CFPP station advisors, covering the "Human Rights through REDD+" curriculum. This curriculum incorporated key international frameworks including the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Chitwan Declaration (2019), and International Ranger Federation Ranger Code of Conduct (2020). Following this initial phase, in June 2024, technical partner Wildlife Works Carbon developed and delivered comprehensive Khmer-language "Human Rights through REDD+" training to all 204 CFPP rangers and staff, establishing specific performance criteria for field staff.

Supporting Documentation:

- [Human Rights Through REDD+ Training documentation](#)

Improvement Measures, Action 4

Review the current frequency and design of the structure of meetings between rangers, project staff, and community members to ensure an open forum for airing and addressing grievances.

Required timeline: within three months from the date of this report.

A new Conservation Communication Officer (CCO) position was created to facilitate dialogue between communities and law enforcement. The CCO brings expertise in conflict resolution, cultural sensitivity, and human rights, working directly with indigenous peoples and local communities to facilitate open dialogue and address concerns. Sixteen such open forums and awareness raising workshops have been conducted so far.

Supporting Documentation:

- [Open Air Meetings Conservation Communication Officer](#) - Documentation of community outreach initiatives since March 2024.

Status of Improvement Measures - Allegation 3

HRW alleges there were multiple instances of arbitrary arrest, detention, and mistreatment of community members by rangers, gendarmes, and WA staff; the detention of community members for months without trial or access to legal counsel; and arbitrary searches of community members' homes. HRW alleges that community members were arrested, and homes were searched because they farmed on and collected non timber forest products (NTFPs) from the project area.

Improvement Measures, Action 1

Clarify whether communities' traditional farming practices and the collection of NTFPs from the project area are criminalized, and if they are criminalized, explain how the project conforms with the Verra program rules listed above.

The Project operates within the framework of the Code on Environmental and Natural Resources (former 2008 Protected Area Law) and adheres to local, regional, and national laws while engaging with communities to respect their traditional practices. Under the Code on Environmental and Natural Resources, the collection of NTFPs for personal, customary use is not criminalized, provided it is done sustainably. However, any such collection that leads to forest or ecosystem degradation, such as tree cutting or burning, is illegal. Additionally, the collection of NTFPs for commercial purposes requires a permit from the Ministry of Environment (MOE), and any abuse of this regulation is considered illegal.

Shifting agriculture, including slash-and-burn practices, is prohibited inside the Protected Area but allowed within the delineated community area. Each project community has an established community area where traditional farming practices, including slash-and-burn, can take place without violating the law.

To ensure compliance with the Code on Environmental and Natural Resources, government rangers, including MOE Judicial Police Officers, are responsible for enforcing the law consistently. These officers monitor activities such as slash-and-burn farming and NTFP collection within the Project Area, ensuring they adhere to legal guidelines.

The Project also recognizes that some community members may have a limited understanding of the legal aspects related to slash-and-burn farming and NTFP collection. To address this gap, a CCO was appointed in March 2024. The CCO's role is to engage with communities and provide educational training about the legalities surrounding these practices, with a focus on sustainable NTFP collection and the implications of the Code on Environmental and Natural Resources.

Importantly, the Project has not displaced traditional activities crucial to local cultures and livelihoods. Instead, it aims to promote sustainable practices while ensuring compliance with the law. SCRP upholds the Code on Environmental and Natural Resources and does not require agreements with Property Rights Holders under the Verra Program Rules, as it works within the existing legal framework. This approach balances the preservation of traditional practices with the need to protect the environment.

Improvement Measures, Action 2

After conducting a review of the allegations, any WA and Cardamom Forest Protection Program (CFPP) staff identified as engaging in any of the allegations described above, shall be held accountable including through internal disciplinary proceedings that may lead to permanent removal of those staff.

The allegations against CFPP staff, as reported by Human Rights Watch (HRW), could not be thoroughly investigated due to insufficient details and evidence. HRW has not supplied further information on the time or location of the alleged violations. Therefore, until such information is provided, the Project cannot implement improvement measures in response to this specific allegation.

Improvement Measures, Action 3

Design and implement policies to ensure that those charged with violations of protected area laws have access to pro bono legal services.

This request has already been addressed in Finding #1 above.

Improvement Measures, Action 4

Identify and implement additional measures to facilitate protection of community members from arbitrary arrest or other violations of judicial process, including training for staff and education for community members.

To protect community members from arbitrary arrest and other violations of judicial process, the Project implemented a set of protective measures:

- (1) The CCO has instituted public workshops, providing essential education about the Code on Environmental and Natural Resources, including detailed information about legal aspects of arrests, the judicial process, and informing community members about their rights to free legal counsel. These topics were addressed during the awareness raising open forums conducted by the CCO.
- (2) The Project has strengthened its legal support system by engaging *pro bono* lawyer networks, including the Samdech Techo Hun Sen Volunteer Lawyers and the lawyers made available by the Ministry of Justice. Suspects are provided with the lists of *pro bono* lawyers and are informed of their rights to use *pro bono* lawyers' services if they wish to do so. These *pro bono* lawyers are legal professionals ensuring quality representation for individuals charged with violating the law.
- (3) While there have been no documented cases of arbitrary arrest within the CFPP, the Project has implemented strict measures, including provisions to terminate the counterpart agreement of any government ranger who fails to adhere to the established Code of Conduct.
- (4) Implementation of human rights training for all 204 CFPP rangers and staff to ensure they understand and uphold human rights principles in all their interactions with community members.

Supporting Documentation:

- [Pro Bono Legal Services documentation](#)
- [Standard Operating Procedures](#)
- [Human Rights Through REDD+ Training documentation](#)

Status of Improvement Measures - Allegation 4

HRW alleges that the project violated the land rights of local communities and Indigenous peoples, and that local communities and Indigenous peoples in the project area and project zone lack formal recognition and mapping of land rights, and communal land titles.

Improvement Measures, Action 1

Establish a plan, with support from a human rights law expert, and in consultation with affected individuals and communities that supports Indigenous groups within the project area and project zone in the following ways:

- *Proactively supports the recognition of, as Indigenous peoples with related rights, any Indigenous peoples who have not been so recognized within the project area and project zone*
- *Sets out how WA will support the securing (i.e., mapping and titling) of land rights for Indigenous peoples impacted by the Project, which may include any of the following depending upon the preferences of the individuals: informing Indigenous peoples of their right to seek and obtain a communal land title that recognizes their residential land, farmland, spirit forests, burial sites, and other sites of cultural significance*

- *and/or of their right to seek individual land ownership; and*
- *Dedicates the financial and technical resources required to obtain communal land titles for those communities who request it.*

The recognition of indigenous peoples has been significantly enhanced through supporting their active participation in key events. In August 2024, the Project facilitated the participation of 11 indigenous community leaders and local authorities from various communes in Cambodia's celebrations of the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples. This event centered on protecting their right to live and communicate in accordance with their customs.

Systematic land registration and titling has been supported by the Project and made substantial progress, particularly in Areng Valley. The Project has supported systematic land measurement and titling to benefit residents of Chhay Areng, where Chhng indigenous people live. Between January and May 2024, a total of 1,432 land parcels have been measured and registered in Chomnoab Commune. The process has expanded to Pralay Commune, where 1,537 land parcels have been measured so far.

A robust benefit-sharing framework has been established through the SCRP Carbon Fund. The Project has organized these communities into 13 Local Development Communities (LDCs) based on geographical proximity. The Carbon Fund Board, comprising 27 members including community representatives and key stakeholders, will oversee the distribution of funds with specific allocations: 85% for local development initiatives, 10% for administrative costs, and 5% for the Indigenous Cultural Fund. This structure ensures fair representation and effective decision-making. As of February 28, 2025, 5 LDCs have been established. Within these LDCs, 29 seats have been allocated, 6 of those to representatives of Chhng communities. Those LDC seats were filled in 16 elections in which 1,291 community members voted (10% of those were indigenous). An additional eight LDCs will be created by the end of May 2025, bringing the total to thirteen LDCs.

Information regarding the Indigenous People Communal Land Registration was disseminated to all five officially recognized Chhng villages in Areng Valley so that the communities are well-informed to make their own decision regarding the Communal Land registration. A total of 118 Chhng indigenous household representatives attended the meeting, with the following outcomes:

- 9 household representatives (8%) expressed interest in registering their communal land title.
- 107 household representatives (91%) voted against registering a communal title.
- 2 household representatives (1%) abstained

Supporting Documentation:

- [Community-Directed Benefit-Sharing Report](#)
- [Map of systematic land registration in Chhay Areng](#)
- [Concept Note on “Promoting the Rights of the Chhng Indigenous Peoples”](#)
- [Summary Report on Indigenous People Communal Land Titling Consultation](#)