



Project Snapshot

Contentious Land Encroachment Issue Resolved by Facilitating Inclusive, Structured Constructive Dialogue

The USAID Supporting Forests and Biodiversity Project assists forest communities, government authorities, and private firms to resolve land encroachment problems.



The Mondulakiri province Technical Working Group on Mitigating Community Forest Land Conflicts meets regularly to discuss land encroachment issues between forest communities and private firms who own economic land concessions.



Working Group and USAID Project's Dialogue Team check CF's boundaries using a GPS device to document land encroachment by the nearby economic land concession.

Cambodia's forest communities commonly experience land encroachment by companies located nearby that have been granted Economic Land Concessions (ELC). For the forest communities and indigenous people who depend on their forests, these land encroachments result in devastating losses in terms of access to traditional forests and non-timber forest products, such as rattan, honey, resin, bamboo, and wild vegetables and fruits.

The 678 hectare Pukreng Community Forest (CF) in Mondulakiri Province, established in 2013, is an example of a forest community with 438 individuals that has suffered from land encroachment, forest fires, and illegal logging. In 2014, the Khao Chhunly ELC was granted a plot of land located next to the Pukreng CF. While preparing the ELC land for a rubber plantation, the company also cleared nearly eight hectares of the Pukreng CF.

At the request of the community, the Constructive Dialogue team of the USAID Supporting Forests and Biodiversity Project (SFB), implemented by Winrock International, facilitated discussions between the key stakeholders, local authorities, and a Technical Working Group on Mitigating CF Land Conflicts. The Technical Working Group was established to resolve disputes such as inadvertent land clearing or land encroachment.

Mr. Kham Dara, Pichrada District Deputy Governor and Chair of the Working Group, said, *"After checking and measuring the location using GPS technology, the working group found that both the company and another party encroached on 11.5 hectares of the Community Forest's boundary. Through dialogue, the encroaching parties have agreed to return the land to the CF."*

Mr. Toeung Sreub, Chief of Pukreng Community Forestry, stated, *"We are very happy that our land is being returned to our management. Because the forest is gone and already planted in rubber trees, we will keep the rubber trees as compensation."*

"We sincerely appreciated the assistance of the USAID project team. They helped us all work together to resolve a contentious problem."

To date, the USAID-SFB project team has assisted several communities in the Eastern Plains and Prey Lang Landscapes by bringing all stakeholders together to discuss the issues, resulting in more than 2000 hectares being recovered.