



**Kingdom of Cambodia
Nation Religion King**

**Second Summary of Information (Sol)
on REDD+ Safeguards in Cambodia
(2018-2022)**

November 2025

PREFACE

Building upon the foundation of peace and political stability established under the leadership of Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo HUN Sen, the President of the Senate, and guided by the Pentagonal Strategy Phase 1 led by Samdech Moha Borvor Thipadei HUN Manet, the Prime Minister of the Royal Government of Cambodia, Cambodia stands at a pivotal juncture in its journey toward sustainable development. As a nation rich in natural heritage, Cambodia recognizes that environmental degradation and climate change are transboundary challenges requiring collective action and strategic collaboration.

With this understanding, It is with great honor that I present Cambodia's Second Summary of Information (Sol), which provides an overview of how REDD+ safeguards were implemented during the period 2018–2022.

Since the submission of Cambodia's first Summary of Information, the country has implemented significant milestones in advancing its national REDD+ process. This progress underscores our unwavering commitment to climate change mitigation under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the global effort to limit temperature rise. REDD+ remains a cornerstone of Cambodia's strategy to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation while enhancing the livelihoods of forest-dependent communities and preserving the country's rich biodiversity.

The implementation of REDD+ safeguards in Cambodia is fully aligned with ongoing national efforts to strengthen forest governance, improve environmental protection, and promote sustainable development. Key achievements include the development of the Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC), the Circular Strategy on Environment 2023-2028, and the Cambodia Climate Change Strategic Plan 2024–2033. These frameworks reinforce the effectiveness of REDD+ activities and support Cambodia's broader climate and sustainable development goals.

This Second Sol reaffirms Cambodia's strong commitment to transparency, accountability, and the meaningful participation of all stakeholders in the REDD+ process. The Safeguards Information System (SIS), established in accordance with UNFCCC and Warsaw Framework requirements, serves as the primary mechanism for collecting, analyzing, and reporting information on the implementation of the Cancun Safeguards across all REDD+ activities.

With this report, Cambodia continues to demonstrate practical progress in safeguarding the rights and interests of indigenous peoples, local communities, women, and other vulnerable groups within the context of REDD+ initiatives. The document highlights notable accomplishments and ongoing challenges while identifying key lessons learned and areas needing further refinement to achieve effective, inclusive, and sustainable forest governance.

The preparation of this Second Sol involved broad-ranging consultations and active collaboration with government institutions, civil society organizations, indigenous

peoples, communities, development partners, and the private sector. Their significant contributions, notably from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), have enriched this report and strengthened our shared commitment to responsible natural resource management.

This report fulfills Cambodia's reporting obligations under the UNFCCC—a prerequisite for accessing REDD+ results-based payments—and reflects our steadfast dedication to accountability and transparency, both to the international community and, most importantly, to our citizens. We recognize that safeguarding the rights and interests of forest-dependent communities is fundamental to ensuring the success and sustainability of REDD+.

On behalf of the Royal Government of Cambodia, I extend my profound appreciation for their invaluable contributions to this important process. We reaffirm our commitment to ensuring that REDD+ continues to deliver environmental, social, and economic benefits for the people of Cambodia. 2

Phnom Penh, 10...November 2025



Minister

EANG Sophalleth

Acknowledgements

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This report was developed under the overall coordination of the REDD+ and Carbon Crediting Secretariat of the Ministry of Environment, with active engagement of relevant line ministries and institutions. The Secretariat, in close collaboration with REDD+ development partners, international and national organizations, and Indigenous Peoples' Organizations, provided essential guidance and support throughout the process. REDD+ project stakeholders contributed critical input, while national and international experts offered technical assistance to enhance the quality and integrity of the report.

The successful completion of the Second Summary of Information was made possible through the support of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), provided via the United Nations Collaborative Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (UN-REDD).

The Ministry of Environment sincerely acknowledges the commitment and collaboration of all those who contributed their expertise, time, and resources to this important national report.

Abbreviations

ADB	Asian Development Bank
AIP	Action and Investment Plan
BCCP	Biodiversity Conservation Corridors Project
BSM	Benefit Sharing Mechanism
BTR	Biennial Transparency Report
BUR	Biennial Update Report
CBNRM	Community-Based Natural Resource Management
CCBS	Climate, Community and Biodiversity Standards
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CF	Community Forestry
CFMCs	Community Forest Management Committees
CFi	Community Fisheries
CI	Conservation International
CPA	Community Protected Areas
CPAC	Community Protected Area Committees
CSLEP	Cambodia Sustainable Landscape and Ecotourism Project
DANIDA	Danish International Development Agency
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
ELCs	Economic Land Concessions
ENRC	Environment and Natural Resources Code
ESMF	Environmental and Social Management Framework
FA	Forestry Administration
FCPF	Forest Carbon Partnership Facility
FiA	Fisheries Administration
FMIS	Financial Management Information System
FPIC	Free, prior, and informed consent
FREL	Forest Reference Emission Level
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GHG	Greenhouse Gas
GPL	Green Prey Long
GRM	Grievance Redress Mechanism
ICLT	Indigenous Communal Land Titling
IP	Indigenous Peoples
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
LTS4CN	Long-Term Strategy for Carbon Neutrality
JCM	Joint Crediting Mechanism
KSWS	Keo Seima Wildlife Sanctuary
KOICA	Korea International Cooperation Agency
MAAF	Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries
MLMUPC	Ministry of Land Management, Urban Planning and Construction
MoE	Ministry of the Environment

MoVA	Ministry of Women’s Affairs
MRLG	Mekong Region Land Governance
MRV	Measurement, Reporting, and Verification
NBSAP	National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan
NCSD	National Council for Sustainable Development
NDC	Nationally Determined Contribution
NESAP	National Environmental Strategy and Action Plan
NFMS	National Forest Monitoring System
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NPA	Natural Protected Area
NPASMP	National Protected Area Strategic Management Plan
NRMIS	Non-Tax Revenue Management Information System
NRS	National REDD+ Strategy
NTFP	Non-timber forest product
PA	Protected Area
PAAF	Partnership for Forestry and Fisheries Communities in Cambodia
PaMs	Policies and Measures
PAWG	Provincial Accountability Working Group
RBP	Results-based payments
RCG	REDD+ Consultation Group
RECOFTC	The Centre for People and Forests
REDD+	Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation
RGOC	Royal Government of Cambodia
RTF	REDD+ Taskforce
SCRIP	Southern Cardamom REDD+ Project
SFM	Sustainable Forest Management
SIS	Safeguard Information System
SGP	Small Grants Programme
SLC	Social Land Concessions
SMART	Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool
Sol	Summary of Information
TWG	Technical Working Group
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VCM	Voluntary Carbon Market
VCS	Verified Carbon Standard
WA	Wildlife Alliance
WCS	Wildlife Conservation Society
WWF	World Wide Fund for Nature

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Executive Summary

This Second Summary of Information (Sol) outlines how Cambodia has addressed and respected the Cancun Safeguards during the implementation of REDD+ interventions between 2018 and 2022. Building on the foundational First Sol (2019), this document shifts its focus from the national interpretation and legal baseline of the safeguards to their practical implementation and direct application in REDD+ interventions on the ground, with an emphasis on respect for these safeguards. This Sol aligns with requirements under the UNFCCC and supports Cambodia's intent to access results-based payments (RBPs), including through the Green Climate Fund (GCF).

Cambodia's REDD+ programme is a critical component of its climate mitigation efforts. It aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from deforestation and forest degradation while promoting sustainable forest management, biodiversity conservation, and community livelihoods. Between 2018 and 2022, several Policies and Measures (PaMs) were implemented, including afforestation and reforestation initiatives, sustainable community forestry practices, improved forest governance, and the establishment of REDD+ pilot projects under both the Verified Carbon Standard and the Joint Crediting Mechanism. Despite the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, these interventions strengthened the enabling environment for REDD+ and laid the groundwork for scaling up safeguard implementation.

The report is based on an extensive analysis of REDD+ interventions carried out by government agencies, development partners, and project developers, supplemented by field-level implementation experiences. As the Safeguard Information System (SIS) is in its final stage of development, with completion expected in 2025, compiled information on REDD+ safeguard implementation was not readily available for preparing this Second Sol. Therefore, the methodology involved identifying all relevant REDD+ related activities carried out, conducted, and promoted under the REDD+ Secretariat and other forest-related government bodies during the 2018-2022 period. This was complemented by a comprehensive review of projects and initiatives implemented by delivery partners and project developers within the same timeframe. The SIS update in 2025 is expected to enable regular, transparent, consistent, and structured reporting on safeguard implementation moving forward.

This Sol describes how each of the Cancun safeguards has been addressed through Cambodia's legal and policy frameworks and assesses their practical implementation. Key development outcomes include progress in Indigenous communal land titling, the integration of gender and social inclusion in REDD+ planning, recognition of traditional knowledge systems, and the promotion of participatory governance and equitable benefit-sharing. The report also identifies ongoing challenges, particularly around land tenure security, institutional coordination, and the need for systematic safeguard monitoring. Implementation revealed several technical, institutional, and financial challenges, including gaps in coordination, limited enforcement capacity, and inconsistent application of safeguards across projects. Strengthening the SIS, institutional capacity, and stakeholder engagement mechanisms is identified as a priority for ensuring effective and inclusive REDD+ implementation moving forward.

This Second Sol reaffirms Cambodia's commitment to implementing REDD+ in accordance with UNFCCC decisions, while respecting the rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities, conserving forests and biodiversity, and promoting sustainable development. The country remains focused on strengthening the enabling environment for safeguards, enhancing SIS functionality, and aligning REDD+ implementation with broader national climate and development goals.

1. Introduction and overview

This document provides a Second Summary of Information (Sol) on how Cambodia has addressed and respected REDD+ safeguards in line with the Cancun Safeguards during the 2018-2022 period. This Second Sol builds on the information provided in the First Sol, which was completed and shared in 2019. While the First Sol¹ focused particularly on what the Cancun safeguards mean in Cambodia's national context and how Cambodia's regulatory and institutional frameworks *address* each of the REDD+ safeguards, this Second Sol is more focused on how the safeguards have been *respected* throughout REDD+ implementation.

This submission aligns with the requirements of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) on REDD+² and demonstrates Cambodia's commitment to implementing REDD+ interventions responsibly and sustainably. It reaffirms the Strategic Objectives of Cambodia's REDD+ programme³: that is, reducing greenhouse gas emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, while also promoting sustainable forest management, protection and conservation of forest and biodiversity, and improved livelihoods for local communities.⁴

This Second Sol provides information on measures taken to implement safeguards and prevent negative social and environmental impacts during the 2018-2022 REDD+ implementation period. It also examines the reporting processes in place to monitor the progress of the REDD+ programme, including the frequency and format of reports, as well as the verification mechanisms utilised to ensure the credibility and integrity of the programme.

Finally, the document presents key lessons learned from the program's implementation, including successes, technical challenges faced from political, social, and financial perspectives, and areas for improvement needed. In this way, this Second Sol is intended to assist in the transparency, accountability, and effectiveness of the national REDD+ program and support the country's overall goals for climate change mitigation, sustainable forest management, and enhanced community livelihoods.

The reporting period of this Second Sol

Cambodia's First Sol was released in October 2019. This document outlines how Cambodia's legal framework addresses the Cancun safeguards and articulates Cambodia's interpretation of the Cancun Safeguards within its country-specific context. In doing so, the First Sol establishes a structural baseline that guides the country's approach to safeguards within its national program.

Building on this foundational understanding of how safeguards are applied and assessed within its National REDD+ Programme, this Second Sol evaluates how these safeguards were respected during the 2018-2022 reporting period. The year 2018 marks the earliest practical starting point for applying

¹ 1st Summary of Information (Sol) on safeguards, October 2019:

https://redd.unfccc.int/media/6_cambodia_1st_summary_of_information_on_safeguards-final-oct-2019.pdf

² Under the UNFCCC, countries implementing REDD+ must promote and support a set of seven safeguards outlined in Decision 1/CP.16 (Cancun Agreements), including transparent governance, respect for indigenous rights, and conservation of biodiversity. To demonstrate compliance, countries are required to develop a Safeguard Information System (SIS) to provide information on how safeguards are being addressed and respected, as specified in Decision 12/CP.17. This information must be submitted periodically through Summaries of Information (Sol), as detailed in Decisions 12/CP.19 and 13/CP.19, including descriptions of the SIS, the REDD+ interventions covered, and any system improvements. Finally, Decision 17/CP.21 establishes that countries must submit the most recent Sol in order to access REDD+ results-based payments, confirming that safeguards have been addressed and respected throughout implementation.

³ <https://cambodia-redd.org/>

⁴ Royal Kingdom of Cambodia, National REDD+ Strategy 2017-2026

https://redd.unfccc.int/media/20180813_national_redd_strategy_cambodia.pdf

this baseline to the country's implementation of the AIP 2018-2031 and the ESMF for the AIP-NRS, as it coincides with the development of a documented record of program implementation. This Second Sol also serves as an essential supporting documentation for an intended application to the Green Climate Fund (GCF) for a Results-Based Payment (RBP), based on activities conducted during this timeframe. For many of the safeguards analysed, there have been important developments and lessons learned in the period from 2022 to the present. Therefore, this Second Sol incorporates more recent activities where appropriate, providing a comprehensive picture of implementation trends over time and offering an updated perspective on programme progress and recommended refinements.

It is important to note that the COVID-19 pandemic significantly disrupted implementation activities during 2020-2021. COVID-19 containment measures limited field-based forest monitoring, community engagement, and capacity-building efforts. Remote work arrangements and reduced in-person meetings hindered coordination between government agencies and development partners on REDD+ policy development and implementation. Additionally, movement restrictions and health concerns constrained active community participation in forest management activities, particularly affecting participatory forest monitoring and benefit-sharing mechanisms. The pandemic also diverted government resources and attention toward immediate health and economic recovery priorities, slowing progress on land tenure formalization and forest governance reforms critical to achieving REDD+ objectives.

2. National circumstances

2.1 Climate change and forests in Cambodia

Cambodia has among the richest repositories of biodiversity in South-East Asia. Its forests offer a unique habitat for a wide range of biological diversity and are deeply interconnected with culture and religion. Dotted with ancient temples, forests remain places to seek solace and spiritual reflection. Their resources are also vital for supporting livelihoods and Cambodia's efforts to move towards sustainable development.

Cambodia is considered a 'high forest cover' country. The country has a corresponding high rate of deforestation. Indeed, while economic growth has brought important benefits for the nation and people, it has also intensified pressure on forests. In 2010, forests covered over 57 % of the land area. By 2018, the share had fallen to around 45%, and by 2020 to 43.9%.⁵ These losses come at a time when the urgency of the climate crisis is apparent around the world, amid fires, droughts, floods and other natural disasters occurring everywhere. According to indices of vulnerability and readiness for climate change, Cambodia is among the countries most at risk to the impacts of climate change, specifically because of its geographical exposure to extreme weather events such as droughts and floods. These have direct negative implications on the agriculture and FOLU sectors, which are highly dependent on the climate.⁶ The country is already facing losses and damages in terms of human lives, livelihoods and the national economy, and the degradation of natural resources.

To address escalating pressures, the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) adopted key policy measures until 2018 that laid the groundwork for REDD+ efforts and results. The 2012 moratorium on new Economic Land Concessions (ELCs) marked a shift away from large-scale deforestation drivers,

⁵ Trading Economics website: <https://tradingeconomics.com/cambodia/forest-area-%of-land-area-wb-data.html>

⁶ According to the Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative (ND-GAIN), Cambodia ranks 53rd in terms of vulnerability and 159th in readiness among 182 countries assessed. This indicates a high vulnerability to climate change impacts and a low capacity to adapt. The country's vulnerability is exacerbated by its reliance on agriculture, forestry, and fisheries, sectors that are highly dependent on climatic conditions. <https://belonging.berkeley.edu/climatedisplacement/case-studies/cambodia>

followed in 2016 by the expansion of Protected Areas (PA) to over 40% of national territory. At the same time, greater community involvement in forest management—through community forests, community protected areas, and participatory governance—strengthened local stewardship. While not sufficient to fully halt deforestation, these measures provided critical foundations for the National REDD+ Strategy and demonstrated early government action aligned with REDD+ objectives.

Cambodia submitted its initial Forest Reference Level (FRL) to the UNFCCC in early 2017. This submission focused on emissions from deforestation activities across the entire national territory, using historical data from 2006 to 2014.⁷ In 2021, Cambodia submitted an updated FRL to the UNFCCC, covering the period from 2011 to 2018. The second FRL used more plot data (e.g., from the REDD+ projects that are now underway), improved methods to produce Activity Data (AD), such as sample-based change estimates, updated allometric equations, and Emission Factor (EF) calculations with a narrower range of uncertainty.⁸ Accompanying this was the 2021 issuance of the Guidelines on the Rules and Procedures for REDD+ Greenhouse Gas Mechanisms. The revised FRL estimated average annual emissions from deforestation at approximately 60.26 million tons of CO₂ equivalent (MtCO₂eq) per year.⁹

In 2020, Cambodia issued an updated ten-year national climate action plan known as a Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC). The plan's ambitious targets include reducing overall greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by nearly 42 % by 2030, half of which would be achieved through measures in the Forestry and Other Land Use (FOLU) sector.¹⁰ Cambodia also aims to achieve zero deforestation by 2040.¹¹ Recently, this commitment was reaffirmed in Cambodia's new NDC 3.0, released in August 2025.¹²

Cambodia's Biennial Update Report (BUR) is a national document submitted to the UNFCCC that outlines the country's efforts to address climate change. The first BUR, submitted in August 2020, provides a comprehensive overview of Cambodia's GHG emissions, mitigation actions, and support received for climate initiatives. It outlines Cambodia's efforts in implementing REDD+, including the development of a National REDD+ Strategy (NRS), establishment of a FRL, and the creation of a National Forest Monitoring System (NFMS) to measure, report, and verify forest-related emissions and removal.¹³

The Long-Term Strategy for Carbon Neutrality (LTS4CN) is Cambodia's comprehensive roadmap to achieve net-zero GHG emissions by 2050. It was submitted to the UNFCCC in December 2021 and aims to balance emissions reductions with economic growth, social equity, and climate resilience. It outlines sector-specific mitigation actions and integrates them with Cambodia's NDC. For the FOLU sector, it targets a carbon sink of 50 MtCO₂eq by 2050 through reduced deforestation, increased forest cover through afforestation and reforestation, and full implementation of the REDD+ Action and Investment Plan (2018-2031).¹⁴ The Strategy states that Cambodia expects the sector to be carbon neutral from 2031 by reducing deforestation and by balancing afforestation and reforestation with agriculture that is more productive and resilient to climate change. By 2045, deforestation should stop all together, with different forms of agroforestry along with reforestation becoming two powerful sources of mitigation. Land dedicated to sustainable plantations and agroforestry is expected to

⁷ Initial Forest Reference Level for Cambodia under the UNFCCC Framework, 2017. https://redd.unfccc.int/media/camfrrl_may_22_2017.pdf

⁸ FCPF REDD+ Readiness Project" Final Report, 2023

⁹ Second Forest Reference Level for Cambodia under the UNFCCC Framework Modified Submission, 2022

https://redd.unfccc.int/media/cambodia_2nd_frl_modification_submission_20213005.pdf

¹⁰ Cambodia's updated NDC, 2020. https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/NDC/2022-06/20201231_NDC_Update_Cambodia.pdf

¹¹ Cambodia's LTS4CN, 2021 https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/KHM_LTS_Dec2021.pdf

¹² Cambodia's NDC 3.0, 2025. https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/2025-08/Cambodia-NDC%203.0_0.pdf

¹³ First biennial update report of the Kingdom of Cambodia, 2020. https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/FBUR_Cambodia.pdf

¹⁴ LTS4CN, 2021.

expand, alongside strengthened efforts in community-led forest management.

The RGC recognizes the challenges posed by global climate change and has actively included the prioritization of action on climate change in its national policies. An important component of the RGC's climate mitigation efforts is a focus on reducing carbon emissions from deforestation and forest degradation. Where forests provide diverse ecosystem services worldwide, they hold a particularly significant position in Cambodia. About 2.97 Gt of carbon is stored in Cambodia's terrestrial ecosystems, and about one-third of this carbon is stored in the evergreen forest¹⁵ while also providing sanctuary for almost 2% of the globally threatened species on the Red List of the International Union for Conservation and Nature (IUCN).

Building on this recognition of the critical role of forests, the RGC considers REDD+ as an effective global initiative that will contribute to mitigating the impacts of climate change in agriculture, forestry and related sectors. The goal of the NRS is to strengthen the functioning and capacity of national and sub-national institutions for effective implementation of policies, laws, and regulations to enhance management of natural resources and forest lands, and conservation of biodiversity. The aim of the NRS is to reduce deforestation and forest degradation while promoting sustainable management, conservation of natural resources and contributing to poverty alleviation.

In order to operationalize and strengthen these commitments, since 2022, several other key documents and strategies were developed. Cambodia's Circular Strategy on Environment 2023–2028 was launched by the Ministry of Environment on November 15, 2023. It aims to transform the FOLU sector into a driver of sustainable development, aligning with the Pentagonal Strategy (Phase 1) and the Vision 2050 of RGC. The strategy's overarching goal is to achieve carbon neutrality and maintain 60% forest cover by 2050. Under the Green pillar, it explicitly integrates REDD+ as a central mechanism, it emphasizes expanding forest cover through reforestation, restoration, and sustainable forest management.

To ensure transparency and demonstrate progress towards these goals, in December 2024, the first Biennial Transparency Report of Cambodia (BTR1) was submitted to the UNFCCC in accordance with the Enhanced Transparency Framework established under the Paris Agreement,¹⁶ outlining the country's progress in addressing climate change.

2.2 Socio-economic context

During the reporting period (2018–2022), Cambodia's economy continued to grow steadily until the global COVID-19 pandemic, with GDP growth averaging over 7% between 2015 and 2019. The pandemic triggered a contraction of around 3.1 % in 2020, severely impacting key sectors such as tourism, manufacturing, and construction. Growth resumed in 2021 and 2022, though economic recovery remained uneven across rural and urban areas. The national poverty rate stood at approximately 17.8 % in 2019 but is estimated to have temporarily increased due to pandemic-related job losses and reductions in household income, especially among vulnerable rural populations.

Forests remain integral to rural livelihoods. According to statistics cited by Global Forest Watch in 2019, nearly 80 % of Cambodians live in rural areas, and the livelihoods of 65 % of these people are

¹⁵ UNEP WCMC, Carbon, biodiversity and ecosystem services: Exploring co-benefits. Cambodia, 2010. https://library.sprep.org/sites/default/files/2021-03/Carbon_biodiversity_ecosystem_services_Cambodia.pdf

¹⁶ Cambodia's Biennial Transparency Report, 2024. <https://unfccc.int/documents/645175>

dependent on forest resources that support the local economy and ensure food security.¹⁷ Forest-based activities, including sustainable agriculture and ecotourism, also contribute significantly to national economic development. However, poverty in rural areas continues to create pressure on forest resources, leading to unsustainable practices such as illegal logging and land encroachment. Large development projects and industrial-scale logging operations, often undertaken outside legal frameworks and with insufficient transparency, also continue to pose a major threat.¹⁸

Land and forest resources are especially important for Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities, who rely on them not only for food and income but also for maintaining cultural identity and traditional governance systems. Cambodia is home to an estimated 455,000 Indigenous Peoples, representing about 3 % of the national population, belonging to more than 20 distinct ethnic groups. Indigenous communities are primarily concentrated in the northeastern provinces, including Ratanakiri, Mondulakiri, Kratie, and Stung Treng.

Efforts to secure Indigenous Peoples' land rights through the Indigenous Communal Land Titling (ICLT) process have seen some progress. The ICLT process in Cambodia is a legal framework established to recognize and protect the ancestral lands of Indigenous communities. Initiated under the 2001 Land Law and detailed in Sub-Decree No. 83 (2009)¹⁹, the process allows Indigenous groups to obtain collective ownership of their traditional territories, thereby safeguarding their cultural heritage and livelihoods. It empowers communities to protect their lands from external encroachments and to maintain their traditional ways of life. As of December 2022, 39 Indigenous communities had received communal land titles from the Ministry of Land Management, Urban Planning and Construction. While this marks a gradual increase from previous years, over 100 additional communities remain at various stages of the titling process²⁰. Challenges to advancing CLTs include lengthy administrative procedures, limited legal awareness at the community level, and competing land use claims from private companies and state actors. For instance, the Cambodian Centre for Human Rights reported that by June 2021, only 155 out of over 400 Indigenous communities had obtained formal recognition as Indigenous communities, which is a prerequisite for communal land titling. However, the number of communities that have completed the entire ICLT process remains significantly lower.²¹

Broader socio-economic challenges persist in forested and remote areas, including limited access to education, healthcare, clean water, and employment opportunities. Forest-dependent communities also face barriers to participating in land use planning and natural resource governance, which can lead to exclusion from benefit-sharing and decision-making processes associated with REDD+ and other conservation initiatives. Given existing gender inequalities within the country and the reality that Cambodia is a patriarchal society, these barriers are also strongly experienced by women, particularly within forest-dependent communities, as they face an additional level of cultural, socio-economic, and political discrimination based on their gender. These realities result in increasing women's vulnerability and poverty as well as exclusion from decision-making, technical training, entrepreneurship opportunities, benefit-sharing arrangements, etc.²²

¹⁷ Global Forest Watch, 2019. <https://www.globalforestwatch.org/blog/forest-insights/whats-happening-in-cambodias-forests/#>

¹⁸ See, among others: <https://news.mongabay.com/2024/04/protected-areas-bear-the-brunt-as-forest-loss-continues-across-cambodia/>, and also <https://globalinitiative.net/analysis/forest-crimes-cambodia/>

¹⁹ Sub Decree on procedures of registration of land of indigenous communities, 2009. <https://faolex.fao.org/docs/pdf/cam184378.pdf>

²⁰ National Report on the Demographic and Socio-Economic Situation of Indigenous Peoples in Cambodia, published in 2021 by the Ministry of Planning and the Ministry of Rural Development, offers a comprehensive overview of the status of Indigenous communities across the country. <https://data.opendatacambodia.net/km/dataset/ab2bc6f5-aa52-4664-8cbc-0e3b04ff8fc5/resource/a93b9849-0885-4b39-8839-ce05e0d45187/download/final-ips-national-report-final-8-polished-by-group.pdf>

Henrich Boll Stiftung, 2022. <https://kh.boell.org/en/2022/08/10/indigenous-communal-land-titling-still-hundred-years-go>

²¹ Cambodian Centre for Human Rights, 2022. <https://cchrcambodia.org/storage/posts/4832/20220808-WIPD-2022-ENG.pdf>

²² UN-REDD Programme, WOCAN and USAID LEAF, 2013.

https://redd.unfccc.int/uploads/2234_23_final_draft_cambodia_gender_and_redd_report_dec_2013_-_copy.pdf

Against this backdrop, the application of REDD+ safeguards is crucial to ensure that the rights and livelihoods of Indigenous Peoples and other marginalized groups, such as rural communities, women, and youth, are protected and promoted. Cambodia's Safeguards Information System (SIS), soon to be operational, is intended to monitor how REDD+ implementation addresses these socio-economic dynamics, with a focus on promoting equitable benefit-sharing, securing land and resource rights, strengthening community participation, and avoiding or mitigating adverse impacts on local communities.

2.3 REDD+ institutional framework

Cambodia's REDD+ implementation is guided by a multi-agency approach that supports coordination, oversight, and alignment with national policies and international commitments. Forest management responsibilities are shared between the Ministry of Environment (MoE) and the Forestry Administration (FA), and the Fisheries Administration (FiA) under the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF). Beginning in 2016, Cambodia's deliberate expansion of the PA system transferred greater responsibility for land stewardship towards conservation-driven management to MoE. It became the primary authority for PAs and biodiversity conservation, while the FiA retains responsibility for on flooded and mangrove forests, and FA on production forests and tree plantations outside of the protected area system.

The REDD+ Taskforce (RTF), chaired by the MoE and comprising representatives from key ministries and agencies, serves as the central coordination body for the development and implementation of Cambodia's REDD+ programme. The Taskforce is supported by a REDD+ Secretariat (hosted in MoE) and a number of specialized technical working groups, which were active during the period (2014-2022) supported through the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF) but have largely been inactive recently as Cambodia is transitioning from REDD+ readiness to the implementation phase. This institutional structure is meant to facilitate inter-ministerial coordination and field execution oversight, ensuring that REDD+ implementation is aligned with Cambodia's NDC, relevant national policies and broader sustainable development goals.

The REDD+ Taskforce also works in close collaboration with non-governmental organisations (NGOs), REDD+ project developers, and development partners (see further below) to enhance the design, financing, and implementation of REDD+ interventions. Specialized Technical Teams were set up to provide expert advice and support on various aspects of REDD+, such as Measurement, Reporting, and Verification (MRV), safeguards, gender, benefit-sharing, demonstration, and the REDD+ Consultation Group. These teams and groups are meant to contribute to the development of technical guidelines and tools necessary for effective REDD+ implementation.

A national REDD+ Consultation Group was also created, comprised of representatives from civil society, indigenous peoples, international and local NGOs, academia, and the private sector.²³ It was designed to serve as a platform for stakeholder engagement, ensuring that diverse perspectives are considered in REDD+ decision-making processes.

A REDD+ Gender Group was also established in 2013,²⁴ responsible for raising awareness on gender and women's empowerment issues among members of the REDD+ Taskforce, Consultation Group, and technical teams. Additionally, the group was created to provide feedback during policy

²³ Information from Cambodia REDD+ website: <https://cambodia-redd.org/governance/consultation-group.html>
IPLC: IP-rep, CF, CPA, and CFI Civil Society Organization: International NGO, Local NGO (national NGO, Local NGO/CSO) Academia: Universities Private Sector

²⁴ Cambodia REDD+ website: <https://cambodia-redd.org/governance/gender-group.html>

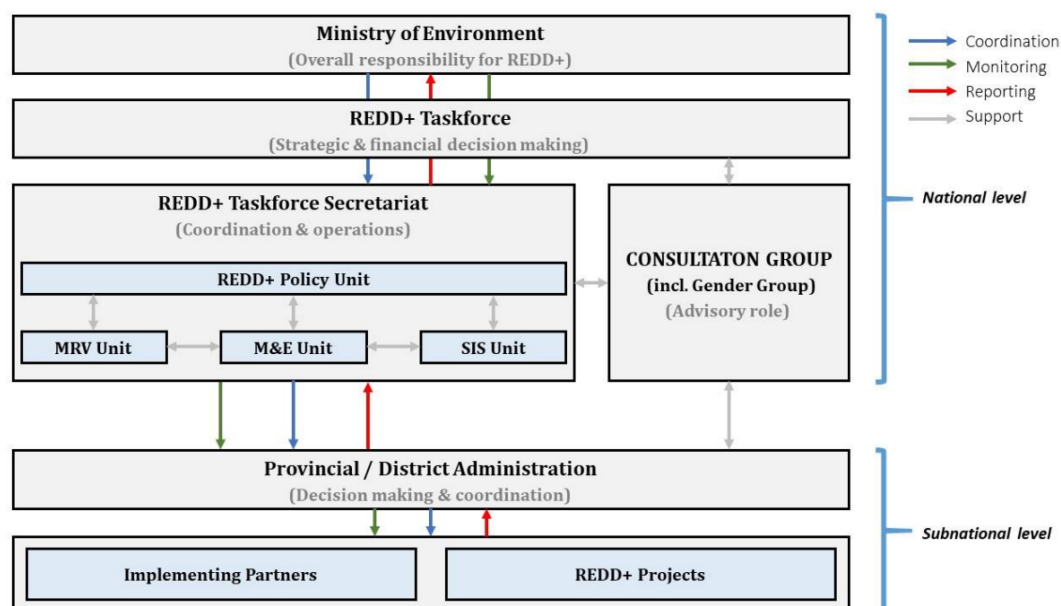
deliberations to ensure that gender concerns are incorporated and that women actively participate in designing and implementing the NRS.

At the subnational level, decision-making authority and REDD+ coordination are vested in provincial and district administrations. REDD+ policies and measures are implemented at jurisdictional scales (i.e., province and district) by a variety of implementing partners (e.g., line ministries, NGOs, local communities, etc.), as well as by (and in coordination with) REDD+ projects aiming at generating GHG emission reductions at project scale. At the sub-national level, REDD+ interventions are integrated into existing forest management structures, including Community Forests (CFs), Community Protected Areas (CPAs), Community Fisheries (CFi), Fishery Conservation (FiC), and Protected Areas (PAs). Local authorities and communities are involved in planning and implementing REDD+ projects, fostering ownership and sustainability. Capacity-building initiatives are conducted to enhance local stakeholders' abilities to contribute to and monitor REDD+ interventions effectively.

In addition, between 2019 and 2021, sub-national initiatives, such as community-based forest management and sub-national REDD+ projects in provinces like Seim Reap and Pursat, played a key role in piloting safeguard implementation and benefit-sharing mechanisms. The institutional framework is designed to emphasize stakeholder engagement, with platforms for civil society, local communities and gender focal points to contribute to REDD+ planning and monitoring processes.

Together, these experiences and institutional arrangements form the backbone of Cambodia's approach to REDD+ safeguards, intending that REDD+ implementation is environmentally effective, socially inclusive, and aligned with both national development priorities and international obligations under the UNFCCC.

Institutional arrangements for REDD+ implementation²⁵



Key international development partners that have supported the development and implementation of Cambodia's REDD+ interventions and its overall natural resource management approach over the years, through readiness funds, technical assistance, and relevant projects. This includes the United

²⁵ Cambodia REDD+ AIP, 2020

Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) through the UN-REDD Programme, mainly, the World Bank's Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF), the Asian Development Bank (ADB), and the Global Environmental Fund (GEF). Bilateral donors have also supported REDD+ in Cambodia, including the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), the European Union (EU), Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA), Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), the Canadian International Development Agency (now part of Global Affairs Canada), Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA), Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA).

These partners have historically supported a wide range of priorities, including protected areas management, indigenous communal land titling (CLT), and the development of CFs, CFIs, and CPAs. More recently, their support has been central to advancing REDD+ readiness as well as the development of Cambodia's REDD+ Strategy, SIS, NFMS, and FREL.

NGOs also play an important role, either as REDD+ project developers or implementers of REDD+ interventions. Project developers (including WCS, CI, Wildlife Alliance, along with other organisations such as FFI, Rising Phoenix and Our Future Organization all in various stages of preparing REDD+ VCM projects) play a critical role in financing, implementing, and monitoring subnational REDD+ initiatives, thereby contributing valuable experiences to the overall REDD+ Programme. Their involvement largely arises from their respective historic roles as managing conservation projects in specific protected areas under cooperative agreement with the government that have now evolved into REDD+ projects. These developers are particularly relevant in the country's move toward operationalizing a nested approach, which seeks to explore alternatives to integrate subnational (project-level) efforts within the national framework.

Other actors, including international NGOs such as WWF, IUCN, RECOFTC, and NatureLife, as well as government-UN collaborations like the Small Grants Programme, the MoE/CSLEP, and MAFF/ASPIRE RT on micro-loans, along with numerous local NGOs, have played a crucial role in supporting Cambodia's REDD+ implementation. These organizations focus on local interventions with indigenous peoples and local communities, addressing a broad range of forest-related issues such as sustainable land use planning (e.g., MLUP Baitang), CF, CPA, CFi, PA, Fishery Conservation (FiC), biodiversity conservation, and livelihood improvement. Groups like the NGO Forum, Action for Development Organization (AFD), or North-Eastern Cottage Organization (NECO) have been instrumental in facilitating participatory approaches, capacity building, and policy advocacy to strengthen forest governance under REDD+ Strategy. Their efforts have been vital in helping the government implement REDD+ AIP on the ground, ensuring that forest conservation is closely linked with the social and economic well-being of Cambodia's rural populations, who depend heavily on forest resources for their livelihoods.

All governmental and non-governmental entities implementing REDD+ interventions are referred to as 'REDD+ implementers' in this report.

2.4 REDD+ policy framework

Cambodia has been actively developing and implementing its national REDD+ framework since becoming a participant country under the UN-REDD Programme (2010-2014) and the FCPF (2014-2022). The country's REDD+ approach is grounded in national policy priorities and international climate commitments, aiming to contribute to emission reductions, improve forest governance, and deliver environmental and social co-benefits.

National REDD+ Strategy (NRS)

The National REDD+ Strategy (2017–2026) provides the overarching policy framework for Cambodia’s efforts to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, conserve forest carbon stocks, sustainably manage forests, and enhance forest carbon stocks, to access RBPs. The NRS aligns closely with the broader environmental policy framework, including the National Forest Programme (NFP), the National Protected Area Strategic Management Plan (NPSMP), the Strategic Planning Framework for Fisheries (SPFF), and the Rectangular Strategy for growth, employment, equity, and efficiency. Also, the NRS and its AIP pathway to achieve the forest sector mitigation targets outlined in the NDC, LTS4CN, and the Green Pillar of the CSE. Together, these frameworks support the national commitments to reducing deforestation and forest degradation while promoting sustainable forest management and climate resilience.

The NRS sets out three strategic objectives:

- Strategic Objective 1: Improve management and monitoring of forest resources and forest land use
- Strategic Objective 2: Strengthen implementation of sustainable forest management
- Strategic Objective 3: Mainstream approaches to reduce deforestation, build capacity, and engage stakeholders

Importantly, the strategy recognizes the need to safeguard the rights of Indigenous peoples and local communities, avoid negative environmental and social impacts, and promote a gender equality and social inclusion approach. It calls for the integration of safeguards across REDD+ implementation, with emphasis on Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC), equitable benefit sharing, and participatory governance.

Action and Investment Plan (AIP)

The Action and Investment Plan (AIP), finalized in April 2020, builds on a series of existing forest-related initiatives and intended actions, and translates the strategic vision of the NRS into concrete activities and investment priorities. Serving as a roadmap for REDD+ implementation from 2018 to 2031, the AIP facilitates coordination among government agencies, development partners, and stakeholders.

The AIP is organized around thematic areas and includes detailed cost estimates, implementation responsibilities, and financing mechanisms. The AIP promotes the NRS’s three strategic objectives through the following Strategies and its PaMs.²⁶

SO1.-Improve management and monitoring of forest resources and forest land use	
Strategy	Policy and Measure
1.1 Strengthen management of forest conservation areas, such as protected areas and flooded and mangrove conservation areas	1.1.1 Demarcate and register PAs boundaries 1.1.2 Prepare PAs Management Plans, including zoning designations 1.1.3 Develop and implement Forest Restoration Plans 1.1.4 Reactivate the National Committee for Conflict Resolution on PA Management to address land use conflicts

²⁶ As outlined in table 1 of the AIP

1.2 Promote forest land tenure security through forest land classification, zoning, demarcation, and registration	1.2.1 Identify and demarcate the boundaries of forest land areas (outside PAs) 1.2.2 Clarify tenure rights in ELCs, CFs, CPAs; develop compliance monitoring procedures 1.2.3 Extend and link forest areas under protection through demarcation and improved management
1.3 Strengthen law enforcement activities to address unauthorized logging and encroachment	1.3.1 Invest in human and material resources for forest law enforcement 1.3.2 Raise awareness for law enforcement among local authorities and communities
1.4 Monitor the status of Economic Land Concessions (ELCs) and Social Land Concessions (SLCs) for compliance with regulations and strengthen capacity for effective monitoring	1.4.1 Extend 2012 ELC moratorium 1.4.2 Develop guidelines on cancelled ELCs and reallocation to communities/IPs 1.4.3 Support community development in ELCs/SLCs
1.5 Support harmonization of legal frameworks for effective management of forest resources	1.5.1 Harmonize REDD+ policies with national development documents 1.5.2 Support the revision of the National Forest Programme 1.5.3 Update/amend the Law on Forestry and National Forest Programme
1.6 Strengthen regulatory framework and capacity for social and environmental impact assessment and compliance	1.6.1 Support the adoption and publication of the new Environment and Natural Resources Code 1.6.2 Train stakeholders on rights and procedures under the new code 1.6.3 Create/update regulatory framework for EIA implementation
1.7 Strengthen capacity for data management and establish decision support systems for the forest and land use sector	1.7.1 Quantify forest by type, location, and extent 1.7.2 Establish Forest Resource Management Information System (FRMIS)
SO2.- Strengthen implementation of sustainable forest management	
2.1 Strengthen and scale up community-based forest management	2.1.1 Support and expand CPA, CF, FiA 2.1.2 Expand livelihood opportunities linked to land use and incentives 2.1.3 Complete CPA Management Plans 2.1.4 Provide direct support to CPAs 2.1.5 Establish and operationalize new CPAs 2.1.6 Strengthen collaborative management with communities
2.2 Engage and encourage the private sector to implement alternative and sustainable supply chains from agro-industrial plantations, and to reduce emissions	2.2.1 Raise awareness of the private sector on REDD+ and environmental impacts 2.2.2 Develop commodity traceability systems 2.2.3 Set up real-time monitoring system linked to NFMS
2.3 Expand afforestation, reforestation and restoration activities	2.3.1 Develop and implement Forest Restoration Plans 2.3.2 Create tree nurseries managed by women and youth
2.4 Enhance timber supply and wood-based energy sourced from community-based forest management areas and private plantations to reduce pressure on forest areas	2.4.1 Establish an institutional framework for public/private investment 2.4.2 Develop guidelines for planted forest management

2.5 Promote effective, equitable, sustainable management and use of forests, forest lands and non-timber forest products	2.5.1 Pilot forest land use projects with stakeholder consultation 2.5.2 Implement EIAs in ELC forest areas 2.5.3 Develop an ecotourism strategy for PAs 2.5.4 Strengthen PA funding mechanisms 2.5.5 Institutionalize management effectiveness evaluations 2.5.6 Implement forest certification schemes 2.5.7 Pilot test forest management certification
2.6 Identify and implement alternative and sustainable livelihood development programmes for local communities most dependent on forest resources	2.6.1 Enable community exploration of livelihood activities 2.6.2 Complete valuation of ecosystem services in priority PAs 2.6.3 Train stakeholders in participatory tools 2.6.4 Conduct outreach and awareness for local authorities 2.6.5 Target CPAs for livelihood enhancement 2.6.6 Facilitate access to small business and microcredit
SO3.- Mainstream approaches to reduce deforestation, build capacity and engage stakeholders.	
3.1 Support mechanisms to mainstream policies and measures that reduce deforestation in relevant government ministries and agencies	3.1.1 Establish an inter-ministerial group for forest coordination (MoE & MAFF) 3.1.2 Ensure coordination for REDD+ monitoring and enforcement 3.1.3 Clarify roles of MoE, MAFF, FiA
3.2 Strengthen national and subnational capacity for improved coordination mechanisms for national land use policy and planning	3.2.1 Review/streamline concession land allocation 3.2.2 Update cadastre to include forests 3.2.3 Develop Centres for Capacity Development
3.3 Strengthen capacity, knowledge and awareness of stakeholders to enhance their contribution to reducing deforestation and forest degradation	3.3.1 Identify and map relevant stakeholders 3.3.2 Raise awareness on REDD+, climate change 3.3.3 Build REDD+ capacities of responsible agencies
3.4 Encourage public engagement, participation and consultations in forestry and land use planning, and promote the involvement of multiple stakeholders	3.4.1 Implement community land tenure security 3.4.2 Establish platform for governance dialogue 3.4.3 Organize local governance structures and build capacity 3.4.4 Set up a national benefit-sharing system
3.5 Strengthen capacity of academic and research institutions in training, research and technology development associated with forestry and land use	3.5.1 Assess training needs and implement capacity development 3.5.2 Support participation in regional/international learning 3.5.3 Strengthen R&D in government departments 3.5.4 Deliver technical training for staff
3.6 Establish partnerships with development partners in building knowledge and human resources related to forestry, land use, and climate change	3.6.1 Improve research, networking and result dissemination 3.6.2 Establish an institutional framework for Official Development Assistance alignment with REDD+

It is important to note for the Sol that some of these strategies involve direct interventions—meaning that they are specific, often local activities which result in a direct change in the carbon stock. Other actions are enabling, meaning that they are aimed at facilitating the implementation of direct interventions by putting in place the conditions—institutional or social—that will improve the likelihood

of success of the direct interventions.²⁷ The Sol will focus on the direct interventions, as they are linked to ‘on the ground’ implementation and direct impacts on communities and forests.

The AIP also provides the foundational framework for accessing RBPs, including through the Green Climate Fund (GCF) and other climate finance mechanisms. Notably, in 2025, Cambodia is working on different fronts and with different financial sources to strengthen and scale up REDD+ readiness components. The RGC is actively working to fulfil all requirements under the GCF REDD+ RBP Policy approved in 2024. This marks a key milestone in advancing the country’s intention to submit a REDD+ RBP proposal to access financial incentives for already achieved and verified outcomes.

The preamble of the AIP also notes that AIP implementation will be guided by socially inclusive and gender responsive approaches that includes FPIC and Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM). The National REDD+ Gender Group is part of institutional arrangements for AIP implementation and also has a seat within its consultative group.

As of the end of the 2018–2022 period, implementation of REDD+ interventions under the AIP was ongoing, with a focus on institutional capacity building, community engagement, and piloting activities and safeguards application at the sub-national level. Due to the lack of continued funding, the AIP was not fully implemented for all activities outlined in the plan. As a result, the government has been exploring alternative sources of financing.

Seeking to gain experience in implementing REDD+ components and to explore alternative sources of financing, Cambodia implemented some of the world’s first pilot REDD+ projects. The Keo Seima Wildlife Sanctuary (KWS) project (VCS), for example, has evolved to the point of successfully selling carbon credits on the Voluntary Carbon Market (VCM).²⁸ Resources raised have financed the protection of the Keo Seima Wildlife Sanctuary and supported surrounding communities, including developing livelihoods and land use plans and improving forest management. Besides the KWS project, the Southern Cardamom Wildlife Sanctuary (VCS) and Tumring REDD+ projects (VCS) have also sold credits on the VCM, while the Prey Lang project is generating income through Japan’s Joint Crediting Mechanism (JCM).

These experiences have spurred momentum in preparations for REDD+ and built a repository of knowledge in managing unique landscapes, such as flooded forests and mangroves. These are important sources of livelihood, food and income for local communities and offer high rates of carbon sequestration.

REDD+ Nesting System

Cambodia is among the pioneering countries developing a REDD+ “nested” regulatory framework. This refers to a regulatory system that applies common rules, management methods and safeguards to projects and programs within a jurisdiction to track and count emissions reductions under the

²⁷ Direct REDD+ interventions are actions that immediately and measurably reduce forest loss or enhance forest carbon stocks. Examples include establishing protected areas, implementing sustainable forest management practices, supporting alternative livelihoods that reduce pressure on forests, or direct payments for forest conservation. These interventions have clear, observable outcomes that can be directly linked to emission reductions. Enabling REDD+ interventions are those that create the conditions necessary for effective forest conservation but don't directly prevent deforestation themselves. Examples include policy reforms, institutional capacity building, land tenure clarification, governance improvements, or developing monitoring systems. While essential for long-term success, their impact on emissions is indirect and often delayed.

²⁸ Under the VCS and CCB standards

UNFCCC-led REDD+ mechanism. It aligns measurements across individual projects, areas of the country and by the national government. Defining how baselines and reference levels are set ensures that starting points are the same. Equal efforts receive equal rewards, and benefits are shared fairly. This greater transparency and environmental integrity are intended to send a positive signal to communities, local partners, international donors and markets, with high-quality carbon credits potentially opening doors to new streams of finance beyond national budgets and donor contributions.

With the private sector, civil society and donors increasingly demanding high-integrity carbon, and the need to show high-integrity carbon increasing, Cambodia remains committed to achieving a nested country program. While progress was made during the reporting period, technical obstacles remain.

RGC started the nesting process in 2018, involving consultations with government officials and technical specialists to design the system and develop a draft regulatory framework and other legal elements for nesting.²⁹ These define carbon rights, set minimum standards, including social and environmental safeguards, and stipulate project general approval procedures as well as establish a national registry of projects linked to all emissions initiatives, including those under REDD+.

At present, RGC, with technical assistance from UNDP, is implementing a nesting piloting project with technical services by Conservation International, Wildlife Conservation Society and Spatial Informatics Group. Key outputs will include an assessment of the current nesting framework, updates to its main components, the development of procedures and process handbook, which include safeguard components, and an MRV roadmap. These activities will be carried out through a series of consultations to disseminate information and collect input from relevant stakeholders.

In the future, this work will guide progress toward fully realizing nesting system, which will be achieved as data becomes sufficiently robust and various functions such as registration and reporting on safeguards are fully institutionalized. The Prakas (Cambodia legal regulation) for implementing Nesting is currently under evaluation for endorsement by the MoE, pending the completion and assessment of the ongoing nesting system pilot and analysis of its main findings. Once the nesting system is in place, REDD+ projects are expected to routinely monitor and report progress in line with the guidelines that will spell out social and environmental safeguards and provisions for sharing project benefits, oversight mechanisms, and provisions for public engagement.

2.5 REDD+ Policies and Measures (PaMs) and projects implemented in Cambodia between 2018-2022

Cambodia implemented several significant REDD+ PaMs during 2018-2022, contributing to the three strategic objectives and strategies outlined in the Action and Investment Plan (AIP). These have been implemented through PaMs by government institutions (MoE, MAFF in particular, FA, FiA), development partners and NGO activities.

As mentioned previously, for purposes of the Sol, which is meant to report on the implementation of REDD+ safeguards 'on the ground', the PaMs and projects being highlighted in this section are those with direct interventions, meaning with direct impacts on communities and forests.³⁰

²⁹ Cambodia Nesting Report, 2022. <https://cambodia-redd.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Nesting-Report-Finalized-Report-ENG.pdf>

³⁰ Relevant AIP activities include: 1.1-1.4, 1.7, 2.1-2.6, 3.3

2.5.1 AIP's strategies and PaMs applicable to 2018-2022

Strategy 1.1: Strengthen management of forest conservation areas, such as protected areas and flooded and mangrove conservation areas

The MoE led comprehensive forest conservation efforts by advancing the implementation of the National Environmental Strategy and Action Plan (NESAP)³¹, providing guidelines for delivery partners, and conducting natural resource management activities in protected areas. These efforts included improved patrolling and biodiversity conservation enforcement.

In REDD+ projects (VCS and JCM), MoE served as the primary project proponent³². Additionally, MoE implemented activities to establish and manage new national parks and biodiversity corridors under the National Protected Area Strategic Management Plan (NPASMP) (2017). Initially, lands under MAFF were transferred to MoE for this purpose.

The MoE also advanced the implementation of the Cambodian Sustainable Landscape Management and Ecotourism project (CSLEP) (2019-2027). The project aimed to improve the planning and management of PAs and CPAs while promoting ecotourism opportunities and improving Non-Timber Forest Product (NTFP) value chains in the Cardamom Mountain and Tonle Sap (CMTS) landscape. Furthermore, as a part of a robust information system and decision support mechanism, the Cambodian Environmental Management Information System (CEMIS) has been developed.

Meanwhile, FiA/MAFF advanced the implementation of the Fishery Conservation Strategy, by providing guidelines and collaborating with development partners to conserve and manage fisheries conservation areas. This included efforts to protect and manage flooded and mangrove forests, as well as the enforcement of laws³³.

The REDD+ Taskforce Secretariat (RTS) worked closely with FA/MAFF, FiA/MAFF and GDNPA/MoE to build sub-national institutions and local communities to implement sub-national REDD+ Pilot activities. These activities focused on testing safeguards and gender approach while protecting community forest, flooded forest, and protected areas; improving reforestation efforts, enforcing laws; and introducing biodigesters³⁴.

Finally, community-based REDD+ initiatives were implemented to empower indigenous peoples and forest-dependent local communities. These initiatives facilitated local engagement in forest governance, sustainable land use planning, and conservation activities³⁵.

Strategy 1.2: Promote forest land tenure security through forest land classification, zoning, demarcation, and registration.

The Government of Cambodia continued the implementation of land classification systems within the framework of the National REDD+ Strategy (NRS). Demarcation of forest boundaries and registration of user rights in PAs progressed significantly.

³¹ https://cambodia-redd.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/national-environment-strategy-and-action-plan_nesap_2016-2023-1.pdf

³² See REDD+ project implementation partners listed above in section 2.3

³³ Development partners and NGOs collaborated with MAFF/FiA in implementing fisheries conservation strategies across multiple protected areas and community fisheries sites.

³⁴ <https://cambodia-redd.org/redd-implementation/redd-projects-based.html>

³⁵ The UNDP SGP supported community-based REDD+ initiatives that empower indigenous peoples and forest-dependent communities, facilitating local engagement in forest governance, sustainable land use planning, and conservation activities.

MoE promoted land demarcation and registry processes for securing land rights through REDD+ projects, based on the Zoning Guidelines for the Protected Areas in Cambodia.³⁶

Strategy 1.3: Strengthen law enforcement activities to address unauthorized logging and encroachment.

One of the key activities that contributed to lowering annual deforestation rates prior to, and continuing throughout, this reporting period was the sustained enforcement of the moratorium on new forest land encroachments and ELCs. This policy action directly curbed a major historical driver of deforestation, helping to reduce annual forest loss compared to baseline trends. In parallel, the government reclaimed forestlands from revoked ELCs, with arrangements made for their planning and sustainable management, including integration into the Protected Area system or allocation for community forestry initiatives. These efforts not only avoided emissions by preventing forest clearance but also created opportunities for local communities to gain secure access to forest resources under formal management structures, thereby aligning with safeguards on tenure rights and inclusive participation.

Complementing these measures, forest patrols and species protection activities were prioritized in key biodiversity landscapes. Systematic documentation of enforcement actions—such as the prevention of illegal logging, wildlife trafficking, and encroachment—further strengthened monitoring and compliance. These combined interventions reduced deforestation pressures, safeguarded high-carbon ecosystems, and protected critical habitats, thus delivering significant climate, biodiversity, and social co-benefits.³⁷

Strategy 1.4: Monitor the status of Economic Land Concessions (ELCs) and Social Land Concessions (SLCs) for compliance with regulations and strengthen capacity for effective monitoring.

Government agencies conducted comprehensive inspections of forest enterprises, compliance monitoring, and ELC-related permit regulation, helping to reduce illegal exploitation of natural resources while ensuring that access and use were more transparent and accountable. MAFF conducted detailed inspections of forest enterprises and enforcement measures against illegal logging and ELC boundary encroachment, which not only curbed deforestation pressures but also helped protect community access rights and reduce land conflicts. Permits supported regulated access to natural resources in protected areas, balancing conservation objectives with the legitimate livelihood needs of local and indigenous communities.

MoE, through the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility project, enhanced the government's capacity to monitor land concessions at multiple levels and ensure compliance with environmental regulations³⁸.

³⁶ WCS secured ICTs for multiple villages in the Keo Seima Wildlife Sanctuary. The PaFF supported community forests, community fisheries, and community protected areas across four provinces. RECOFTC supported the formalization of CFs aligned with Cambodia's NFP. The UNDP SGP supported forest-dependent communities in PAs through the Community Land Titles process, facilitating local engagement with local authorities.

³⁷ WA operated the Cardamom Forest Protection Program with joint patrols between NGO staff, the MoE, and Military Police. WCS provided technical support for the national deployment of SMART in Cambodia. CFMCs actively reported unauthorized activities to authorities. RECOFTC and UNDP SGP mainstreamed regular community patrols as part of their core activity to target CBFM communities that actively involve women and indigenous people

³⁸ WWF supported governmental efforts to monitor the impact of ELCs on biodiversity conservation in the Eastern Plains Landscape. The FCPF Phase II project enhanced the government's capacity to monitor land concessions and ensure compliance with environmental regulations.

Strategy 1.7: Strengthen capacity for data management and establish decision support systems for the forest and land use sector

The government improved governance transparency through the rollout of the Financial Management Information System (FMIS) (2017) and Non-Tax Revenue Management Information System (NRMIS) systems for tracking environmental budgets and outcomes. The National Forest Monitoring System (NFMS) was regularly updated with satellite and field data.

The government conducted analysis and early discussion about the implementation of the Environmental and Social Fund (ESF) (2016). In 2019, MoE implemented early warning systems in REDD+ zones to detect illegal forest clearing. In terms of SMART implementation, MoE provided technical oversight, coordination, and institutional support to integrate SMART into national forest and biodiversity monitoring frameworks.

The MoE made significant progress in developing the CEMIS and the Information System and Decision Support (ISDS). These platforms serve as gateways to environmental data within protected areas, offering tools and information to support practitioners and decision-makers in promoting environmental protection, sustainable natural resource management, and biodiversity conservation³⁹.

Strategy 2.1: Strengthen and scale up community-based forest management

One of the most significant activities that generated emission reductions in 2018 and in preceding years—and that continues to be a national priority today—has been the government’s systematic promotion of Community-based Forest Management (CBFM) across multiple natural resource sectors. Through MAFF implementation of the National Forest Program (2010-2029) was advanced the expansion of Community Forests was advanced, while the Strategic Planning Framework for Fisheries (SPFF) supported the scaling-up of Community Fisheries. In parallel, the MoE implemented the Protected Area Strategic Management Plan to strengthen Community Protected Areas (CPA), ensuring that forest-dependent communities became both custodians of natural resources and beneficiaries of their sustainable management.

To operationalize these frameworks, government agencies provided guidelines for delivery partners to establish and develop these communities in their respective jurisdictional areas. These included procedures for community legalization, development of community management plans, and technical support for governance structures that empower local people to make forest management decisions. From a safeguard’s perspective, these interventions directly enhanced tenure security, improved participation of marginalized and indigenous groups, and increased accountability in forest governance.

In addition, the Ministry of Land Management, Urban Planning and Construction (MLMUPC) implemented the Land Law 2001 targets for the Indigenous People Communal Land Title (IP-CLT).⁴⁰ By

³⁹ WCS provided technical support for the development and expansion of the SMART monitoring system, including technical training to PDoe staff. RECOFTC supported CF/CPA committees to use tools like Telegram and Excel for record-keeping and outreach in communities engaged in monitoring activities. Under the USAID GPL project, communities trained by REDD+ submit 50 formal reports about forest crimes per month to the MoE using SMART application.

⁴⁰ RECOFTC operated the Community Forestry Credit Scheme providing financial support to community forest programs and supported communities to prepare and implement CFMPs. The PaFF initiative supported CBNRM groups and MoE in collaboration with Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), IUCN Netherlands, and German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). UNDP SGP and CBR+ provided financial support to CSOs (CF, CFI, CPA) to prepare and implement community management plans, including demarcation and patrolling, reforestation, fire prevention, promoting renewable energy, and livelihood improvement activities.

formalizing collective rights to ancestral domains, the government not only safeguarded indigenous peoples' cultural and livelihood dimensions but also created strong incentives for sustainable land stewardship and long-term forest conservation.

Strategy 2.2: Engage and encourage the private sector to implement alternative and sustainable supply chains from agro-industrial plantations and to reduce emissions

The Government launched and implemented Cambodia's Roadmap for Sustainable Consumption and Production (2022-2035), which provides guidelines linking sustainable production practices with ecotourism activities in protected areas while promoting sustainable non-timber forest product production⁴¹.

Strategy 2.3: Expand afforestation, reforestation, and restoration activities.

MAFF and MoE developed guidelines and promoted private forest plantations on state land, encouraging investment in sustainable timber and fuelwood species to boost forest cover and improve livelihoods. In collaboration with FAO, MoE implemented the Forest and Landscape Restoration Mechanism (FLRM) through pilot projects, capacity building initiatives, and effective monitoring tools for the sustainable restoration of degraded forests and community areas.

The Government supported CBFM, including CF, CFi, and CPA, by expanding local forest management rights and increasing the number of community forest sites, empowering communities to manage and protect resources. Building on this foundation, Cambodia has prioritized afforestation, reforestation, and restoration (ARR) to complement CBFM and address declining forest cover. Additionally, government agencies worked closely with international partners like AFoCO and GLURI to promote the plantation of native tree species through public-private partnerships, thereby strengthening reforestation efforts and enhancing environmental awareness.⁴²

Strategy 2.4: Enhance timber supply and wood-based energy sourced from community-based forest management areas and private plantations to reduce pressure on forest areas.

The Government established limits for annual forest harvesting through a bidding process to supply domestic timber demand. Multi-actor cooperation by MoE/RGC on sustainable timber activities at the community level was conducted through engagement with local stakeholders and key provincial partners⁴³.

Strategy 2.5: Promote effective, equitable, sustainable management and use of forests, forest lands, and non-timber forest products

Cambodia continued the implementation of its National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) 2016-2023. Different CBFM models were established, including Community Conservation Forestry and

⁴¹ Implementation of the IBIS Rice initiative co-operated by MoE and WCS. Everland represented a portfolio of REDD+ projects in Cambodia and collaborated with the government to scale conservation efforts. WWF promoted sustainable supply chains through its rattan project, collaborating with agro-industrial stakeholders to promote sustainable sourcing practices, reducing pressure on natural forests.

⁴² RECOFTC supported silviculture, forest fire control, and reforestation in CFs across 10 provinces. Tula worked with RECOFTC to apply a successive forestry restoration model successfully used in Myanmar. CI supported reforestation projects in degraded areas, contributing to carbon sequestration and habitat restoration. UNDP SGP and RTS supported reforestation in CF, CFi, and CPAs across their grantee sites.

⁴³ RECOFTC implemented the "Piloting Sustainable Timber Harvesting in CF" project aimed at strengthening legal, sustainable timber use. Sustainable timber harvesting was piloted in Preah Vihear and Stung Treng (2019-2022), promoting legal forest use within management plans. Community-Based Production Forest pilots combined community forestry with responsible commercial forestry activities. ADB provided technical assistance to improve the productivity of community-managed forests, ensuring sustainable timber supply.

Community Protected Areas⁴⁴.

Strategy 2.6: Identify and implement alternative and sustainable livelihood development programmes for local communities most dependent on forest resources

Cambodia's Minister of Environment acknowledged the dependency of many Cambodians on forest resources and the need for sustainable alternatives. During 2018-2022, the government promoted multiple livelihood alternatives, including ecotourism, NTFP enterprises, and eco-farming.⁴⁵

Strategy 3.3: Strengthen the capacity, knowledge, and awareness of stakeholders to enhance their contribution to reducing deforestation and forest degradation

The Government provided stakeholders with REDD+ information through various communication channels, ensuring the inclusion of women and marginalized groups in the management of the REDD+ readiness process.⁴⁶ The REDD+ Taskforce Secretariat organized over 100 REDD+ related awareness-raising events, training sessions, workshops, and public consultation meetings at both national and sub-national levels.⁴⁷

While all these PaMs contributed to Cambodia's overall conservation and improved forest management, challenges persist in fully integrating and streamlining them consistently within the National REDD+ program. Further work is required to assess the impact of these initiatives on curbing deforestation and to attribute results effectively. Additionally, reporting on these efforts is not currently aligned with a framework compatible with REDD+ safeguards, which will involve addressing these challenges during SIS operations. Integrating these programs into the broader National REDD+ Programme would be a critical step toward establishing a fully functioning national system.

2.5.2. REDD+ Projects

REDD+ pilot projects by MoE and MAFF under FCPF

During 2018-2022, the RTS, through a collaboration between the MoE and the MAFF, also implemented three REDD+ pilot projects to test at the community level the REDD+ interventions and the national safeguards framework.

- **The REDD+ Pilot Project in Sarsar Sdam Community Fishery, Siem Reap Province.** It focused on integrating REDD+ with community-managed fisheries and flooded forest in the Tonle Sap floodplain and aimed to reduce deforestation and degradation of flooded forests surrounding the lake by strengthening community tenure, restoring degraded habitats, enhancing livelihoods through sustainable fishing practices, and supporting renewable energy-efficient biodigester

⁴⁴ UNDP SGP funded projects that developed value chains for non-timber forest products, enhancing livelihoods and forest conservation. RECOFTC focused on helping local communities and government establish legal community forestry sites and ensure their long-term economic viability. PaFF supported communities to develop and implement management plans for their respective areas. WWF's rattan project worked across the Greater Mekong region to promote systems of sustainable rattan harvest and production.

⁴⁵ The Southern Cardamom REDD+ project constructed water wells with solar energy panels. WA initiated community-based ecotourism in the Cardamom Mountains, offering alternative incomes and reducing reliance on forest exploitation. The Keo Seima REDD+ project showed improvements in local livelihood assets including natural, physical, human, financial, and social capital. KWS benefit-sharing initiatives focused on women's empowerment through scholarships for girls, savings groups, and household training. Community-based alternative livelihood programs were implemented to provide sustainable income sources. The ADB BCCP provided alternative livelihood options.

⁴⁶ More information provided under safeguard B reporting.

⁴⁷ RECOFTC conducted REDD+ awareness events, including organizing an event on REDD+ SIS with the NGO Forum Cambodia and National REDD+ Secretariat. In 2010, RECOFTC began a national community forestry capacity-building needs assessment. The PaFF initiative-built capacities among communities and government agencies to implement community-based approaches to sustainable resource management. Over 600 awareness sessions, training events, and public consultations were conducted under BCCP.

technology. The project supported community capacity building, resource mapping, and piloting co-management agreements.

- **The REDD+ Pilot Project in Samroang Community Forestry, Pursat Province.** Located within a community forestry site managed under MAFF, this project promoted sustainable forest management through community participation. Activities included supporting CF legalization and establishing a management plan, forest patrols, fire prevention, and the development of alternative livelihoods to reduce pressure on forest resources, as well as supporting biodigesters.
- **The Pilot REDD+ Project in Phnom Kulen National Park, Siem Reap Province.** This project operated in a protected area under MoE jurisdiction, aiming to test REDD+ implementation in a national park context. It addresses challenges such as encroachment, illegal land clearing, restoring degraded forest and agricultural expansion, while strengthening park zoning, management plan, and community co-management. The project also supports biodiversity monitoring, environmental education, and community engagement in conservation activities.

REDD+ projects by project developers

Perhaps the most significant development in Cambodia's REDD+ programming from 2018 to 2022 was the government's decision to promote and support REDD+ projects to gain practical experience. This approach addresses forest and land policy frameworks by translating them into concrete actions on the ground and enhancing the performance of its leading carbon sequestration projects, all of which generated significant benefits and revenue. The focus on VCM pilot REDD+ projects and the bilateral offset project (JCM), represents a strategic response by RGC to carry out REDD+ interventions effectively on the ground while leveraging financing from the private sector. It is important to note that the MoE remains the official owner and overseer of these projects.

- **WCS and Keo Seima:** WCS has supported conservation efforts in the Keo Seima Wildlife Sanctuary since 2002, and since 2010 has worked to develop the Sanctuary's potential as a REDD+ project. In 2016 the project achieved a major milestone, becoming the first REDD+ project in the country to issue carbon credits.⁴⁸ In total, the project has generated 18,874,423 carbon offset credits through December 2021.⁴⁹ All of Keo Seima's credits have been verified by the Verified Carbon Standard and the Climate, Community and Biodiversity Standards.
- **Conservation International and Prey Lang:** Managed by Conservation International, the Northern Prey Lang landscape became operational as a REDD+ Project in 2018. Unlike the Keo Seima and Southern Cardamom projects that ostensibly seek buyers on the open market, the Prey Lang project is registered under Japan's Joint Crediting Mechanism (JCM) and is jointly implemented by Conservation International, the Ministry of Environment, and Mitsui, Ltd. In total, the project has generated 612,525 tons of carbon-dioxide equivalent offset credits through December 2023⁵⁰.
- **Wildlife Alliance and the Southern Cardamom:** Building on its longstanding engagement in the Southern Cardamom landscape, in 2015, Wildlife Alliance launched the area's REDD+ project, with the first credits being sold in December 2018.⁵¹ As of June 2023, the Southern Cardamom REDD+ Project had issued over 27.6 million carbon credits. All the Southern Cardamom credits have been

⁴⁸ WCS website, 2016. [https://newsroom.wcs.org/News-Releases/articleType/ArticleView/articleId/9125/Cambodias-Keo-Seima-Wildlife-Sanctuary-Sells-First-Carbon-Credits.aspx#:~:text=Cambodia's%20Keo%20Seima%20Wildlife%20Sanctuary%20Sells%20First%20Carbon%20Credits.&text=Phnom%20Penh%2C%20Cambodia%20\(July%202022%2C%202016\)%20-,encompasses%20a%20total%20area%20of%20292%2C690%20hectares](https://newsroom.wcs.org/News-Releases/articleType/ArticleView/articleId/9125/Cambodias-Keo-Seima-Wildlife-Sanctuary-Sells-First-Carbon-Credits.aspx#:~:text=Cambodia's%20Keo%20Seima%20Wildlife%20Sanctuary%20Sells%20First%20Carbon%20Credits.&text=Phnom%20Penh%2C%20Cambodia%20(July%202022%2C%202016)%20-,encompasses%20a%20total%20area%20of%20292%2C690%20hectares)

⁴⁹ Arbor Day Foundation website. <https://www.arborday.org/carbon/projects/keo-seima-wildlife-sanctuary>

⁵⁰ JCM website: <https://www.jcm.go.jp/projects/92>

⁵¹ Wildlife works website: https://www.wildlifeworks.com/timeline#:~:text=2015%20*%20FEBRUARY.%20Launched%20Stand%20for%20Trees%2C,forests%20to%20fight%20climate%20change.%20*%20APRIL

verified by the Verified Carbon Standard and the Climate, Community and Biodiversity Standards.

- **Wildlife works and Tumring REDD+ Project:** Initiated in 2015, is a collaborative effort between the FA and the Korea Forest Service, with technical support from Wildlife Works. Spanning approximately 67,000 hectares in Kampong Thom province, the project aims to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, protect biodiversity, and support local communities through sustainable land use and alternative livelihoods.

Since 2022 several other REDD+ projects are also in various stages of REDD+ preparedness work.

3. Cambodia's REDD+ safeguards approach

Clarification of Cancun safeguards

Parties to the UNFCCC agreed to a set of seven safeguards (broad principles) that are expected to be applied in accordance with national context and circumstances when undertaking REDD+ interventions. See Box 1.

Box 1: The Cancun safeguards⁵²

When undertaking the activities referred to in paragraph 70 of this decision, the following safeguards should be promoted and supported:

- (a) That actions complement or are consistent with the objectives of national forest programmes and relevant international conventions and agreements;*
- (b) Transparent and effective national forest governance structures, taking into account national legislation and sovereignty;*
- (c) Respect for the knowledge and rights of indigenous peoples and members of local communities, by taking into account relevant international obligations, national circumstances and laws, and noting that the United Nations General Assembly has adopted the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples;*
- (d) The full and effective participation of relevant stakeholders, in particular indigenous peoples and local communities, in the actions referred to in paragraphs 70 and 72 of this decision;*
- (e) That actions are consistent with the conservation of natural forests and biological diversity, ensuring that the actions referred to in paragraph 70 of this decision are not used for the conversion of natural forests, but are instead used to incentivize the protection and conservation of natural forests and their ecosystem services, and to enhance other social and environmental benefits;⁵³*
- (f) Actions to address the risks of reversals;*
- (g) Actions to reduce displacement of emissions*

Cambodia has interpreted these broad principles to the national context and circumstances, which has been unpacked into interpretative elements. This was done through a participatory process in 2018.⁵⁴

This interpretation specifies how the general principles outlined in the UNFCCC REDD+ safeguards translate into specific principles and objectives that are to be followed and promoted in the context of the implementation of REDD+ interventions in Cambodia, and which are anchored in the country's policies, laws and regulations (PLRs).

National Interpretation of the Cancun Safeguards in Cambodia

Safeguard A: The NRS/AIP is designed in compliance with the objectives of national forestry policies, considering jurisdictional arrangements, and consistent with provisions of the relevant treaties and international conventions to which Cambodia is a ratified party.

A.1 The NRS is consistent with the objectives of national forest relevant policies

A.2 The NRS is consistent with relevant and applicable international conventions and agreements

Safeguard B: The rights of access to information, accountability, justice, gender equality, land tenure and fair distribution of benefits are clarified, respected and promoted in the scope of the application of the NRS/AIP.

⁵² UNFCCC Decision 1/CP.16 Appendix 1 paragraph 2

⁵³ Taking into account the need for sustainable livelihoods of indigenous peoples and local communities and their interdependence on forests in most countries, reflected in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, as well as International Mother Earth Day.

⁵⁴ Cambodia's first Sol, 2019. https://redd.unfccc.int/media/6_cambodia_1st_summary_of_information_on_safeguards-final-oct-2019.pdf

B.1 Right to access information is promoted in the context of the implementation of the NRS/AIP B.2 Accountability is guaranteed in the context of the implementation of the NRS/AIP B.3 Right to access justice is recognized and protected in the context of the implementation of the NRS/AIP B.4 User rights over forest land are recognized and protected in the context of the implementation of the NRS/AIP B.5 Gender equality is promoted and ensured in the context of the implementation of the NRS/AIP B.6 Fair distribution of benefits is recognized and promoted in the context of the implementation of the NRS/AIP
Safeguard C: The NRS/AIP is implemented in accordance to the rights of recognition of, and respect for the rights of Indigenous peoples and local communities, including the rights to non-discrimination, traditional knowledge and culture, self-determination, benefit sharing, and collective tenure rights. C.1 The rights of indigenous peoples and local communities are promoted and protected in the context of the application of the NRS/AIP C.2 Traditional knowledge is recognized and protected in the context of the application of the NRS/AIP
Safeguard D: The right to participate, in an effective manner, including how Free Prior Informed Consent for relevant indigenous peoples and local communities are recognized and promoted under the implementation of the NRS/AIP. D.1 Relevant indigenous peoples and local communities have the right to participate in the implementation of the NRS/AIP REDD+ interventions D.2 Right to a Free, Prior and Informed Consent is recognized and protected in accordance with the relevant legal obligations.
Safeguard E: The NRS/AIP is implemented to promote the conservation of natural forests and biodiversity, the enhancement of social and environmental benefits, and will not result in the conversion of natural forests. E.1 The conservation of natural forests and biological diversity is recognized and protected in the context of the implementation of the NRS/AIP E. 2. The NRS/AIP will not incentivize the conversion of natural forests E.3 Enhancement of ecological, biological, climatic, and socio-cultural benefits
Safeguards F&G: Risks of reversals and displacement of emissions of the REDD+ PaMs will be addressed through the MRV and national forest monitoring system. F.1 Addressing risks of reversals is required by the NRS/AIP G.1 Addressing the risks of displacement of emissions is required by the NRS/AIP

4. Implementation of REDD+ Safeguards

The following sections **detail how each Cancun Safeguards was addressed and respected** in Cambodia for the period from 2018-2022, structured according to Cambodia's national safeguard components. In the context of the Cancun REDD+ safeguards, the terms "addressed" and "respected" represent two distinct but complementary aspects of safeguard implementation:

- "Addressed" refers to the policies, laws, and regulations that are relevant to each of the seven Cancun safeguards in a country's context. Specifically, addressing safeguards means identifying/applying national policies and legal frameworks relating to safeguard elements; establishing institutional arrangements to oversee implementation; and developing procedures, guidelines, and methodologies.
- "Respected" refers to putting in place institutional arrangements and procedures that allow for the principles encompassed in the safeguards to be implemented in practice. This is about the actual implementation and adherence to the safeguards during REDD+ interventions.

The relationship between these terms can be understood as:

- "Addressed" focuses on the preparatory and structural elements (what's on paper)
- "Respected" focuses on implementation and outcomes (what happens in practice)

This distinction is important because simply having policies in place ("addressing") doesn't guarantee effective implementation ("respecting"). Both elements are necessary for the successful application of the Cancun safeguards in REDD+ interventions.

4.1 How the REDD+ safeguards were addressed

Cambodia's legal framework regulates the country's substantive and procedural rights and is meant to align with UNFCCC REDD+ Safeguards. As such, Cambodia's legal framework determines 'how' the country ensures REDD+ interventions are carried out in consistency with REDD+ safeguard goals.

This section describes the legal and institutional framework in place to ensure REDD+ interventions are implemented in accordance with the Cancun safeguards; that is, how safeguards are "addressed" within the Cambodian legal framework. It has been prepared to reflect the framework up to 2025.

This section provides a succinct overview of the legal and institutional framework, outlining the relevant policies, laws, and regulations (PLRs) that are in place to ensure consistency with the UNFCCC REDD+ safeguards throughout REDD+ implementation. In large part, those PLRs in place during the development of Cambodia's First Sol remain largely in place.⁵⁵ However, two notable updates are the 2021 Guidelines on the Rules and Procedures for REDD+ GHG Mechanisms in the Kingdom of Cambodia (the REDD+ Nesting), and the 2023 enactment of the Environment and Natural Resources Code (ENRC, the Code), culminating a process of drafting and stakeholder consultation that began in 2016.⁵⁶ The REDD+ Nesting reiterates Cambodia's commitment to the Cancun safeguards, requiring that all REDD+ projects adhere to them.⁵⁷ The Code's 862 articles touch virtually all aspects of Cambodia's environmental governance. Relevant provisions are noted here.

⁵⁵ Cambodia's first Sol, 2019.

⁵⁶ MoE website: <https://www.moe.gov.kh/index/50787>

⁵⁷ Cambodia's Nesting Guidelines, 2022

Safeguard A: The REDD+ interventions are designed in compliance with the objectives of national forestry policies, considering jurisdictional arrangements, and consistent with provisions of the relevant treaties and international conventions to which Cambodia is a ratified party

A.1 The NRS/AIP is consistent with the objectives of the national forest relevant policies

The Forestry Laws define a management framework for forests, with the National Forest Program specifically aimed at unifying the goals of any forest resource development program, and to ensure the sustainable conservation and forest resource development and biodiversity program in Cambodia.⁵⁸ The National REDD+ Strategy's goal is aligned, as it aims to reduce deforestation and forest degradation while promoting sustainable management, conservation of natural resources, and contributing to poverty alleviation. The Code reaffirms management requirements for both protected areas and other non-protected area forest resources.⁵⁹

A.2 The NRS/AIP is consistent with relevant and applicable international conventions and agreements

Cambodia is a signatory to over twenty relevant international agreements⁶⁰. Once an international convention is passed into law by the National Assembly and is ratified by the King, it receives the same hierarchy as domestic laws.

The mission of the National REDD+ Strategy is to strengthen the functioning and capacity of national and sub-national institutions for effective implementation of policies, laws, and regulations to enhance management of natural resources and forest lands, and biodiversity conservation.

Safeguard B: The rights of access to information, accountability, justice, gender equality, land tenure, and fair distribution of benefits are clarified, respected, and promoted in the scope of the application of the NRS/AIP.

B.1 Right to access information is promoted in the context of the implementation of the NRS/AIP

The right to access information is linked to the right to participation across different pieces of legislation. The newly updated Safeguard Information System provides timely and transparent information on how Cambodia addresses and respects the Cancun safeguards. The Code also contains extensive provisions specifying access to information rights, including, in the context of Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs), rights to access information from private companies.⁶¹

B.2 Accountability is guaranteed in the context of the implementation of the NRS/AIP

Cambodia provides clear measures to deal with corruption that are directly applicable to the forest sector.⁶² The Anti-Corruption Law, Chapter 6, contains detailed descriptions of specific penalties and classes of offenses pertaining to different types of corrupt activities. Many of the corruption offenses are also stipulated in the criminal code so they follow the code of criminal procedure.

The National REDD+ Strategy outlines the creation of a monitoring and evaluation framework, which is intended to create an enabling environment of accountability and learning.

⁵⁸ National Forest Programme (2.7 Objective of Program)

⁵⁹ ENRC, Book 4, section 1, chapter 4, Articles 355-357; section 2, chapter 6, Articles 495-496.

⁶⁰ See Cambodia's first Sol, 2019.

⁶¹ ENRC, Book 5, section 2, chapter 9, Article 712.

⁶² The 2010 Anti-Corruption Law; Criminal Code Art. 38; Land Law, Chapter 19; The Law on Environmental Protection and Natural Resource Management (1996), Article 24.

B.3 Right to access justice is recognized and protected in the context of the implementation of the NRS/AIP

The right to access to justice is a recognized and protected right in Cambodia. Below, we identify the most relevant dispute resolution mechanisms.

The Protected Area Law (2008) establishes a National Committee for Conflict Resolution on Protected Area Management to assist in the discussion, consultation, and conflict resolution on protected areas. The Committee is chaired by the Minister of the Environment and includes representation of relevant ministries and institutions.⁶³

The Land Law (2001) addresses disputes over immovable property between possessors (i.e. those possessing land without formal titles)⁶⁴. Such disputes are resolved by the Cadastral Commission, created by the Ministry of Land Management, Urban Planning, and Construction.

Indigenous peoples are also protected and granted the right to access dispute mechanisms under the National Policy on the Development of Indigenous Peoples (2009).⁶⁵ The policy establishes that the community committees are a mechanism for dispute resolution.

The Code establishes an environment and natural resources dispute resolution mechanism, including committee memberships, procedures, and rights of appeal.⁶⁶

B.4 User rights over forest land are recognized and protected in the context of the implementation of the NRS/AIP

Cambodian Constitution⁶⁷ and the 2001 Land Law, recognize a range of land and forest rights that can be accessed by individuals and communities, including collective indigenous community property⁶⁸. In addition, in its first chapter, it establishes the procedures and rights for land ownership on both privately owned land and communal land. This includes who may own land, how land can be transferred, and the rights of owners. Article 26 also provides collective ownership to indigenous communities through the issuing of communal land titles. These land titles are based on traditional land uses.

The Land Law (2001), Forestry Law (2002), Fisheries Law (2006), and Protected Area Law (2008) all recognize the rights to traditional access and customary user rights by local communities and indigenous peoples. These recognitions cover land rights, rights to forest products and by-products, and rights to have fishery communities. The different laws recognise traditional use on various types of land, as well as different, cultural, subsistence and commercial use rights. These rights are often protected against concessions as well.⁶⁹ These user rights are reiterated in the Code.⁷⁰

B.5 Gender equality is promoted and ensured in the context of the implementation of the NRS/AIP

The Constitution clearly prohibits any discrimination against women and establishes that they have the same rights, freedoms, and obligations of all Khmer citizens. The constitution states its recognition of and respect for the UN Charter on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in Article 31, and Cambodia is a signatory of

⁶³ Protected Area Law (2008), Chapter V, Article 20

⁶⁴ Land Law (2001) articles 33,35,38,40

⁶⁵ National Policy on the Development of Indigenous Peoples (2009), Chapter 2, Section 8.2

⁶⁶ Code, Book 9, section 1, Articles 799-807.

⁶⁷ Constitution of Cambodia, Article 44

⁶⁸ Land Law (2001), Title 1. Land Law, Article 25; Forestry Law (2002), Article 40; Fisheries Law (2006)

⁶⁹ Land Law (2001), Article 25; Forestry Law (2002), in article 45, also recognizes the religious forest of local communities as Protection Forests. It prohibits the harvesting of any spirit trees. However, it classifies the spirit forests as "Protection Forests", which means the communities maintain customary rights, but the areas are actually public state land and under the authority of MAFF. Forestry Law (2002) chapter 9 further recognizes the traditional user rights of local communities to use forest products and by-products. These rights include livestock grazing and sale of forest by-products. The Protected Areas Law (2008), in chapter 6, reaffirms the recognition of the right to access protected forests for traditional uses. Under this law the Ministry of Environment can also establish community protected areas that are adjacent to or reside in a protected forest. Forestry Law (2002), Article 40. The Forestry Law (2002) recognizes customary subsistence use rights of forest produce and by-products for local communities registered with the state. It also states that concessionaires shall not interfere with customary user rights taking place on land property of the indigenous peoples who have customary access to user rights.

⁷⁰ ENRC, Book 4, section 1, chapter 6, Article 369.

the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) (1992).

Certain other laws, sub-decrees, and programs recognize the unique role that women have, and within the law, there are stipulations regarding actively encouraging women to participate.⁷¹ The Cambodian governmental structure contains institutions explicitly mandated to promote women's rights in the country. The Ministry of Women's Affairs is the agency that is tasked with achieving gender equality, women's empowerment, and the realization of women's rights in Cambodia. The RGC stipulated the Land Law in 2001, guaranteeing equal rights for men and women to own and inherit land. It also protects the rights of female-headed households and people with disabilities and specifies that men and women have the rights to co-sign land titles. Furthermore, the Marriage and Family Law also recognize joint property rights.

MoE has a functioning Gender Technical Working Group (some members are part of the REDD+ Gender Group) and has a Gender Mainstreaming Strategic Plan. From 2018-2022, there were two strategic phases of the Plan implemented (phase 2016-2020) and (2021-2025).⁷²

The National REDD+ Strategy supports and complements the implementation of Cambodia's broader development plans in particular, the Gender and Cambodia Climate Change Strategic Plan (CCSP) 2014-2023. Additionally, a gender group was established by the REDD Task Force (RTF) to build awareness on gender issues among members of the RTF, consultation group, and technical teams and to review and provide gender-specific inputs to the development and implementation of NRS. The four members of the gender group are affiliated with FA and FiA of MAFF, MoE, and the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA).

B.6 Fair distribution of benefits is recognized and promoted in the context of the implementation of the NRS

The Forestry Law (2002) states that the local communities in a Community Forest area shall have the right to harvest forest products and by-products within the area that is designated by the agreement. The Law also states that any individual who plants a tree on private or state forest land where they have the user right, also has the right to use, sell, and distribute their products.⁷³ Regulations related to CPAs and CFs provide requirements on equitable benefit sharing.⁷⁴

The National REDD+ Strategy states as and when established, the REDD+ fund would adhere to internationally accepted principles of transparency, accountability, effectiveness, equity and efficiency.

Safeguard C: The REDD+ interventions are implemented in accordance with the rights of recognition of, and respect for the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities, including the rights to non-discrimination, traditional knowledge and culture, self-determination, benefit sharing, and collective tenure rights.

⁷¹ National Policy on the development of Indigenous Peoples Chapter 2.2.4 recognizes that women are especially in need of vocational training in occupation skills beyond growing and plantation Works. Sub-Decree on Community Forestry Management (2003) Article 18 requires the Community Forestry Management Committee to encourage the participation of women in the Committee. The National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (2016) does embody the National Green Growth Roadmap that was adopted by Cambodia in 2009. This Roadmap stipulates that one of the goals is to ensure equal access to resources for both women and men. The strategic goals and actions for the updated NBSAP also state that the full and effective participation of indigenous peoples and local communities, in particular women, if of primary importance for the successful development and implementation of policies and programs. One of the principles under the Cambodia Climate Change Strategic Plan 2013 is to address gender equality and implement climate change responses that encourage inclusive participation of Indigenous Peoples and local communities, especially women, in order to achieve effective implementations. One of the principles under the Cambodia Climate Change Strategic Plan is to enhance gender equality and mainstream gender into climate change responses. The Ministry of Women's Affairs (MOWA) is a national mechanism to enhance gender equality, empower women, increase women's participation in decision making to adaptation and mitigation to climate change. MOWA serves as a coordinating body in encouraging relevant institutions to mainstream gender into policies, and relevant projects and programmes to climate change.

⁷² MoE Gender Strategic Plan 2021-2025 <https://ncsd.moe.gov.kh/kh/dcc/resource/document/StrategicPlan/Gender/MoE>

⁷³ Forestry Law (2002), Article 40, 44, 46.

⁷⁴ Prakas on Guidelines on Community Forestry (2006), Art. 7, Prakas on Guideline and Procedure on Community Protected Area Establishment (2017), Art. 21, Sub-Decree on Social Land Concessions (2003), Art. 5, National Forest Programme (2010), Pg. 23 and 94, National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (2016), Pg. 179, National Protected Area Strategic Management Plan (2017), Pg. 11 and 12, National REDD+ Strategy (2017-2026), Pg. 19. Prakas on Guidelines on Community Forestry 2006 allow for the sharing of benefits by Community Forestry members from the community forest."

C.1 The rights of indigenous peoples and local communities are promoted and protected in the context of the application of the NRS/AIP

Some of Cambodia's laws provide a definition of the term Indigenous peoples that is generally consistent with the way in which the term is defined internationally.⁷⁵ Cambodian laws have various similar definitions of what a local community is in relation to the forestry sector.⁷⁶ However, the Code departs from this approach, not providing a definition for Indigenous peoples in its glossary, and refers to them only once within the broader definition of local communities.⁷⁷

The Cambodian Constitution recognizes that all Khmer citizens, which includes Indigenous people under the National Policy on the Development of Indigenous Peoples (NPDIP)– are equal before the law regardless of race, colour, national origin, etc.⁷⁸

The Land Law (2001) recognizes the collective property rights of Indigenous peoples according to their traditional customs.⁷⁹ The Forest Law (2002) recognizes the customary, subsistence use rights of forest products and by products for local communities, and rights of shifting cultivation by indigenous peoples registered with the state.

The Land Law (2001), Forestry Law (2002), Fisheries Law (2006), and Protected Area Law (2008) and the Code (2023) all recognize the rights to traditional access and customary user rights by local communities and Indigenous people.⁸⁰ These recognitions cover land rights, rights to forest products and by-products, and rights to have fishery communities. Traditional decision-making and dispute resolution mechanisms are recognized.⁸¹

The National REDD+ Strategy will be guided by several guiding principles, which include ensuring full and effective participation of relevant stakeholders, including those most vulnerable, such as local communities, Indigenous peoples, and women.

⁷⁵ Land Law (2001), Chapter 3, Part 2, Article 23 defines an indigenous community as “a group of people that resides in the territory of the Kingdom of Cambodia whose members manifest ethnic, social, cultural, and economic unity and who practice a traditional lifestyle, and who cultivate the lands in their possession according to customary rules of collective use. The Protected Area Law (2008) defines an “indigenous people” as original ethnic people living in mountainous areas, most of whom make their living by practicing shifting agriculture and other additional livelihoods, such as hunting, fishing, and collection of forest products/by- products. The term is also defined in the National Policy on the Development of Indigenous Peoples (2009). The definition states indigenous peoples as genetically distinct groups of people who are living in Cambodia who have their own distinctive languages, cultures, traditions, and customs and are different from those of the Khmer people who are the core nationals For translation purposes, the translations of the laws in English often say indigenous peoples, but the literal translation from Khmer is “original ethnic minorities.”

⁷⁶ The Protected Area Law (2008) article 22, the government recognizes and ensures traditional and cultural users’ rights of local communities and indigenous peoples who live in protected areas. Article 24 states the Ministry of Environment has right to allocate area in sustainable use zone to local community and indigenous peoples who live in adjacent or inside protected area as community protected area. Forestry Law (2002) also provides a definition for local communities in the Glossary Annex: Community, tribe or a group of people whose home residence is inside or nearby the State Forest and having their custom, religious belief and culture that depend on Forest Products and By-products for their subsistence. The Forestry Law (2002) also defines “community” as: A group of people living in one or more villages, in the living in one or more villages, in the Kingdom of Cambodia, interested in social, culture, custom and economic issues in using sustainable natural resources within or nearby their area for their subsistence and livelihood improvement.

⁷⁷ ENRC, Glossary.

⁷⁸ Cambodia Constitution, Article 31

⁷⁹ Land Law (2001), Article 23, 26.

⁸⁰ Land Law, Article 25; Forestry Law (2002), Article 40; Fisheries Law (2006), Code (2023), Book 4, section 1, chapter 6, Article 369.

⁸¹ NPDIP, Chapter 2, Section 6: Land Sector Land disputes within the community are handled by the community committee or by the decision-making mechanism that is established by the community. The Land Law (2001) Article 26 further recognizes the role of traditional authorities, mechanism, and customs in the decision- making processes. Indigenous peoples are also protected and granted the right to establish dispute mechanisms under the National Policy on the Development of Indigenous Peoples (2009). The policy establishes that the community committees are a mechanism for dispute resolution (Chapter 2, Section 8.2). The law also reinforces that community committees are to be respected as dispute resolution mechanisms. NPDIP, Chapter 2, Section 9: Justice, paragraph 8.2 the community committees that are a mechanism for dispute resolution in the living areas of indigenous peoples; 8.3. community committees shall undertake to resolve disputes occurring between the communities of IPs.

C.2 Traditional knowledge is recognized and protected in the context of the application of the NRS

Cambodia's laws require respecting traditional knowledge through consultation or preservation. The National Policy on the Development of Indigenous Peoples (2009) Chapter 2, Section 2 establishes the need to protect the traditions and culture of the indigenous peoples. The National Protected Area System Strategic Framework (2014) Chapter IV: states that participation of local communities and Indigenous ethnic minorities' communities implies the value of traditional ecological knowledge is recognized so that this knowledge is integrated with modern science to promote innovation. The National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (2016), Theme 14 is centred around customary sustainable use and traditional knowledge.

Legislation defines "community"⁸² as: A group of people living in one or more villages, in the living in one or more villages, in the Kingdom of Cambodia, interested in social, cultural, custom, and economic issues in using sustainable natural resources within or near their area for their subsistence and livelihood improvement.

Safeguard D: The right to participate, in an effective manner, including how Free Prior Informed Consent for relevant original ethnic minorities, indigenous peoples, local communities, and women are recognized and promoted under the implementation of REDD+ interventions.

D.1 Relevant indigenous peoples and local communities, especially women, have the right to participate in the implementation of the NRS/AIP

Cambodia's laws regulate the right for public participation in forest-related decision-making processes and projects. The Environmental Protection and Natural Resource Management Law (1996) Article 16 requires the Ministry of Environment to encourage participation of the public in environmental protection and natural resource management. The Protected Area Law (2008) Articles 4 and 21 recognize the right of the public to participate in the decision-making on the sustainable management, conservation of biodiversity, and the management of protected areas. The Forestry Law (2002), Article 4 requires public participation in government decisions that have a potentially heavy impact on the general citizens.

The Forestry Law (2002), Chapter 5, Article 19 requires a Forest Concession Management Plan, and the EIA should also be available for public comment. Guidelines on Public Participation in Environmental Impact Assessment Process (2016) section 1.7; establish a clear process for consultations and public participation in the EIA process. This includes details about public participation, stakeholders, appropriate timeframes, and information to be included in consultations. Section 4.3: outlines the desired meeting outcomes from consultations at each step of the EIA process. The result of these meetings should incorporate the input from PAP and the Stakeholders into the final EIA report. Section 4.3 requires that under the 'Public Consultation and Disclosure' of any EIA report the issues identified by Stakeholders and how those issues were taken into account be included.

The Land Law (2001), Article 26, recognizes the role of traditional authorities, mechanisms, and customs in decision-making processes. The Sub-Decree on Community Forestry Management (2003) requires active participation by community members in all aspects of community forest governance. This includes participation in the development of CF regulations, CF agreements, and the CF Management Plan. These participatory processes are essential to ensure sustainable forest use and to uphold the rights of communities under the Community Forest Agreement.

The Forestry Law⁸³ and Protected Area Law⁸⁴ include specific provisions concerning local authorities and people in forest decision-making processes.

⁸² Land Law (2001), Protection Area Law (2008)

⁸³ Forestry Law 2002, Chapter 1, Article 7: requires the Forestry Administration to coordinate with local authorities and communities when assessing boundaries, classifying, and demarcating forests to establish a land use map of the Permanent Forest Estates.

⁸⁴ Protected Area Law 2008, Chapter 2, Article 6: Nature Protection and Conservation Administration has the following rights and duties promote education and dissemination among the public and coordinate with local indigenous communities to participate in the preparation and implementation of community protected area.

The Code includes the public's right of participation as a component of the general principle of access to information.⁸⁵ and refers to public participation rights in numerous instances, for example, including stating that communities should be encouraged to participate in matters concerning protected areas.⁸⁶

D.2 Right to a Free, Prior and Informed Consent is recognized and protected in accordance with the relevant legal obligations.

While Cambodia does not refer to Free Prior Informed Consent (FPIC) in its PLRs (although this is under consideration in the context of major proposed legislation currently under development), it is a signatory to the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (UNDRIP). Notably, the Code does not mention FPIC; instead, it adopts other standards, as in Article 11 regarding the principle of public participation, where affected persons are entitled to provide informed and timely inputs.⁸⁷ And, in Article 691 in the context of EIAs, where stakeholders affected by a project are afforded a prior and informed consultation regarding impact mitigation measures.⁸⁸

Safeguard E: REDD+ interventions are implemented to promote the conservation of natural forests and biodiversity, the enhancement of social and environmental benefits, and will not result in the conversion of natural forests.

E.1 The conservation of natural forests and biological diversity is recognized and protected in the context of the implementation of the NRS/AIP

Cambodia's Protected Area Law (2008), Forestry Law (2002) and Fishery Law (2006), and the Code (2023) include provisions for the protection of natural forest areas. Recent policies provide additional mechanisms for the protection of natural forest areas⁸⁹ and for the protection and conservation of biodiversity.⁹⁰

The Forestry Law (2002), the Protected Area Law (2008), the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (2016), the National Protected Area Strategic Management Plan, and the National Forest Programme (2010) include protections for endangered species and their habitat,⁹¹ including prohibitions against the market and trade of endangered species.⁹²

The Code sets out a comprehensive framework for handling biological diversity and endangered species, with dedicated chapters on wild plant protection, wildlife management, alien species management, species management and wildlife hunting, wildlife farming, wildlife restoration, and implementation of CITES. All these provisions include descriptions of responsible institutions, management responsibilities, and technical requirements.⁹³

The Forestry Law (2002), Prakas on Guidelines on Community Forestry (2006), Prakas on Guideline and Procedure on Community Protected Area Establishment (2017), Sub-Decree on Social Land Concessions (2003), Protected Area Law (2008), National Protected Area Strategic Management Plan (2017), National Forest Programme (2010), and the Environmental Protection and Natural Resource Management Law (1996) require environmental planning, including forest and protected area management planning, and regular

⁸⁵ ENRC, Book 1, section 1, Article 12.

⁸⁶ ENRC, Book 4, section 1, chapter 6, Article 368.

⁸⁷ ENRC, Article 11.

⁸⁸ ENRC, chapter 6, Article 691.

⁸⁹ National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (2016), Pg. 170, 176, National Protected Area Strategic Management Plan (2017), Pg. 9, National REDD+ Strategy (2017), Pg. 2, 9, 19, 20.

⁹⁰ Protected Area Law (2008), Art. 1, 16, 19, Annex, Forestry Law (2008), Art. 1, 22, Annex, Biosafety Law (2008), Art. 1, National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (2016), Pg. 4, 5-14, National Protected Area Strategic Management Plan (2017), Pg. 10.

⁹¹ Forestry Law (2002), Art. 48, 49, 50, Protected Area Law (2008), Art. 11, National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (2016), Pg. 174, National Protected Area Strategic Management Plan (2017), Pg. 10, National Forest Programme (2010), Pg. 55. The Forestry Law (2002)"

⁹² Protected Area Law (2008), Art. 41, Forestry Law (2002), Art. 49 and 50, National Protected Area Strategic Management Plan (2017), Pg. 10, National Forest Programme (2010), Pg. 56 and 74.

⁹³ ENRC, Book 4, section 2, chapters 7-8, Articles 515-596.

monitoring and evaluation.⁹⁴

E. 2. The NRS/AIP will not incentivize the conversion of natural forests

The Law on Environmental Protection and Natural Resource Management (1996), Forestry Law (2002), Sub-Decree on Economic Land Concessions 2005, Sub-Decree on Social Land Concessions 2003, Protected Area Law (2008), Sub-Decree on Community Forestry Management (2003), and Sub-Decree on Environmental Impact Assessment Process (1999) set control over conversion in both public and private forests through environmental impact assessments.⁹⁵ The Code sets out a comprehensive EIA mechanism,⁹⁶ including the requirement that all full-scale EIAs contain an assessment of a proposed project's impact on climate change, including the proposed project's present and potential future greenhouse gas emissions.⁹⁷

Cambodia has also had a moratorium on issuing ELC since 2012, which halts the conversion of forest lands to other land use due to concessions and helps to maintain forest cover.⁹⁸

E.3 Enhancement of ecological, biological, climatic, and socio-cultural, benefits

The Protected Area Law (2008) protects biological, natural, and cultural resources for environmental, social, and economic benefits, the Forestry Law (2002) protects social, economic, environmental, and cultural heritage benefits of the permanent forest estate.⁹⁹ Fishery Law (2006) Chapter 6 focuses on the management of biodiversity, flooded forest, and mangrove forest. The Code addresses these matters in a range of its technical provisions but also prioritizes these issues through its enunciation of the principles of sustainable development, avoiding harm to the environment and natural resources, the polluter pays, reduction or prevention of environmental harm, and others.¹⁰⁰

Safeguards F&G: Risks of reversals and displacement of emissions of the REDD+ PAMs will be addressed through the MRV and national forest monitoring system.

F.1 Addressing risks of reversals is required by the NRS/AIP

Forestry Law (2002), Sub-Decree on Procedure Establishment Classification and Registration of Permanent Forest Estate (2005), Protected Area Law (2008), Prakas on Guideline and Procedure on Community Protected Area Establishment (2017), and Sub-Decree on Community Forestry Management (2003), require mapping of

⁹⁴ Environmental Protection and Natural Resource Management Law (1996), Art. 5, Forestry Law (2002), Art. 9 and 18, Prakas on Guidelines on Community Forestry (2006), Art. 25, Prakas on Guideline and Procedure on Community Protected Area Establishment (2017), Art. 30, Sub-Decree on Social Land Concessions (2003), Art. 30, Protected Area Law (2008), Art. 17 and 28, National Protected Area Strategic Management Plan (2017), Art. 9, National Forest Programme (2010), Pg. 78. The Environmental Protection and Natural Resource Management Law (1996) requires National Environmental Plans [National Environment Strategy and Action Plans] be reviewed and revised at least once every five years.

⁹⁵ Law on Environmental Protection and Natural Resource Management 1996, Art. 6 and 7, Forestry Law (2002), Art. 4, Forestry Law (2002), Art. 19, Sub-Decree on Economic Land Concessions 2005, Art. 4, Sub-Decree on Social Land Concessions 2003, Art. 9, Protected Area Law (2008), Art. 44, Sub-Decree on Community Forestry Management (2003), Art. 5, Sub-Decree on Environmental Impact Assessment Process (1999).

⁹⁶ ENRC, Book 5, section 2, chapters 4-6.

⁹⁷ ENRC, Book 5, section 2, chapter 5, Article 681.

⁹⁸ Order on the Measures Strengthening and Increasing the Effectiveness of the Management of Economic Land Concessions (2012). In addition to the requirements for environmental impact assessment, Cambodia has had a moratorium on issuing economic land concessions since 2012, the Order on the Measures Strengthening and Increasing the Effectiveness of the Management of Economic Land Concessions (2012), which halts the conversion of forest lands other land use due to economic land concessions and helps to maintain forest cover.

⁹⁹ Protected Area Law (2008), Annex, Forestry Law (2002), Art. 1 and 11, National Forest Programme (2010), Pg. 87. The Protected Area Law (2008) includes in the definition of protected area that "these areas are of physical and biological importance which requires management by law with the purpose of protecting and maintaining biological, natural and cultural resources, and shall be sustainably managed in every generation for environmental, social and economic benefits." The objective of the Forestry Law (2002) includes ensuring the sustainable development of forests for their "social, economic, and environmental benefits, including conservation of biodiversity and cultural heritage." In addition, the Law states that the "permanent forest estates shall be managed with the objective to increase to the maximum extent the social, economic, environmental, and cultural heritage benefits." Programme 4 (Community Forestry Programme) of the National Forest Programme (2010-2029) seeks to involve the local communities in multi-purpose forest management that takes into consideration sustainability, biodiversity, conservation, and environmental services, as well as socio-economic considerations, equity, and governance.

¹⁰⁰ ENRC, Book 1, section 1, chapter 2, Articles 9-19.

forest resources and land use change¹⁰¹. The Code requires mapping in a variety of contexts, including land use planning (including land, heritage sites, and natural resources),¹⁰² and forest cover, watershed, and protected areas mapping¹⁰³. The Nesting Guideline that is under improvement contains provisions specifically addressing reversals.¹⁰⁴

G.1 Addressing the risks of displacement of emissions is required by the NRS/AIP

The Environmental Protection and Natural Resource Management Law (1996), Forestry Law (2002), Prakas on Guidelines on Community Forestry (2006), Prakas on Guideline and Procedure on Community Protected Area Establishment (2017), Sub-Decree on Community Forestry Management (2003), and the Protected Area Law (2008) require carrying out social and environmental impacts assessments and subsequent monitoring of activities and projects¹⁰⁵ and numerous laws and regulations, and the Code require environmental planning, including forest and protected area management planning, and regular monitoring and evaluation.¹⁰⁶ The Nesting Guideline contains provisions specifically addressing leakage.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰¹ Forestry Law (2002), Art. 7, Sub-Decree on Procedure Establishment Classification and Registration of Permanent Forest Estate (2005), Art. 3 and 10, Protected Area Law (2008), Art. 8 and 14, Annex, Prakas on Guideline and Procedure on Community Protected Area Establishment (2017).

¹⁰² Code, Book 2, section 8, chapter 4, Article 110.

¹⁰³ Code, Book 4, section 2, chapter 2, Articles 351 and 367.

¹⁰⁴ Nesting Guideline, Section 4.3.6.

¹⁰⁵ Law on Environmental Protection and Natural Resource Management 1996, Art. 6, Forestry Law (2002), Art. 4 and 19, Sub-Decree on Economic Land Concessions 2005, Art. 4, Sub-Decree on Social Land Concessions 2003, Art. 9, Protected Area Law (2008), Art. 44, Sub-Decree on Community Forestry Management (2003), Art. 5, Sub-Decree on Environmental Impact Assessment Process (1999), Art. 1 and 2. The Environmental Protection and Natural Resource Management Law (1996) requires an assessment of environmental impacts on every project and activity that is either private or public.

¹⁰⁶ Environmental Protection and Natural Resource Management Law (1996), Art. 5, Forestry Law (2002), Art. 9 and 18, Prakas on Guidelines on Community Forestry (2006), Art. 25, Prakas on Guideline and Procedure on Community Protected Area; Establishment (2017), Art. 30, Sub-Decree on Community Forestry Management (2003), Art. 30, Protected Area Law (2008), Art. 17 and 18; Code, Book 2, section 8, chapter 4, Article 110.

¹⁰⁷ Nesting Guideline, Section 4.3.5.

4.2 How the REDD+ safeguards were respected

This section provides a description of how the Cancun Safeguards have been respected within the reporting period of 2018-2022 for the National REDD+ Program. Emphasis is placed on the REDD+ PaMs implemented during 2018-2022, presented in section 2.5, with consideration of REDD+ projects, other initiatives, and activities occurring more recently as needed to ensure completeness. As explained in section 2.4 it is important to note that in order to report on the 'respect' of safeguards during REDD+ implementation, this section is mostly focused on direct interventions, which are specific, often local activities resulting in direct impacts on people and the environment.

As the SIS is in the last stage of development, the information over the past years required to report in this section was not readily available in any existing governmental database or compiled form. The methodology used to prepare this section involved identifying all relevant REDD+ related activities carried out, conducted, and promoted under the REDD+ Secretariat of the MoE and other relevant government agencies during the 2018-2022 period. This was complemented by a comprehensive review of projects and initiatives implemented by delivery partners and project developers within the same timeframe. Additionally, available activity implementation reports and information from third parties were collected and analysed to ensure the accuracy and completeness of the information presented, which involved significant research across implementing partners.

Given the number of activities and associated documentation, a comprehensive narrative of every individual activity linked with the respective PaMs is beyond the scope of this report. However, these efforts collectively demonstrate the government's commitment to advancing REDD+ implementation and safeguarding compliance in recent years. Moreover, given the document's scope as mostly a national-level summary, information related to how each safeguard component was 'respected' is structured in the following manner:

- Summarizing the context and actions taken to meet the safeguard element;
- Identifying any issues or challenges faced; and
- Outlining actions taken and next steps to improve conformance.

This provides an adequate overview of REDD+ safeguards implementation during 2018-2022. It highlights efforts to balance practical REDD+ implementation with international safeguard obligations, achieving significant alignment while identifying areas for continued strengthening to date and in future implementation.

It is important to note that in 2018, Cambodia prepared an Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF) for the implementation of the NRS.¹⁰⁸ While the ESMF identifies key social and environmental risks related to strategic objectives and actions of the NRS, along with procedures and management measures to address them, it was not fully implemented or reported on at the national level only. Initial training on the ESMF was given to the implementers of the three REDD+ pilot projects in 2019.¹⁰⁹ Although several national documents and few REDD+ pilot site reports from 2019 reference the ESMF¹¹⁰ Its implementation remained limited, and coordinated monitoring of relevant information was constrained throughout the timeframe covered by this report. The government acknowledges these limitations and recognizes the need to strengthen systematic monitoring of ESMF implementation going forward.

¹⁰⁸ Cambodia's NRS ESMF, 2018. https://cambodia-redd.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/3.-ESMF-SESA_Cambodia-20181122-Eng.pdf

¹⁰⁹ UNDP Back to Office Reports on trainings, FCPF II, 2019

¹¹⁰ REDD+ pilot project Sols, 2021.

Safeguard A: The REDD+ interventions are designed in compliance with the objectives of national forestry policies, considering jurisdictional arrangements, and consistent with provisions of the relevant treaties and international conventions to which Cambodia is a ratified party.

A.1 The implemented REDD+ interventions are consistent with the objectives of national forest-relevant policies

Summary of context and actions taken to meet this safeguard sub-element

The Royal Government of Cambodia ensures that all REDD+ PAMs and activities align with the country's existing legal and policy frameworks, in accordance with the country's commitment to environmental governance and sustainable development. During 2018–2022, the government designed and implemented REDD+ interventions in alignment mainly with Cambodia's NRS (2017–2026), the National Forest Programme (2010–2029), the NPASMP (2017-2031), and the Strategic Planning Framework for Fisheries (2015-2024). These frameworks provide the policy backbone for sustainable forest management, climate change mitigation, and forest governance improvements across national and subnational levels.

These are further supported by national legislation such as the Forestry Law (2002), Protected Areas Law (2008), and the Environmental Protection and Natural Resource Management Law (1996), which collectively establish the national legal basis for responsible forest governance.

The government demonstrated alignment between REDD+ interventions and national forest policy objectives through multiple strategic and operational initiatives during the 2018-2022 period. The MoE advanced implementation of the National Environmental Strategy and Action Plan (NESAP), which directly supported REDD+ goals and aligned with post-2020 biodiversity targets.¹¹¹ Government-led REDD+ implementation was specifically designed to align with key national instruments, including the National Forest Programme, NESAP 2016-2023, the Strategic Planning Framework for Fisheries (SPFF), and NDC. By 2020, REDD+ interventions were explicitly integrated with NESAP Objective 2, promoting sustainable use of natural resources and ecosystem services,¹¹² while in 2021, they were included as a critical element to achieve the LTS4CN's targets by 2050.

Major REDD+ projects implemented under government oversight demonstrated significant results and direct policy alignment. The KSWs project aligned with the NRS, Protected Areas Law, and NPASMP, promoting REDD+ as both a sustainable finance mechanism and forest conservation tool. The JCM REDD+ project in Prey Lang Wildlife Sanctuary supported national biodiversity conservation and forest protection policies through addressing drivers of deforestation.¹¹³

Summary of any existing issues and challenges

During 2018-2022, the government identified ongoing difficulties in interpreting and applying the entire scope of national forest and environmental legislation coherently. The lack of robust coordination mechanisms between the MoE, MAFF, and land-use planning authorities such as the Ministry of Land Management and sub-national administrations- resulted in overlapping mandates¹¹⁴ and fragmented REDD+ safeguards implementation, leading to inconsistencies in policy interpretation and implementation across agencies.

¹¹¹ MoE APR 2019, 2022.

¹¹² MoE ARP, 2020.

¹¹³ CI Consolidated Report of Village Consultation on REDD+ and FPIC for the JCM-REDD+ Project in Prey Lang Wildlife Sanctuary Conservation International, 2023.

¹¹⁴ MoE APR 2021.

The breadth and complexity of relevant legal instruments, encompassing multiple ministries and sub-national jurisdictions, created uncertainty regarding specific roles, procedures, and compliance obligations. The government recognized that technical guidance and operational support from the RTS and RTF were limited, particularly challenging for REDD+ projects in the readiness pipeline. Human resources at subnational levels were insufficient, with limited technical expertise to effectively implement national forest policies through REDD+ interventions.¹¹⁵ Additionally, active forest carbon projects in Cambodia utilized different data and methodologies to measure emissions from forests, creating challenges for coherent national reporting.

Next steps to improve conformance:

To further strengthen alignment between REDD+ implementation and Cambodia's national policy framework:

- Finalize REDD+ nesting assessment and updates to the design of the nesting framework. Issue complementary guidance to REDD+ project implementers on key objectives of national forest programs and reporting requirements.
- Expand capacity-building efforts for both national and sub-national government officials and REDD+ activity implementers to improve legal literacy and policy coherence.
- Strengthen inter-ministerial coordination mechanisms to ensure REDD+ is fully embedded within Cambodia's broader sustainable development planning and land use frameworks and to prevent competing land use decisions.
- Define an institutional framework to ensure effective monitoring and appropriate technical support to REDD+ projects, particularly regarding safeguards and market components.

A.2 The implemented REDD+ interventions are consistent with relevant and applicable international conventions and agreements

Summary of context and actions taken to meet this element

As a signatory to all major multilateral environmental agreements, the government demonstrated its commitment to upholding international conventions through the inclusion of international safeguard standards in the National REDD+ Strategy's ESMF.¹¹⁶ The MoE led the integration of biodiversity, access and benefit-sharing, and endangered species protection into national programming both within and beyond the REDD+ framework.

Government-led REDD+ implementation yielded demonstrable results aligned with key international conventions. REDD+ interventions contributed to reductions in deforestation and habitat loss, supporting biodiversity conservation goals under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and ecosystem restoration under the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). Benefit-sharing mechanisms at REDD+ project sites promoted fair and equitable sharing of benefits, aligning with the principles of the Nagoya Protocol. Indigenous peoples' participation and traditional knowledge were increasingly incorporated into land-use planning and forest management, consistent with international expectations under the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and the Cancun Safeguards.

The Government's engagement in international REDD+ readiness platforms, including the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility, UN-REDD+ Programme, and, in 2021, the Glasgow Leaders' Declaration

¹¹⁵ MoE APR 2022.

¹¹⁶ Cambodia's NRS ESMF, 2018

on Forests and Land Use,¹¹⁷ further reinforced alignment with international expectations for transparency, equity, and environmental integrity.

Summary of any existing issues and challenges

While Cambodia's REDD+ interventions have been implemented in line with international conventions and agreements, one area requiring further institutional strengthening relates to the legal codification of FPIC approach. The REDD+ Programme in Cambodia, including its key implementers, has taken significant steps to apply FPIC principles in practice. These efforts are aligned with the requirements of the Cancun Safeguards, as reaffirmed in Cambodia's REDD+ Nesting Guidelines (2021).¹¹⁸ However, FPIC has not yet been fully integrated and detailed into the domestic framework with a standardized approach.

During the development of the ENRC, extensive technical discussions were held on whether to formally embed FPIC in national legislation. While FPIC is clearly acknowledged within the REDD+ framework, the final version of the Code adopted in 2023 does not include FPIC as a legal requirement, opting instead for a more general standard of consultation. This divergence does not affect REDD+ implementation but highlights the need to ensure continued policy coherence between REDD+ programming and the broader legal landscape.

The Government acknowledges this as an area for ongoing attention, particularly in the context of enhancing alignment with the UNDRIP and ensuring effective safeguard implementation across all REDD+ initiatives. Cambodia remains committed to fulfilling its obligations under relevant international conventions and will continue to advance efforts to ensure that REDD+ interventions are implemented in full respect of social and environmental safeguards.

Next steps to improve conformance:

To strengthen alignment between REDD+ implementation and applicable international agreements, Cambodia will:

- Sustain REDD+-specific application of FPIC through consistent implementation of the provisions outlined in the ESMF and future REDD+ Nesting Guidelines, including monitoring and reporting through the SIS;
- Undertake a technical review, in coordination with relevant ministries and development partners, to assess how national legal frameworks could be further harmonized with international FPIC standards over the longer term;
- Explore legal instruments or policy directives that would reinforce the application of FPIC in REDD+ contexts, with particular attention to Indigenous Peoples and ethnic minority communities;
- Continue promoting good practice on FPIC at the project level through technical assistance, capacity building, and the exchange of lessons learned among REDD+ implementers.

¹¹⁷ <https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20230418175226/https://ukcop26.org/glasgow-leaders-declaration-on-forests-and-land-use/>

¹¹⁸ Not approved yet.

Safeguard B: The rights of access to information, accountability, justice, gender equality, land tenure, and fair distribution of benefits will be clarified, respected, and promoted in the scope of the application of the National REDD+ strategy.

B.1 Right to access information is promoted in the context of the implementation of the REDD+ interventions

Summary of context and actions taken to meet this safeguard sub-element

The Government recognizes that ensuring effective access to information is central to meaningful engagement with local communities, particularly rural residents with limited formal education residing in and around REDD+ project sites. The Cambodia REDD+ Programme maintains a dedicated website¹¹⁹ providing information on REDD+ interventions, including policies, strategies, and technical reports.

During the 2018–2022 period, the government implemented comprehensive information-sharing strategies across multiple levels and platforms to ensure stakeholder access to REDD+ information. The MoE conducted consistent outreach through social media, radio broadcasts, TV spots, printed materials, and environmental education campaigns targeting both urban and rural communities.¹²⁰ Large-scale information sharing occurred through annual ministerial conferences where MAFF and MoE invited all ministries, international and local organizations, and stakeholders to disseminate information on implementation activities.¹²¹ MAFF complemented these efforts by disseminating forest law, forest management practices, and REDD+ project information through over 150 outreach sessions annually in protected areas and community areas, supported by local and international partners.¹²²

Under the FCPF REDD+ Readiness Project, the RTS organized over 300 capacity-building and consultation events were organized nationwide.¹²³ These engagements focused on developing the REDD+ AIP, the first Sol, SIS design, and early discussions on REDD+ Nesting. In total, 1,357 participants—including 395 women—were directly involved, representing various stakeholder groups including Indigenous Peoples, community-based organizations, and civil society.

Digital communication tools were increasingly utilized to enhance information access through government partnerships. Community-based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) networks — including CFs, CPAs, and CFIs— established Telegram groups and ICT tools to share information and report illegal activities, particularly in remote areas. Partners such as RECOFTC supported CFs and CPAs management committees in using Telegram and Excel for record-keeping and outreach¹²⁴, while training on communication technology was delivered to CFs and CPAs women's networks.¹²⁵

At the community level, government-supported initiatives facilitated information dissemination through multiple channels, including structured annual workplan meetings, training, and committee briefings, with regular bulletins, village posters, and training documents improving transparency

¹¹⁹Cambodia REDD+ Programme website: <https://cambodia-redd.org/>

¹²⁰ MoE APRs, 2021 and 2022.

¹²¹ MoE and MAFF APRs, 2018-2022.

¹²² MAFF APR, 2020-2022.

¹²³ FCPF Phase I and Phase II Final Report, 2023.

https://www.forestcarbonpartnership.org/system/files/documents/cambodia_fcpf_final_project_report_signed_2.pdf?utm_source=chatgpt.com

¹²⁴ RECOFTC APR 2021.

¹²⁵ RECOFTC APR 2022.

around funding and REDD+ rules.¹²⁶ Visual tools and participatory methods were used to enhance understanding.¹²⁷ Where feasible, outreach was adapted to local contexts, including the use of indigenous languages and participatory tools to increase accessibility and comprehension.¹²⁸

Examples of facilitated information access include awareness-raising events, orientation workshops across multiple provinces, and training programs covering REDD+, forest rights, conservation, and land use planning, with materials developed in local languages.¹²⁹ The government coordinated multiple initiatives contributing to information dissemination through factsheets and leaflets in Khmer and English, awareness meetings, radio programs, and community engagement reaching over 17,000 people.¹³⁰

In many REDD+ project sites, stakeholder meetings and community consultations have been extensive, structured, and well-documented. Dedicated outreach teams—often including trained local facilitators or community representatives—have delivered materials to build awareness of REDD+ principles, project objectives, safeguard requirements, and community roles in benefit-sharing mechanisms (even in schools).¹³¹ In the REDD+ pilot sites, big billboards for forest restoration map were installed to inform the communities and to encourage forest conservation.¹³²

To enhance transparency, Cambodia launched development of several national systems: the SIS to collect and disseminate information on how safeguards are being addressed and respected; the NFMS to provide transparent and credible data on forest cover and changes relevant to REDD+; and CEMIS for management and dissemination of geo-spatial information related to natural resource monitoring. These systems are designed to provide stakeholders with access to timely, relevant information on REDD+ implementation and impacts. Cambodia's National Committee for Sub-National Democratic Development (NCDD) also has several databases¹³³ which are designed to gather socio-economic, environmental, participation and accountability data.

Summary of any existing issues and challenges

Despite government efforts to promote access to information, several challenges persist in ensuring equitable and effective information sharing across all REDD+ stakeholders and communities. The government acknowledges that local populations' grasp of the legal consequences and relevance of natural resources and biodiversity is relatively low.¹³⁴

Both MoE and MAFF highlighted that human resources at subnational levels are insufficient, with limited technical expertise and capacity to implement comprehensive information dissemination programs. Funding constraints for long-term community engagement and outreach persist, particularly for reaching remote Indigenous communities.¹³⁵ During the reported timeframe, there were gaps in environmental data availability and integration, including real-time deforestation alerts,

¹²⁶ KWS Benefit Sharing Manual, 2019.

¹²⁷ CI Report on Village Consultation Meetings during the Public Input Period of the JCM REDD+ in PLWS Project, 2021.

¹²⁸ VCS Monitoring Report KWS REDD+, 2020–2021.

¹²⁹ RECOFTC/UNDP, Restoration in Stung Treng CPA Pursat, 2020–2021. RECOFTC, Quarterly Report, Jan-Mar 2022. PAFF Operational Report, 2022; ADB BCCP Completion Report, 2025.

¹³⁰ UNDP SGP Project End Report SFMTR+ Chrok La Eang, 2020. UNDP SGP Final Project Completion Report PNCK, 2020. UNDP SGP Final Project Report CoDec, 2023. UNDP SGP End Report of RKCBA MBED, 2023. NatureLife Cambodia Annual Report, 2022. BirdLife Cambodia Annual Report, 2021. WWF Cambodia Annual Report, 2020.

¹³¹ REDD+ in KWS Project Verification Report, May 2023. WA APR 2022.

¹³² Sol Sarsadam, 2021.

¹³³ Cambodia's NCDD website: <http://db.ncdd.gov.kh/>. Commune database (CDB), Sub-national Project Database (SPD), Project Implementation Database (PID), M&E Monitoring Tool, and M&E Database system

¹³⁴ MoE APR 2022.

¹³⁵ MoE APR 2022.

biodiversity indicators, and emissions tracking.¹³⁶ Additionally, CEMIS was launched in mid-2023, meaning it was not operational during the reporting period as initially stated. Regarding the NCDD databases, although some could provide (limited) additional information on REDD+ and safeguards, limited maintenance and coordination with other national databases have resulted in limited data coverage and outdated information.

Logistical and financial constraints hinder effective and inclusive stakeholder consultations REDD+, especially in remote Indigenous communities. Seasonal livelihood activities create additional challenges, as noted in both 2022 village consultation meetings and 2021 public input periods, where many community members, particularly men, were unavailable due to rice field or shifting cultivation activities during consultation periods, resulting in low attendance and meetings dominated by women.¹³⁷ COVID-19 also has an impact on low access to reliable, community-scale communications.¹³⁸

Active intervention was required to ensure that women and Indigenous peoples were adequately represented in meetings, suggesting underlying challenges in equitable participation due to social norms.¹³⁹

Several reports noted no formal grievances submitted during monitoring periods, which may reflect a lack of awareness or confidence in available information channels and feedback systems, especially among vulnerable groups.¹⁴⁰ Challenge of wide and inclusive outreach, particularly in remote and indigenous communities due to language and literacy barriers.

The Community-Based REDD+ (CBR+) Country Plan for Cambodia underscores the necessity of working closely with Indigenous peoples to develop comprehensive understanding of their needs concerning REDD+, noting that consultations revealed the importance of engaging with IPs to ensure they fully grasp REDD+ initiatives, especially given their generational dependence on forests for livelihoods.¹⁴¹

Next steps to improve conformance

To minimize variability in information provision, Cambodia will establish guidance setting minimum standards for the types of information shared with Indigenous Peoples and local communities, including details objectives, key activities, adverse impacts and mitigation measures, details of benefit-sharing arrangements and overall project financing, as well as the manner in which information is conveyed through accessible channels and simple languages and visual aids and language materials.

By promoting more inclusive communication practices, the government aims to enhance stakeholder empowerment and build stronger foundations for effective implementation of REDD+ safeguards.

¹³⁶ MoE APR 2022.

¹³⁷ CI Summary Report on Village Consultation Meeting – Project Verification (Phase I), 2022.

¹³⁸ WWF Cambodia Annual Report, 2020.

¹³⁹ CI Report on Village Consultation Meetings during the Public Input Period of the JCM REDD+ in PLWS Project, 2021.

¹⁴⁰ CI JCM Safeguard Progress Report, 2024.

¹⁴¹ UNREDD, Community based REDD+ country plan, 2015. https://www.un-redd.org/sites/default/files/2021-10/Cambodia_CBR%2B%20Country%20Plan_English.pdf

B.2 Accountability is guaranteed in the context of the implementation of the REDD+ interventions

Summary of context and actions taken to meet this safeguard sub-element

The government recognizes that accountability in REDD+ implementation refers to the duty of all actors involved—particularly those in positions of authority and decision-making power—to act transparently and be responsive to stakeholders. To address these challenges, the Cambodia REDD+ Programme established institutional arrangements including the REDD+ Taskforce and its secretariat, composed of relevant government ministries for oversight and coordination, Technical Working Groups intended to bring expertise and stakeholder representation to REDD+ planning, REDD+ Consultation Group (CG) consisting of 9 constituency groups¹⁴², Gender Group, and adoption of the ESMF with provisions for grievance redress mechanisms.

During 2018-2022, the government implemented comprehensive governance improvements through rollout of FMIS and NRMIS systems, enabling planning and tracking of environmental budgets and outcomes, supported by 73 legal directives for environmental oversight.¹⁴³ Over 1,500 governance-related directives were issued, with systems such as LUMAR (Land Use and Management Application for Registration) and QR-coded budgeting improving efficiency and transparency while reducing corruption

The government conducted detailed inspections of forest enterprises and enforcement measures against illegal logging and ELC boundary encroachment were conducted systematically, with compliance results published in MAFF bulletins.¹⁴⁴ Routine audits and monitoring of industrial and artisanal polluters were implemented, particularly near forest areas.¹⁴⁵ Law enforcement activities were recorded using the SMART system, with data used to improve enforcement strategies and guide decision-making.¹⁴⁶

Government-supported initiatives strengthened financial transparency through capacity development for CF/CPA committees in financial record keeping and reporting on community credit schemes.¹⁴⁷ CPA and CF management committees were elected with authority to monitor forest use, report infractions, and coordinate with local authorities, ensuring transparent financial management with community monitoring of grant disbursement.¹⁴⁸ Multistakeholder platforms functioned as accountability mechanisms for CBNRM communities to hold government duty bearers accountable, with over 60 % of reported illegal activity cases receiving government responses.¹⁴⁹

At REDD+ projects level, the government facilitated accountability frameworks at the provincial and national levels through regular reporting, stakeholder consultations, and publication of materials, with documented responses to complaints while maintaining confidentiality¹⁵⁰. CBNRM networks and coordination platforms enabled reporting of 311 environmental crimes to authorities, achieving a 66 % response rate through grievance redressal mechanisms.¹⁵¹ Government partnerships with implementing organizations included dedicated community engagement to build trust with local

¹⁴² CF, CF1, CPA, IP, Academic, SCOs, NGOs, government and private sector

¹⁴³ MoE ARP, 2020.

¹⁴⁴ MAFF APRs, 2019-2022

¹⁴⁵ MAFF APRs, 2019-2022

¹⁴⁶ BirdLife Cambodia Annual Report, 2020. NatureLife Cambodia Annual Report, 2022.

¹⁴⁷ RECOFTC APR 2022.

¹⁴⁸ ADB BCCP Environmental and Social Monitoring Report, 2021

¹⁴⁹ CBNRM Network and platform

¹⁵⁰ CI JCM Safeguard Progress Report, 2024.

¹⁵¹ PaFF Operational Report, 2022

residents and ensure project transparency.¹⁵²

Project-specific accountability measures included the Stung Tmey CPA project disbursing at least 50 % of its budget directly to CPA members for labour contributions, using beneficiary lists endorsed by local authorities and performance monitoring against defined targets.¹⁵³ The Our Tonle Sap project implemented training needs assessments, patrol team selection endorsed by commune chiefs, and GIS-based activity tracking to ensure decisions could be traced and verified.¹⁵⁴ Institutional structures such as Stakeholder Forums and Village Forums were regularly convened to review conservation outcomes, discuss grievances, and strengthen local participation in governance processes.¹⁵⁵ The UNDP SGP also supported multiple projects promoting participatory monitoring and reporting mechanisms in line with the governmental guidelines.¹⁵⁶

Summary of any existing issues and changes

Despite efforts to improve accountability, several challenges persist. Both MoE and MAFF highlighted insufficient human resources at subnational levels, with limited technical expertise and capacity to implement REDD+, FPIC, MRV, and environmental monitoring. Funding constraints for long-term forest monitoring, biodiversity protection, and community engagement persist, particularly for enforcement in remote areas.¹⁵⁷

Weak law enforcement capacity continues to hinder efforts to control illegal logging, wildlife trafficking, and land encroachment, with MoE repeatedly reporting high rates of forest crimes in protected areas and REDD+ zones despite increased patrolling.¹⁵⁸ The development and operationalization of transparent national benefit-sharing mechanism (e.g., for carbon credits) remains in early stages, with MAFF noting difficulties in tracking revenue flows and ensuring equitable distribution at the community level.¹⁵⁹

Lack of clear institutional coordination mechanisms between MoE, MAFF, and land-use planning authorities sometimes results in overlapping mandates and fragmented implementation of REDD+ safeguards.¹⁶⁰ Several reports noted no formal grievances submitted during monitoring periods, potentially indicating underreporting due to lack of awareness or confidence in the grievance redress system, especially among vulnerable groups.

The government recognizes ongoing challenges related to ensuring inclusive and transparent local decision-making, as well as strengthening community capacities for effective fund management and implementation of community-driven actions. Efforts are underway to empower local institutions and enhance transparency at the community level. Additionally, law enforcement officials and park rangers continue to demonstrate dedication and resilience in their roles, despite facing risks from individuals involved in illegal activities and natural resource crimes.¹⁶¹

The government acknowledges that accountability mechanisms are inconsistently applied across REDD+ project sites, leading to varied experiences for local communities. Allegations were raised

¹⁵² REDD+ in KWS Project Verification Report, 2023. Southern Cardamom REDD+ Project report, 3rd Monitoring Period, 2023.

¹⁵³ RECOFTC/UNDP, Restoration in Stung Tmey CPA Pursat, 2020-2021.

¹⁵⁴ RECOFTC, Quarterly Reports, 2022.

¹⁵⁵ BirdLife Cambodia Annual Report, 2021.

¹⁵⁶ UNDP SGP Project End Report OPKC, 2022. UNDP SGP Phnom Namlear CPA Project End Report, 2023.

¹⁵⁷ MOE APR 2022.

¹⁵⁸ MoE APRs, 2021-2022.

¹⁵⁹ MAFF APR 2022.

¹⁶⁰ MoE APR 2021.

¹⁶¹ MoE APRs

about implementation practices in some projects, including concerns about the Southern Cardamom REDD+ Project, where allegations were raised that project implementers did not consistently uphold principles of fair and inclusive engagement.¹⁶²

Next steps to improve conformance

The Government of Cambodia recognizes that building accountability requires more than regulatory frameworks. To strengthen accountability in REDD+ implementation, the following actions will be considered:

- Ensure that GRMs are in place and well-publicized, accessible to all stakeholders (including those with low literacy or language barriers), and adequately resourced to respond to complaints in a timely and fair manner
- Develop and deliver targeted training for national and subnational government officials and REDD+ project staff on, inclusive engagement, and rights-based approaches to forest governance.
- Establish minimum standards for participatory governance, transparency, and community feedback processes across all REDD+ initiatives. These should be embedded in REDD+ project design and implementation plans.
- Promoted independent verification and regular site-level assessments to identify issues and gather local views.

B.3 Right to access to justice is recognized and protected in the context of the implementation of REDD+ interventions

Summary of context and actions taken to meet this safeguard sub-element

The government recognizes that access to justice is a foundational component of the REDD+ safeguards, ensuring that affected individuals and communities have fair and effective mechanisms to resolve disputes and defend their rights in the context of REDD+ implementation. In Cambodia, access to justice occurs at local-level disputes (typically intra-community issues such as land boundaries, leadership disputes, benefit-sharing concerns) and higher-level disputes involving broader governance matters or more powerful actors (land concessions, infrastructure projects, political interference).

Cambodia has established both national and provincial community forestry networks to support community-based forest management, which includes addressing grievances. The General Directorate of Local Communities (GDLC) has a department of Local Community that plays a vital role in supporting the livelihoods of communities living in and around protected areas, which can include responding to grievances.

Throughout the reporting period, the MoE maintained a hotline and formal complaint mechanisms for reporting environmental crimes. In 2021–2022, cooperation with judicial police and sub-national authorities was strengthened to investigate violations related to illegal logging and land encroachment.¹⁶³ Provincial offices handled grievances from forest-dependent communities through participatory conflict resolution frameworks, with communities actively using provincial complaint systems.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶² Letter from Human Rights Watch to Wildlife Alliance, 1 December 2022.

¹⁶³ MoE APR 2021.

¹⁶⁴ MAFF APR 2021.

Through partnerships with organizations like RECOFTC, the government provided legal capacity-building support and liaised with government partners to ensure legality in forest access and timber harvesting, as demonstrated in pilot projects on legal timber harvesting submitted to MAFF¹⁶⁵. The PaFF program strengthened legal community user rights through formal recognition and registration of CF, CPA, and CFI areas covering 182,881 ha, enabling community management, access, and benefit-sharing in accordance with national laws¹⁶⁶. The CPA Establishment Guideline¹⁶⁷ outlines conflict mediation responsibilities for the Department of Community Livelihood and Provincial Departments of Environment, including intervention upon request by the CPA, giving CPAs structured recourse for conflict resolution and protection of their resource management rights. Some partner projects emphasized collaboration with local authorities and development partners to resolve disputes¹⁶⁸ and train communities on how to raise concerns, resolve disputes, and report illegal forest use, reinforcing access to justice within the REDD+ framework.¹⁶⁹

The government established various grievance redress mechanisms:

- Local bodies such as Community Forest Management Committees (CFMCs) and Community Protected Area Committees (CPACs) handle disputes at the community level. These draw upon customary norms and are participatory in nature, and give emphasis on conflict prevention, though they may lack formal legal authority. While no serious complaints were lodged, some informal grievances were mediated locally.¹⁷⁰ Dispute resolution mechanisms were embedded in commune council structures, with projects training local leaders and community members in environmental laws and utilizing mechanisms for resolving land conflicts in several CPAs.¹⁷¹
- National Institutions such as the National Committee for Conflict Resolution on Protected Area Management and the National Authority for Land Dispute Resolution are designated to handle conflicts at higher levels.
- The “Accountability Box” mechanism, supervised by the National Committee for Sub-National Democratic Development (NCDD), remains the primary grievance mechanism. It is more extensively used at the village and commune levels, facilitating greater accessibility compared to its use in more remote areas.
- Some REDD+ projects have established their own grievance mechanisms. For example, the Keo Seima Wildlife Sanctuary REDD+ project implemented a process involving FPIC with local communities, allowing them to participate in decision-making and benefit-sharing agreements.

Across the major REDD+ implementation sites, project developers—mainly international conservation NGOs—have developed and deployed a variety of localized, user-friendly grievance mechanisms based on the government directions. Community members are able to submit concerns through a range of formats, including anonymous complaint drop boxes at village level, dedicated mobile hotlines and communication platforms, in-person visits to community field offices, and direct contact information for donors and implementing partners.¹⁷²

Where illegal activities were encountered, cases were escalated to the judicial system under government coordination. In 2022, nine cases of forest law violations in Lumphat Wildlife Sanctuary were filed with the provincial court by patrol teams¹⁷³. In earlier years, legal complaints were also filed

¹⁶⁵ RECOFTC APR 2022.

¹⁶⁶ RECOFTC CBNRM profile, 2022-2023.

¹⁶⁷ CPA Establishment Guideline, 2017.

¹⁶⁸ RECOFTC, APR 2018.

¹⁶⁹ UNDP SGP Project Completion Report PNKA, 2020. UNDP SGP Project End Report of RKCPA MBED, 2023. UNDP SGP Project End Report Phnom Namlear CPA, 2023.

¹⁷⁰ REDD+ pilot project SOIs for Kulen and Samroang, 2021

¹⁷¹ Project Completion Report, January 2025

¹⁷² Keo Seima Verification Report, 2023

¹⁷³ NatureLife Cambodia Annual Report 2022

for illegal sawmill use and land grabbing in Siem Pang Wildlife Sanctuary¹⁷⁴. These actions demonstrate the integration of formal legal recourse in the REDD+ implementation framework, ensuring offenders are held accountable under Cambodian law

Summary of any remaining issues and challenges

While progress has been made in establishing grievance redress mechanisms, significant challenges persist. Both MoE and MAFF highlighted insufficient human resources at subnational levels, with limited technical expertise and capacity affecting the ability to maintain effective grievance redress mechanisms.

The OWSO progress report in 2018 highlighted the number of administrative complaints at the subnational level, however only the administrative complaint 'case has been described, whereas other complaints, such as social accountability, are not properly mentioned. Only 7% out of 959 complaints in the social accountability box have been opened.¹⁷⁵

Weak law enforcement capacity continues to hinder efforts to address grievances related to illegal logging, wildlife trafficking, and land encroachment, creating situations where grievances may be filed, but enforcement of resolutions remains challenging.¹⁷⁶

The most significant challenges arise in addressing larger-scale disputes involving multiple stakeholders, including those with political or economic influence. A key issue is the absence of an overarching national dispute resolution mechanism with jurisdiction over high-level REDD+-related grievances. This gap affects complaints involving actors beyond the scope of individual REDD+ projects, as well as disputes extend beyond project boundaries and cannot be addressed by REDD+ initiative alone. Consequently, matters that fall outside the exclusive responsibility of project implementers (e.g. land titling and registration, extractive concessions) cannot be effectively addressed solely through REDD+ projects, or the REDD+ Programme.

While the REDD+ ESMF includes provisions for grievance redress and various alternatives to address claims at the grassroots level are in place, the national-level REDD+ grievance redress mechanism has not yet been fully operationalized. Evidence would suggest significant underreporting of grievances, with several reports noting no formal grievances submitted during monitoring periods¹⁷⁷, raising concerns about limited awareness of available grievance channels, lack of confidence in the grievance redress alternatives, cultural or social barriers discouraging formal complaints, and language and literacy barriers limiting effective access.¹⁷⁸

Next steps to improve conformance:

To strengthen access to justice within Cambodia's REDD+ framework, the following measures are proposed:

- Integrate and operationalize a National REDD+ GRM, by setting up a structure building on functioning REDD+ GRM Resolution Committees relying on existing mechanisms at the local and project level.
- Socialize and promote the REDD+ GRM structure and Resolution Mechanisms to all Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities, ensuring collaborative resolution approaches

¹⁷⁴ BirdLife Cambodia Annual Report 2018

¹⁷⁵ OWSO Progress Report 2018 <https://www.owso.gov.kh/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/DFR-2018-full-finaly.pdf>

¹⁷⁶ MoE APR 2022.

¹⁷⁷ CI JCM Safeguard Progress Report, 2024.

¹⁷⁸ CI Summary report village consultation meeting Project Verification, 2022. CI Report on Public Input Period, 2021.

with the REDD+ Implementers

- Promote sectoral dialogue platforms with REDD+ implementers, civil society, and government identify unresolved issues, and propose collaborative solutions.
- Ensure information sharing requirements include awareness-raising on grievance options, and avenues for escalation in REDD+ contexts.
- Where REDD+ issues intersect with other sectors (e.g., mining, infrastructure), coordinate with relevant ministries and authorities to enable collaboration on conflict resolution.

B.4 User rights over forest land are recognized and protected in the context of the implementation of the REDD+ interventions

Summary of context and actions taken to meet the safeguard sub-element

The government recognizes that recognition and protection of user rights over forest land is foundational to REDD+ interventions in Cambodia, including collective and individual rights to access, use, and manage forest resources, with particular attention to Indigenous Peoples and women who often rely heavily on forest resources for livelihoods, cultural practices, and food security. Cambodia's REDD+ Programme aligns with national legal instruments, including the Forestry Law (2002), Land Law (2001), Protected Areas Law, and National Policy on the Development of Indigenous Peoples (2009), which provide for formal recognition of customary land use rights, including the Indigenous Communal Land Titling (ICLT) process.

Between 2018 and 2022, the Cambodian government made significant strides in strengthening user rights over forest lands through formal recognition and technical support. Over 150 CPAs, 236 CFs, and 18 CFIs were officially recognized, with registered user rights granted to local communities.¹⁷⁹ The establishment process involved formal agreements with FA cantonments, and in 2022, five CFs received formal approval from the MAFF.¹⁸⁰ To apply for CPA status, an application letter signed by community members residing in the area must be submitted to the MoE. Additionally, 32 CPAs were accepted by the MoE, with official Prakas issued to formalize their status.¹⁸¹

Notably, the government supported the recognition of Indigenous Communal Land Titles (ICLTs)¹⁸², including seven Bunong communities under the Keo Seima REDD+ Project, granting important legal recognition of traditional land and resource use rights.¹⁸³ Progress was also made in forest boundary demarcation and registration of user rights, particularly in provinces hosting REDD+ pilot projects.¹⁸⁴ For example, four community forests covering 5,547 hectares were officially recognized in 2022.¹⁸⁵

Through initiatives such as the Biodiversity Conservation Corridor Project (BCCP), the government granted legal user rights to over 9,000 households, covering access to non-timber forest products, forest patrols, zoning authority, and benefit-sharing mechanisms.¹⁸⁶ These efforts highlight the government's central role in formalizing community tenure and empowering local communities to manage and benefit from forest resources sustainably.

Women achieved significant representation in forest governance structures, comprising 49% of total

¹⁷⁹ MAFF APRs

¹⁸⁰ RECOFCT APR 2022.

¹⁸¹ MoE APRs

¹⁸² Land Law 2001 recognizes IP identity, culture, and their communal land areas. Sub-decree # 83, 2009, outlines the procedural process on IP communal land titling.

¹⁸³ WCS website: <https://cambodia.wcs.org/Keo-Seima-REDD.aspx>

¹⁸⁴ MoE APR, 2022.

¹⁸⁵ MRLG Completion Report, 2022.

¹⁸⁶ ADB BCCP Social and Environmental Monitoring Report, 2021.

CBNRM members and occupying 30% of leadership positions in CFs, CPAs, CFIs and associated credit schemes.¹⁸⁷ Rights were respected through tenure support activities, including participatory mapping, resin tree tenure recognition, and formalization of community zones in PLWS, with FPIC consultations including both women and Indigenous peoples representatives.¹⁸⁸

Government-supported specific local initiatives included rice field mapping in Siem Pang, where 1,347 rice field parcels were mapped and registered for 1,042 households, with 1,139 land certificates issued¹⁸⁹ and support to three CPAs and one local conservation group in Lumphat to implement natural resource management plans¹⁹⁰

In the covered reported period, government-coordinated REDD+ interventions contributed to operationalizing user rights in various forms, including formal recognition of communal tenure, participatory land-use mapping, and the integration of customary practices into conservation planning, and have, in several instances, served as a catalyst for advancing the formal recognition of user rights

Summary of any existing issues and challenges

Despite meaningful progress, several challenges persist in ensuring full protection and promotion of user rights, particularly for Indigenous peoples and women. The government acknowledges significant gaps remain in formalization of land tenure, especially for Indigenous Peoples and local communities in REDD+ areas.¹⁹¹ The slow registration and therefore recognition of CFs and CPAs continues to limit legal protection of customary land rights.¹⁹²

Gender equality efforts face cultural and structural barriers, with limited participation of women in decision-making bodies despite targeted trainings and inclusion policies.¹⁹³ Active intervention was required to ensure women and Indigenous Peoples were adequately represented in meetings, suggesting underlying challenges in equitable participation due to social norms.¹⁹⁴

Both MoE and MAFF highlighted insufficient human resources at subnational levels, with limited technical capacity to implement REDD+ interventions and monitor its outcomes and progress, affecting the ability to properly support and monitor user rights recognition processes.¹⁹⁵ Logistical and financial constraints hinder effective and inclusive stakeholder consultations, especially in remote Indigenous communities.¹⁹⁶

While Cambodia's legal framework includes recognition of Indigenous Peoples' user rights through provisions such as communal land titling, practical implementation has been uneven due to the complexity of procedures (local context, time consuming, multiple ministries). Challenges have arisen in the titling process, especially for communities within protected areas, with a fraction of land areas proposed for communal titles approved by provincial authorities. Out of more than 450 Indigenous communities in Cambodia, as of 2022 only 40 have obtained communal land titles.¹⁹⁷

¹⁸⁷ RECOFTC PaFF Pamphlet, 2023

¹⁸⁸ CI JCM Safeguard Progress Report, 2024. CI Consolidated Report of village consultation on FPIC, 2023.

¹⁸⁹ BirdLife Cambodia Annual Report, 2021.

¹⁹⁰ NatureLife Cambodia Annual Report, 2022.

¹⁹¹ FCPF Progress Report, 2020.

¹⁹² MoE, 2021.

¹⁹³ MoE, 2022.

¹⁹⁴ CI Report on Public Input Period, October–November 2021.

¹⁹⁵ MoE APR 2022.

¹⁹⁶ CI Summary report on village consultation meeting, Project Verification, 2022.

¹⁹⁷ <https://pulitzercenter.org/stories/cambodia-indigenous-villagers-lose-forest-land-amid-carbon-offset-project>

While there have been numerous instances in which user rights have been well respected and fully incorporated into REDD+ project activity, with the REDD+ project interventions serving as the catalyst for more effective formalization of user rights (for example, seven Bunong communities affiliated with the Keo Seima REDD+ project have received ICLTs)¹⁹⁸ there have also been instances in which restrictions on traditional user rights have been alleged.¹⁹⁹ Insufficient consultations with local communities and inadequate processes for resolution of the resulting disputes has also been raised.

In the Southern Cardamom REDD+ Project, reports indicate that Indigenous Chong communities were not consulted for over two years after project activities began, violating their rights to FPIC. Additionally, there have been allegations of forced evictions and restricted access to traditional livelihoods within REDD+ project areas.

These challenges are further complicated by the fact that many aspects of user rights fall outside the direct control of REDD+ project implementers, involving cross-ministerial coordination and legal enforcement entities beyond the REDD+ program's jurisdiction.

Next steps to improve conformance:

To strengthen the protection of user rights within the REDD+ framework, the RGC and MoE will continue to prioritize the following actions:

- Accelerate and simplify the Indigenous Communal Land Titling process, with a focus on communities located within REDD+ project areas and protected areas;
- Ensure that participatory land-use planning is systematically integrated into REDD+ project activities, including strong community engagement and recognition of customary tenure systems;
- Promote legal and Protected Area Laws, IP rights awareness and capacity building at the community level, particularly targeting Indigenous women, to support rights-based participation in REDD+ activities;
- Clarify roles and responsibilities among relevant ministries to improve inter-agency coordination on matters of land governance and Indigenous tenure;
- Accelerate and prioritize PA zoning and management plan where REDD+ projects are implemented, so IPLCs understand areas are either accessible or restricted.
- Establish a dedicated review mechanism within the REDD+ Secretariat to monitor implementation of user rights commitments and address any grievances or restrictions that arise;
- Ensure that evolving REDD+ benefit-sharing mechanisms are explicitly linked to recognized user rights, and that land tenure status is considered in fund allocation processes.

B.5 Gender equality is promoted and ensured in the context of the implementation of the REDD+ interventions

Summary of context and actions taken to meet this safeguard sub-element

The government recognizes gender equality as a fundamental component of inclusive and effective REDD+ implementation. Women play a vital role in forest management, natural resource use, and community governance, and their equal participation is essential to achieving sustainable forest outcomes and equitable benefit sharing.

¹⁹⁸ <https://news.mongabay.com/2024/07/can-a-carbon-offset-project-really-secure-indigenous-rights-in-authoritarian-cambodia>

¹⁹⁹ <https://www.hrw.org/report/2024/02/29/carbon-offsettings-casualties/violations-chong-indigenous-peoples-rights>

To support implementation, the government established a Gender Group within the Cambodia REDD+ Programme, tasked with advising on gender integration, reviewing safeguard instruments, and contributing to capacity development across REDD+ implementers and stakeholders. Based on the REDD+ program's gender work and other governmental directions, REDD+ project implementers have developed local-level strategies to operationalize these principles through community consultations, participatory planning, and tailored capacity-building initiatives.

During the 2018-2022 period, the government demonstrated significant progress in promoting gender equality within REDD+ implementation through targeted training, capacity building, and inclusive participation mechanisms. MAFF reported training 124 women in forest leadership and integration of gender equity into climate-smart agriculture and REDD+ pilot project designs.²⁰⁰ Through partnerships with organizations like RECOFTC, the government supported gender mainstreaming strategies within the Forestry Administration and the Ministry of Environment, conducting multiple training programs and youth engagement initiatives.²⁰¹ A foundational gender assessment conducted in 2018 prioritized women's participation through nursery maintenance, savings groups, and leadership training, with 41 out of 56 nursery participants being women²⁰²

The inter-ministerial REDD+ Gender Group, established in 2014 and comprising representatives from the Forestry Administration, Fisheries Administration, Ministry of Environment, and Ministry of Women's Affairs, continued to play a pivotal role in mainstreaming gender into REDD+ processes during 2018-2022 by providing inputs to the National REDD+ Strategy development, conducting awareness-raising and capacity-building workshops for national REDD+ bodies, and utilizing public media campaigns including radio talk shows and television programs to build broader awareness on REDD+ and gender issues. The Ministry of Women's Affairs developed a Master Plan on Gender and Climate Change (2018-2030) to address gender issues and climate change impacts, particularly to strengthen women's resilience capacity in climate change matters in Cambodia.²⁰³

The government has played a central role in coordinating efforts to enhance women's participation in community-based forest governance. Under government leadership, women comprised over 51% of Community Forest credit scheme members in 2020 and held 30% of leadership positions across CFs, CPAs, CFs, and related groups.²⁰⁴ Women's leadership in CBNRM increased to 29%, with nearly half of all members being women.²⁰⁵ Through government-supported initiatives, including collaboration with UNDP SGP projects, women's representation in governance and livelihood groups has been strengthened.²⁰⁶ Notably, women from CPA networks have been elected to commune councils, demonstrating enhanced political engagement and leadership at the local level^{207 208}

Government supported projects demonstrated strong gender integration across multiple dimensions. Projects achieved significant women's participation, with examples including 46% female participation in reforestation activities, women-headed households receiving equal compensation and training, and women comprising over 82% of participants in community forest credit schemes.²⁰⁹ REDD+ implementation included specific government-facilitated interventions for women's empowerment

²⁰⁰ MAFF APR 2022.

²⁰¹ RECOFTC APR 2022.

²⁰² FCPF Progress reports, 2018 and 2020.

²⁰³ MOWA, 2018. <https://asset.cambodia.gov.kh/mowa/2020/11/KP-7-English-Women-4th-Sept-2020.pdf>

²⁰⁴ RECOFTC APR 2020.

²⁰⁵ PaFF Operational Report, 2022.

²⁰⁶ UNDP SGP CEPA and PNKA projects

²⁰⁷ RECOFTC APR 2022.

²⁰⁸ PaFF Operational Report, 2022.

²⁰⁹ RECOFTC/UNDP, Restoration in Stung Tmey CPA Pursat, 2020-2021. RECOFTC, SMCF-ICFMP Annual Report, 2018.

including scholarships for girls, savings groups, household training, and dissemination of fuel-efficient stoves and biodigesters, with financial literacy training reaching 396 people, including 190 women, across ten villages²¹⁰.

Government oversight ensured that gender considerations were systematically integrated across projects, with women comprising over 40% of CPA and CF committee members and participating actively in all implementation stages, including planning, patrolling, and livelihood training in some areas.²¹¹ In other cases, significant efforts were made to ensure women's meaningful participation in decision-making processes, with 1,710 women participating in consultations and active measures taken to balance gender presence at meetings²¹²

Summary of any remaining issues and challenges

Despite significant achievements in promoting gender equality within REDD+ implementation, several challenges persist that require continued attention and intervention. Data disaggregation by gender is not yet systematic across all REDD+ interventions, limiting the ability to fully assess gender outcomes and impacts.

Gender equality efforts face persistent cultural and structural barriers, with limited participation of women in national and local decision-making bodies despite targeted trainings and inclusion policies²¹³. Project teams consistently had to actively intervene to ensure that women and Indigenous Peoples were adequately represented in meetings, suggesting underlying challenges in achieving equitable participation due to prevailing social norms.²¹⁴

While some projects demonstrated strong gender integration, the quality and depth of gender mainstreaming varied across different REDD+ initiatives and locations, indicating that systematic approaches to gender equality have not been uniformly implemented across all REDD+ interventions.

Additional challenges include the fact that participation does not always translate into influence—while women may be present in meetings, their ability to contribute to or shape decision-making processes varies across sites and cultural contexts. Customary practices also limit women's land ownership, leadership opportunities, and time availability for participation in REDD+ processes, particularly in more remote or conservative areas.

Next steps to improve conformance:

Women's groups should be encouraged at the local level. All local voting processes should be designed to ensure women's right to vote without influence are upheld. Project implementers and the government should organize special guidelines and programs to increase educational opportunities for women and to support female leadership potential.

To strengthen gender equality across REDD+ programming, Cambodia will pursue the following priorities:

- Strengthen partnerships with the Ministry of Women's Affairs and civil society organizations with expertise in gender equality to support REDD+ implementation;
- Encourage women's leadership in REDD+ institutions and forest management structures by identifying and addressing site-specific barriers to and actively seeking to maximize active

²¹⁰ BirdLife Cambodia Annual Report, 2021.

²¹¹ ADB BCCP Project Completion Report, January 2025.

²¹² CI JCM Safeguard Annual Report, 2023. WWF Cambodia Annual Report, 2020. NatureLife Cambodia Annual Report, 2022.

²¹³ MOE APR 2022.

²¹⁴ CI Report on Public Input Period, 2021.

participation of women;

- Ensure that REDD+ benefit-sharing mechanisms consider women's roles, contributions, and priorities when allocating funds or designing community development projects;
- Improve the effectiveness, reactivate, and increase the resources of the REDD+ Gender Group and clarify its advisory and oversight role in future REDD+ implementation phases, ensuring REDD+ implementers are part of and aware of the REDD+ Gender Group led by the MoE REDD+ Secretariat.

B.6 Fair distribution of benefits is recognized and promoted in the context of the implementation of the REDD+ interventions

Summary of context and actions taken to meet this safeguard sub-element

The government recognizes that benefit-sharing is a cornerstone of REDD+ implementation in Cambodia, ensuring that communities who contribute to emissions reductions also receive an equitable share of the resulting benefits. The methodology by which benefit sharing occurs has been developed and refined across multiple REDD+ project sites, with the Cambodia REDD+ Programme advancing efforts to ensure transparency, stakeholder involvement, and fairness in benefit-sharing arrangements.

Under the direction of the REDD+ Taskforce Secretariat, the REDD+ Benefit Sharing Technical Team provided preliminary assessment and recommendation²¹⁵ for benefit sharing, that emphasize clear roles and responsibilities for benefit management, transparent distribution mechanisms, and inclusive stakeholder consultation processes. These guidelines have informed both national policy discussions and project-level implementation.

Between 2019 and 2022, the Cambodian government led benefit-sharing efforts through projects like PaFF/RECOFTC and UNDP Small Grand Programme, supporting over 100 community initiatives via trust funds and PES pilots. It also expanded Community Forest credit schemes significantly, benefiting thousands of members, including many women.²¹⁶ These actions highlight the government's commitment to sustainable resource management and community empowerment.

Government-supported projects demonstrated sophisticated benefit-sharing models. The KSWs implemented a sophisticated model combining base payments (equal across communities) and performance-based payments proportional to community achievements in forest protection and development. Initially, funds were distributed equally across 20 participating communities, with over USD 220,000 allocated in 2018 for locally selected development priorities ranging from construction of community halls and bridges to water systems, health care services and ecotourism projects.²¹⁷ The project subsequently transitioned to a performance-based benefit-sharing model known as "Cash for Communities," where financial disbursements are tied to indicators of environmental stewardship, thereby reinforcing community responsibility for project outcomes.²¹⁸

The Southern Cardamom REDD+ Project funded infrastructure, including 94 wells, 34 culverts, and 18km of roads, plus fully funded university scholarships for 25 students and livelihood projects for 29

²¹⁵ Working paper on benefit sharing for REDD+ in Cambodia, 2014. <https://cambodia-redd.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Working-Paper-Preliminary-review-and-approach-to-develop-a-system-for-allocation-of-incentives-and-benefit-sharing-for-REDD+-in-Cambodia.pdf>

²¹⁶ RECOFTC APR 2022

²¹⁷ See "Communities" section at <https://cambodia.wcs.org/saving-wild-places/seima-forest.aspx>

²¹⁸ WCS website: <https://cambodia.wcs.org/Keo-Seima-REDD.aspx#:~:text=C4C%20empowers%20villages%20by%20providing,address%20their%20most%20pressing%20needs.>

communities²¹⁹. In other occasions and projects local use of proceeds went to garbage collection, equipment maintenance, and tourism upgrades Premium pricing and conservation incentive schemes, such as the Ibis Rice scheme, provided premium prices up to 70% above market rate for households complying with forest protection rules. In 2021, 509 households earned over USD 170,000 collectively, averaging USD 336 additional income per family²²⁰.

Local benefit-sharing systems operated through eco-tourism, agroforestry, and NTFP value chains, with profits reinvested in community conservation funds and CPA infrastructure. Targeted support ensured poor and vulnerable households received equitable access, with transparent mechanisms including equitable labour payments and maintenance contracts.²²¹ Supporting tools include benefit-sharing manuals outlining transparent procedures and community roles, signed community agreements with participating villages, and public records of disbursement and results.

Summary of any existing issues and challenges

Despite these achievements, the government recognizes that several challenges persist in ensuring fully equitable and transparent benefit-sharing across all REDD+-related activities. The development and operationalization of transparent benefit-sharing mechanisms remains in early stages in some locations, with MAFF noting difficulties in tracking revenue flows and ensuring equitable distribution at the community level.²²² Although a draft benefit-sharing plan exists for some projects, the mechanisms for actual distribution at the community level remain undefined, pending the first issuance of carbon credits²²³

Inconsistencies remain across implementation sites. While some projects demonstrate strong transparency with community members fully informed and participating in benefit decisions, in others, understanding of how funds are allocated remains limited. Villages may need additional support to manage funds transparently and implement community-driven actions effectively, with some elite capture risks remaining within local decision-making bodies.

The Southern Cardamom REDD+ Project was alleged by Human Rights Watch (HRW) of insufficient consultation and a lack of a formal benefit-sharing framework, despite significant revenue generation.²²⁴ This highlights the variability in benefit-sharing system quality and the need for standardized approaches across all REDD+ initiatives.

In 2024, to contribute to the development of national transparent benefit-sharing guidelines MoE, along with UNDP and RECOFTC, are documenting lessons learned and proposing standardized, transparent approaches for REDD+ benefit sharing nationwide.

Next steps to improve conformance:

To strengthen benefit-sharing across REDD+ programming, Cambodia will pursue the following priorities:

- Finalize the definitions of a national Benefit-Sharing Mechanism (BSM) to guide the design and development of site-specific plans, including REDD+ projects. This mechanism will also apply to

²¹⁹ WA Annual Report, 2021.

²²⁰ BirdLife Cambodia Annual Report, 2021.

²²¹ ADB BCCP, Environmental and Social Monitoring Report, 2021.

²²² MAFF APR 2022.

²²³ CI JCM Safeguard Annual Report, 2024.

²²⁴ HRW website : <https://www.hrw.org/report/2024/02/29/carbon-offsettings-casualties/violations-chong-indigenous-peoples-rights>

REDD+ initiatives and activities that fall outside of formal project boundaries and will be flexible to respect prior arrangements that may have been put in place prior to the establishment of the national BSM guidance;

- Promote greater experience sharing among project sites—particularly including new projects preparing for certification—to assist adoption of similar systems elsewhere and facilitate cross-learning on effective benefit-sharing models;
- Embed benefit-sharing protocols within the progress of the nested system development to ensure consistency across REDD+ projects and activities and include provisions for information disclosure concerning benefit sharing.
- Establish a national and comprehensive framework for benefit distribution, which aims to guide and align site-specific benefit sharing plans with national guidelines. The development of such a framework is intended to ensure transparency, efficiency, and equity in channelling benefits from REDD+ initiatives, while also accommodating local needs and contexts within the broader priorities and National REDD+ Strategy.
- Strengthen monitoring and evaluation systems to track the effectiveness and equity of benefit-sharing mechanisms, including the development of indicators that measure both the effective and efficient distribution of benefits and their impact on community development and forest conservation outcomes

Safeguard C: The REDD+ Strategy will be implemented in accordance with the rights of recognition of, and respect for the rights of original ethnic minorities, indigenous peoples and local communities, including the rights to non-discrimination, traditional knowledge and culture, self-determination, benefit sharing and collective tenure rights.

C.1 The rights of indigenous peoples and local communities are promoted and protected in the context of the implementation of the REDD+ interventions

Summary of context and actions taken to meet this safeguard sub-element

The government recognizes that respect for Indigenous Peoples' and local communities' rights is fundamental to safeguarding implementation. From 2018-2022, the REDD+ Secretariat promoted participation through the REDD+ Consultation Group (RCG), which includes representatives of Indigenous communities, civil society, academia, and the private sector.²²⁵

The government established a strong legal foundation for indigenous and community rights through formal recognition of CPAs and Indigenous Community Conservation Areas (ICCAs) with participatory mapping and management training.²²⁶ The government continued boundary negotiations and promoted recognition of customary rights through legal instruments and CPA/ICCA expansion.²²⁷ The CPA Establishment Guideline provides a clear legal basis for indigenous peoples and local communities to participate in natural resource management, mandating voluntary establishment and free elections of CPA committees with encouragement for women's participation.

Government facilitated initiatives ensured Indigenous communities were actively engaged in forest management planning and benefit-sharing mechanisms, ensuring culturally sensitive conservation approaches.²²⁸ Traditional knowledge was systematically integrated into biodiversity management and species protection.²²⁹ Cambodia's REDD+ program has implemented FPIC, particularly in areas

²²⁵ Cambodia REDD+ AIP, 2020.

²²⁶ MoE APR 2018.

²²⁷ MoE ARP 2019.

²²⁸ MoE APR 2020.

²²⁹ MoE APR 2021.

with indigenous groups in Mondulkiri, Ratanakiri, and Preah Vihear, with REDD+ demonstration sites including community training on rights, FPIC, and conflict resolution.²³⁰

Multiple indigenous groups benefited from REDD+ interventions: Poar and Chong ethnic groups in Samroang were included in consultations and benefit distribution, receiving biodigesters and access to saving groups²³¹. Indigenous Bunong communities in KSWs received support for conservation planning, educational and health services, protection of culturally important forest areas, and assistance with securing Indigenous Communal Land Titles²³², and the Kouy ethnic groups were directly involved in FPIC and benefit-sharing consultations with land-use mapping and formalized participation structures.²³³ Tampuon, Kreung, and Jarai groups had their customary rights supported through the demarcation of use zones and the formal registration of CPAs and CFs²³⁴

The government facilitated significant progress in women's participation. Women and Indigenous Peoples participated in forest patrols, commune meetings, and CF governance, with two CPA women becoming commune councillors by 2022.²³⁵ A CPA women's network was formed with 25 women from 15 provinces receiving tailored capacity-building in communication, documentation, regulation, and livelihood.²³⁶

As noted in safeguard element B.4, the government supported the recognition of Indigenous Communal Land Titles (ICLTs). By 2022, a total of 37 LCTs had officially obtained CLT issued by the Ministry of Land Management, Urban Planning and Construction (MLMUPC), covering 38,719 hectares, benefiting 3,652 families.²³⁷ Through programs like BCCP, the government supported 27 CPAs and 10 CFs, providing forest tenure security to over 9,000 households, including many from Indigenous communities, with community-based land use planning as a major implementation component.²³⁸ The PaFF3 program placed Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities at the centre of natural resource governance, supporting 155 CBNRM groups involving over 30,000 households with significant indigenous representation and developing 66 CBNRM management plans.²³⁹

Government-supported project examples demonstrate inclusive approaches across multiple initiatives, including reforestation with women's participation²⁴⁰, promotion of vulnerable groups and women in decision-making²⁴¹, CPA sub-grants for natural resource management plans²⁴², and specific projects focused on Indigenous Peoples' empowerment, managing 776 hectares of natural protected area²⁴³

Summary of any existing issues and challenges

Considering limitations in governmental program management capacity, the key actors have achieved considerable results. However, challenges persist in ensuring the full realization of these rights. Indigenous communities face difficulties in securing communal land titles (and some have shown low

²³⁰ MoE APRs, 2021-2022.

²³¹ REDD+ pilot project Sol Samroang, 2021.

²³² HES Case Study on KSWs, 2020.

²³³ CI JCM Safeguard Progress Report, 2023. CI Consolidated Report of village consultation on FPIC, 2023.

²³⁴ ADB BCCP Environmental and Social Monitoring Report, 2021.

²³⁵ RECOFTC APR 2021.

²³⁶ RECOFTC APRs, 2020-2022.

²³⁷ Outcome report of MLMUPC, July 2022_

²³⁸ ADB BCCP Completion Report, 2025.

²³⁹ PaFF Operational Report, 2022; MRLG Completion Report

²⁴⁰ RECOFTC/UNDP, Restoration in Stung Treng CPA Pursat, 2020-2021.

²⁴¹ RECOFTC, SMC/ICFMP Annual Report, 2018.

²⁴² NatureLife Cambodia Annual Report, 2022.

²⁴³ UNDP SGP, Project End Report of RKCPA MBED, 2023.

interest), and in some cases have experienced limited involvement in certain REDD+ projects. This process depends on multiple actors beyond the Ministry of Environment, including the Ministry of Rural Development, the Ministry of Interior, and the Ministry of Land Management.

Oversight from the REDD+ Secretariat is limited, and external REDD+ verification functions play minimal roles. Without national coordination, safeguard quality varies, with newer projects potentially lacking access to technical resources and key support structures recently closed. Allegations by human rights groups reveal oversight and accountability gaps.

Slow recognition and registration of ICLTs continues as a challenge, with out of more than 450 Indigenous communities in Cambodia, only 40 having obtained communal land titles. The MoE has approved only a fraction of the land areas proposed for communal titles by provincial authorities, with some communities granted ownership over just 15.5% of the initially identified land.

Next steps to improve conformance:

To strengthen the protection of the rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities within REDD+ implementation, the RGC will pursue the following priorities:

- Accelerate and simplify the Indigenous Communal Land Titling process, particularly in areas covered by REDD+ activities, in coordination with the Ministry of Rural Development, Ministry of Interior, and Ministry of Land Management;
- Enhance the role of the REDD+ Secretariat and REDD+ Consultation Group, ensuring that Indigenous and women representatives have capacity with sustained and informed participation in national-level decision-making and policy development;
- Promote peer learning among REDD+ implementers, to share good practices in Indigenous engagement, customary governance, and rights-based project design;
- Support gender responsive approaches to Indigenous engagement, ensuring that Indigenous women are equitably and actively included in consultation, decision-making, and benefit-sharing.
- Explore new way to identify risks that may lead to grievances about rights, such as new channels or systems (e.g. SIS) for receiving reports from grassroots implementation. Strengthening local reporting mechanisms will enable timely detection and response to community concerns.

C.2 Traditional knowledge is recognized and protected in the context of the implementation of the REDD+ activity

Summary of context and actions taken to meet this safeguard sub-element

The government recognizes that traditional knowledge, especially customary farming systems, spiritual practices, and land use knowledge, is deeply linked to the forest livelihoods of Cambodia's Indigenous Peoples. In the Cambodian context, this typically refers to knowledge of traditional rotational areas where fields would be cleared, planted, left fallow, regenerate, and then replanted in rotational (swidden) farming practices customary for Cambodia's indigenous peoples.

The government demonstrated commitment to recognizing and protecting traditional knowledge through multiple approaches between 2018-2022. Cambodia participated in international Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS) events under the Nagoya Protocol in 2019 and 2021, emphasizing community access to traditional knowledge systems. Projects under the NBSAP framework integrated indigenous ecological knowledge for biodiversity monitoring, while government reports documented traditional

fire and NTFP knowledge integration.²⁴⁴

Traditional resource use was integrated into conservation strategies through livelihood models including honey production, resin tapping, and NTFP collection. NTFP-based enterprises and honey/resin value chains were developed in Prey Lang and Tonle Sap regions from 2018-2022, promoting traditional ecological practices. Forest-based enterprises rooted in local traditions were documented as part of CBNRM case studies.²⁴⁵

The government recognizes that farming and land use practices of Cambodia's indigenous communities directly relate to issues of land tenure and user rights. In those areas where communities' lands are well demarcated, and titles secured; communities are able to enjoy their traditional agricultural practices without incident. Community participatory land use mapping exercises have been used effectively to build community understanding of landscapes and engagement in REDD+ project efforts.²⁴⁶ Agroforestry design and species selection incorporated local ecological knowledge, particularly in the Samroang and Sarsarsdam projects.²⁴⁷ Local communities advised on tree species selection and nursery practices, with community preferences for native species like Rang, Sandan, and Korki being integrated in restoration projects.

Traditional forest use knowledge was integrated into zoning and land-use planning, particularly related to resin trees and customary territories.²⁴⁸ Indigenous knowledge informed land-use mapping, forest zoning, and biodiversity monitoring, with local resource users participating in identifying sacred sites and forest-use boundaries.²⁴⁹

The Cambodian government has played a key role in protecting indigenous and community cultural values by integrating traditional knowledge into the formulation of CPA bylaws, management plans, and resource zoning decisions. Initiatives like the MRLG project documented customary governance and forest practices in Yak Loam CPA²⁵⁰, while the Our Tonle Sap²⁵¹ and PaFF2 projects²⁵² incorporated local ecological knowledge into fire management and resource planning. Supported by government-led programs such as UNDP SGP, CEPA, SELIC, and CoDeC, communities actively documented spiritual forest knowledge and sustainable practices through participatory mapping and planning.²⁵³ Elders and community members guided decisions on zoning, patrol routes, and restoration areas, ensuring that cultural values and traditional resource management remain central to conservation efforts across multiple projects.

In Keo Seima, the WCS-led REDD+ project collaborated with Indigenous Bunong communities, incorporating their knowledge into forest zoning and biodiversity monitoring. This collaboration ensured that conservation efforts respected and reflected the cultural and spiritual values of the Bunong people.

The Community-Based REDD+ (CBR+) program supported local communities, including Indigenous

²⁴⁴ MAFF APR 2020. MoE APR 2019.

²⁴⁵ RECOFTC APR 2022.

²⁴⁶ <https://servir.adpc.net/news/3d-participatory-mapping-model-promote-socially-inclusive-climate-action>

²⁴⁷ REDD+ pilot project Sols, 2021.

²⁴⁸ CI JCM Safeguard Progress Report, 2024.

²⁴⁹ ADB BCCP Project Completion Report, January 2025.

²⁵⁰ MRLG Completion Report

²⁵¹ RECOFTC, Quarterly Reports, Apr-Jun and Oct-Nov 2022.

²⁵² RECOFTC, PaFF2 Annual Report, 2018.

²⁵³ UNDP SGP, End Project Report, 2020. UNDP SGP Final Report ARD, 2020. UNDP SGP Project End Report CEPA, 2020. UNDP SGP Final Project Report, 2023.

Peoples, in piloting and implementing REDD+ approaches. These initiatives emphasized the use of traditional knowledge in forest management, aiming to address deforestation drivers effectively.²⁵⁴

Summary of any existing issues and challenges

While progress has been made, challenges remain in ensuring consistent recognition and protection of traditional knowledge across REDD+ initiatives. In some cases, land-use maps were created without adequate community input, leading to disputes over traditional use areas and concern over potential restrictions on customary practices.²⁵⁵ Limited institutional guidance and national standards exist for how traditional knowledge should be documented, respected, and used within REDD+ implementation and monitoring.

There is still limited formal recognition of the role of traditional knowledge in national legal frameworks and forest management plans, beyond project-specific arrangements. Some Indigenous communities report continued uncertainty about whether traditional practices (particularly rotational farming) are fully protected under REDD+ agreements, especially where enforcement mechanisms are not clearly defined.

Next steps to improve conformance

To further support the integration and protection of traditional knowledge within the REDD+ framework, Cambodia will prioritize the following actions:

- Develop national guidance on how traditional knowledge should be incorporated into REDD+ interventions, including participatory mapping, planning, and monitoring processes;
- Ensure all REDD+ project implementers apply culturally appropriate methodologies for engaging with Indigenous communities and documenting traditional knowledge, based on the principle of FPIC;
- Support legal and institutional mechanisms to recognize sacred sites and customary use areas within REDD+ project zones, including coordination with protected area zoning authorities.
- A clear mapping methodology emphasizing community participation and leading to a definitive local land use map must be standardized in a national approach.
- Provide training and awareness-raising for government staff, project implementers, and local authorities on the value and application of traditional knowledge in sustainable forest management.
- Encourage knowledge-sharing between communities, including intergenerational learning initiatives, to ensure the continuity of traditional practices in REDD+ landscapes.

Safeguard D: The right to participate, in an effective manner, including how Free Prior Informed Consent for relevant indigenous peoples, local communities, and women will be recognized and promoted under the implementation of REDD+ interventions

D.1 Relevant indigenous peoples, local communities, and women have the right to participate in the implementation of activities

²⁵⁴ UNREDD, Community Based REDD+ Country Plan Cambodia, 2015. https://www.un-redd.org/sites/default/files/2021-10/Cambodia_CBR%2B%20Country%20Plan_English.pdf

ITTO Sustainable Forest Management Through REDD+ Mechanisms in Kampong Thom Province” project, 2019. https://www.itto.int/files/itto_project_db_input/3107/Technical/ITTO%20Technical%20Report%20%28compilation%20of%206%20Reports%29.pdf

²⁵⁵ <https://www.hrw.org/report/2024/02/29/carbon-offsettings-casualties/violations-chong-indigenous-peoples-rights>

Summary of context and actions taken to meet this safeguard sub-element

The government recognizes effective participation by Indigenous Peoples, local communities, and women is essential to the legitimacy and success of REDD+ implementation. The REDD+ Consultation Group (RCG) served as a formal platform for Indigenous, community, NGO, private sector, and civil society representatives to engage with the REDD+ Secretariat, facilitating dialogues to ensure diverse voices contribute to REDD+ decision-making processes.²⁵⁶

The MoE demonstrated sustained commitment to stakeholder participation throughout the reporting period. From government reports, there is evidence of extensive participation activities. Activities progressed from co-management of protected areas and patrolling in 2018²⁵⁷ to engaging over 174 community groups in REDD+-relevant actions including ecotourism, reforestation, and forest monitoring, with particular focus on women and youth.²⁵⁸ By 2020, community forums, local workshops, and training programs for Community Protected Area (CPA) committees ensured participatory governance with gender-inclusive participation. The Ministry expanded efforts through youth-led campaigns and increased community leadership roles across 17 provinces²⁵⁹, culminating in over 100 public consultations and extensive training for commune and district officials.²⁶⁰

The MoE thought the ADB BCCP project engaged over 14,000 people in community consultations, including Indigenous women and elders, using FPIC-aligned processes for all key decisions affecting land and natural resources.²⁶¹

Through partnerships with organizations like RECOFTC, the government played a central role in facilitating community participation, supporting over 50 communities from 2018-2022 to prepare and implement Community Forest Management Plans (CFMPs) and Community Protected Area Management Plans (CPAMPs) through 8 defined participatory steps, including community mapping, consultation, and endorsement. By 2021, 23 communities were in various stages of CFMP development, with draft plans including land-use zoning, institutional roles, and budget needs verified by FA and PDAPP before endorsement.²⁶² Government-supported projects utilized common methods including PRA, community workshops, consultation meetings, and the establishment of representative local committees. Projects actively involved Indigenous Peoples, local communities, and women in planning, decision-making, implementation, and monitoring activities with tailored consultation processes using local languages and culturally appropriate facilitation, gender-responsive strategies with significant participation of women in governance roles, and documented feedback mechanisms.²⁶³

Government coordinated REDD+ pilot projects implemented FPIC principles through multiple consultation rounds. Specific examples included: Samroang with community engagement in site selection and nursery formation; Sarsarsdam forming teams with Indigenous Peoples, poor, and women members for bio-digester recipient selection; and Kulen where zoning maps were revised based on feedback from 5 communities and national stakeholders.²⁶⁴

²⁵⁶ FCPF Final project report, 2023.

https://www.forestcarbonpartnership.org/system/files/documents/cambodia_fcpf_final_project_report_signed_2.pdf

²⁵⁷ MOE APR 2018.

²⁵⁸ MOE APR 2019.

²⁵⁹ MOE APR 2021.

²⁶⁰ MOE APR 2022.

²⁶¹ ADB BCCP Completion Report, 2025.

²⁶² RECOFTC ARP, 2022.

²⁶³ UNDP SCP projects PNKA (2020), CEPA (2020), RKCPA (2023), CoDec (2023), PNKA (2020)

²⁶⁴ REDD+ pilot projects SOIs, 2021.

REDD+ projects also implemented large-scale consultations, demonstrated broad engagement: 2,865 participants, including 501 Indigenous Peoples and 1,710 women, participated in village-level consultations.²⁶⁵ In projects such as Northern Prey Lang and Keo Seima, formal Stakeholder Engagement Strategies have guided outreach activities, ensuring that communities receive timely information, are consulted on key decisions, and are included in REDD+ governance structures.²⁶⁶

The government systematically promoted women's participation across projects. The CPA Establishment Guideline mandated voluntary establishment by at least 60% of households and encouraged women candidates in committee elections. Under the ADB project, CPA and CF management committees were formed through participatory elections, with women accounting for over 40% of committee members.²⁶⁷ Specific projects demonstrated strong female participation, with examples including 46% women participation and over 1,900 women participating across multiple villages.²⁶⁸

Summary of any existing issues and challenges

While government efforts to enable community participation to have advanced, several challenges remain in ensuring meaningful, inclusive, and effective participation across all REDD+ interventions. The quality and depth of participation vary across activity sites, depending on the capacities of implementers and resources available for engagement. In some locations, community members have reported limited understanding of REDD+ concepts and roles, indicating the need for more sustained information-sharing and dialogue.

Participation mechanisms are sometimes limited to consultation, with fewer structured opportunities for shared decision-making or ongoing governance. There is limited information flow on issues such as carbon revenue, benefit-sharing calculations, or legal responsibilities of different stakeholders. Language, literacy, and logistical barriers can still limit effective participation, particularly among Indigenous and remote communities.

As noted in the introduction of this Sol, the COVID-19 pandemic significantly disrupted implementation activities during 2020-2021, limiting community engagement and capacity-building activities. Community participation in forest management activities was constrained by movement restrictions and health concerns, particularly impacting participatory forest monitoring and benefit-sharing mechanisms

Participation limitations due to seasonal livelihood activities were noted, with many community members—especially men—being unavailable during consultation periods due to involvement in cultivation activities. Logistical and financial constraints hinder effective stakeholder consultations, and limited human resources at subnational levels with insufficient technical expertise affect implementation quality.

Steps to improve conformance:

To ensure that participation is consistently meaningful, inclusive, and effective across all REDD+ interventions, the RGC will pursue the following priorities:

- Develop a national guidance on participation in REDD+, defining core principles, procedures,

²⁶⁵ CI Consolidated Report of village consultation on FPIC, 2023. CI JCM Safeguard Annual Report, 2023.

²⁶⁶ CI JCM REDD+ Safeguard Activity Progress Report Form, 2018-2020.

²⁶⁷ ADB, BCCP Social and Environmental Monitoring Report, 2021.

²⁶⁸ RECOFTC/UNDP, Restoration in Stung Treng CPA Pursat, 2020-2021. RECOFTC, SMCF-ICFMP Annual Report, 2018.

and minimum standards for inclusive engagement of Indigenous Peoples and local communities. These guidelines should incorporate a social inclusion and gender approach, and make clear the types of information that are to be provided on what issues, and the extent to which communities can exert influence on which decisions.

- Strengthen the REDD+ Consultation Group, including by allocating resources and supporting capacity-building for representatives of all stakeholder groups and ensuring regular dialogue with the REDD+ Taskforce Secretariat;
- Include participation indicators within the SIS, to monitor how and to what extent local communities, Indigenous peoples and women are involved in the design, implementation, and oversight of REDD+ activities;
- Promote cross-learning among project sites, enabling communities and implementers to exchange experiences, tools, and good practices in participatory REDD+ implementation.

D.2 Right to a Free, Prior and Informed Consent is recognized and protected in accordance with the relevant legal obligations

Summary of context and actions taken to meet this safeguard sub-element

The government acknowledges that FPIC is a core safeguard under the UNFCCC Cancun Framework and a fundamental principle for protecting rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities in REDD+ contexts. The ESMF requires that FPIC processes are implemented for all REDD+ interventions affecting local communities, emphasizing transparent and culturally appropriate information-sharing, sufficient time for community consultation and decision-making, and respect for customary decision-making structures.

FPIC was formally integrated into safeguards procedures for REDD+ pilot initiatives, with 2021 consultations at demonstration sites including pre-informed sessions, documentation of community feedback, and consensus agreements prior to activities. The government provided training sessions on FPIC principles were provided to sub-national environment officers and community facilitators in Ratanakiri, Mondulakiri, and Preah Vihear.²⁶⁹

The CPA Establishment Guideline reflects key FPIC principles, requiring voluntary establishment initiated by local residents, participation of at least 60% of households, and approval of key documents by community consensus and commune chiefs. While not always explicitly labelled as "FPIC", participatory processes in CF/CPA formulation embodied FPIC principles through village assemblies and consultations, CFMP reviews by elected CFMCs, written agreements signed by FA cantonments and commune authorities, and translation of information into accessible forms.

Government supported projects implemented FPIC-aligned practices including prior consultations and community approval before implementing activities, informed and voluntary participation supported by community discussions and agreements, and community-led planning processes such as participatory mapping and beneficiary selection.²⁷⁰

Specific examples included informed consent obtained prior to involvement in activities, participatory mapping with active dialogue among community members and authorities, and written agreements

²⁶⁹ MAFF APR 2021. MoE APR 2021.

²⁷⁰ Prior consultations and community approval before implementing site-level activities, often recorded through meeting minutes or CPA committee resolutions. Informed and voluntary participation, supported by community discussions, contract agreements, and opportunity to opt-in or raise concerns. Community-led planning processes such as participatory mapping, patrol planning, and beneficiary selection, ensuring consent from both leadership and general members. UNDP SGP projects CEPA (2020), CWDCC (2020), SMP (2023), CIPO (2022)

required before activities commenced.²⁷¹

Government overseen REDD+ projects have also gone to great lengths to undertake some sort of FPIC process; extensive consultations and community workshops are the norm.²⁷² FPIC processes were implemented across all KWS REDD+ villages, with community agreements outlining expectations and obligations, reinforced through regular consultations and feedback loops.²⁷³ The Southern Cardamom REDD+ Project reports conducting over 100 FPIC-related community meetings throughout the early phases of project design and implementation.²⁷⁴ A structured FPIC process was conducted with materials and training tailored to local understanding, including quizzes and participatory feedback loops, with public votes confirming consent.²⁷⁵ Reports from third-party project verifiers under the VCS and Climate, Community and Biodiversity Standards (CCBS) confirm that FPIC has been conducted in accordance with international safeguard expectations at certified REDD+ sites.

Summary of any existing issues and challenges

Despite clear progress, differences among implementers regarding scope of information provided and timing of community approval in relation to project activity launch created variability with significant repercussions for community-level ownership and support. While REDD+ interventions should apply FPIC through the ESMF and other REDD+-related governmental guidelines, these are programmatic, not legislative instruments.

The quality and scope of FPIC processes vary between projects. Some implementers have robust systems; others, particularly newer or smaller initiatives, face capacity constraints and rely on general consultation rather than structured FPIC procedures. Concerns have been raised about timing and completeness of information shared with communities during consent processes, and whether consent is truly obtained prior to start of REDD+ interventions in all cases. Participation mechanisms are sometimes limited to consultation²⁷⁶, with fewer structured opportunities for shared decision-making or ongoing governance. While participation is described in trainings and project meetings of projects, some activities are more top-down. Language, literacy, and logistical barriers can still limit effective participation, particularly among Indigenous and remote communities.

Logistical and financial constraints hinder effective and inclusive stakeholder consultations, especially in remote Indigenous communities. The quality and documentation of FPIC processes were found to be inconsistent across different REDD+ projects and areas.

Next steps to improve conformance:

To strengthen the implementation of FPIC across REDD+ interventions, the RGC will prioritize the following actions:

- Develop and publish national guidance or minimum standards on participation in REDD+, defining core principles, procedures, and minimum standards for inclusive engagement of

²⁷¹ RECOFTC/UNDP, Restoration in Stung Treng CPA Pursat, 2020-2021.

²⁷¹ RECOFTC, Quarterly Reports, 2022.

²⁷¹ ADB BCCP Environmental and Social Monitoring Report, 2021.

²⁷² CI JCM REDD+ Safeguard Activity Progress Report Form, 2023

²⁷³ KWS Benefit Sharing Manual, 2019.

²⁷⁴ Southern Cardamoms REDD+ Project Monitoring Report, 3rd project period, 2022

²⁷⁵ CI JCM Safeguard Annual Report 2023. CI Report on Public Input Period, 2021. CI Consolidated Report of village consultation on FPIC, 2023.

²⁷⁶ WA APRs for example do not provide detailed documentation of FPIC processes, and The statement that “no objections were raised” may reflect inadequate outreach rather than full, informed consent.

Indigenous Peoples and local communities. These guidelines should make clear the types of information that are to be provided on what issues, and the extent to which communities are able to exert influence on which decisions.

- Develop and implement national FPIC guidelines with clear processes and requirements for all REDD+ implementers as a key reference and minimum requirements
- Maintain and enforce FPIC standards through the guidelines for project implementers and other partners, ensuring all REDD+ implementers understand and apply FPIC procedures and documentations throughout the project cycle;
- Consider evaluation indicators and reporting channels to receive information that allows the government to understand the implementation and treatment of measures related to FPIC implementation.
- Facilitate cross-learning and documentation of FPIC experiences across REDD+ projects, to inform continuous improvement and capacity building.

Safeguard E. REDD+ interventions are implemented to promote the conservation of natural forests and biodiversity, the enhancement of social and environmental benefits, and will not result in the conversion of natural forests.

E.1 The conservation of natural forests and biological diversity is recognized and protected in the context of the implementation of REDD+ interventions

Summary of context and actions taken to meet the safeguard sub-element

The government affirms that REDD+ implementation must promote and contribute to long-term conservation of natural forests and biological diversity. This principle is reflected in Cambodia's national policy frameworks and international commitments, operationalized through REDD+ interventions that prevent deforestation, support forest regeneration, and strengthen protection of key ecosystems and species. As outlined in the NRS, conservation outcomes are core to REDD+ results and delivery of environmental co-benefits, aligned with the National Protected Area Strategic Management Plan, Forestry Law (2002), and Protected Areas Law (2008).

The government implemented comprehensive measures to promote conservation of natural forests and biological diversity through REDD+ interventions between 2018-2022. The MoE prioritized active forest protection through extensive patrol systems and enforcement actions. Over 5,100 patrols and 975 enforcement actions were conducted, with habitat restoration and biodiversity offsets piloted.²⁷⁷ By 2022, enforcement activities expanded significantly, with patrols covering over 7,500 km² across 70 protected areas and intercepting 2,389 illegal logging and poaching incidents.²⁷⁸

Government-led large-scale restoration efforts showed substantial progress. Activities expanded from covering over 11,000 hectares in Tonle Sap and Eastern Plains²⁷⁹ to 11,700 hectares by 2020, with biodiversity corridors mapped and monitored to safeguard critical ecosystems.²⁸⁰ Prepared to reforest 35,000 native trees on 30 hectares of land in Preah Jayavarman Norodom Phnom Kulen National Park²⁸¹. Through partnerships, silviculture, forest fire control, and reforestation were supported across 10 provinces, with 8 Community Forests planting trees on 8.5 hectares and conducting silviculture on 11 hectares in Stung Treng in 2021 alone.²⁸² Through the BCCP, the government protected over

²⁷⁷ MOE APR 2018.

²⁷⁸ MOE APR 2022.

²⁷⁹ MOE APR 2019.

²⁸⁰ MOE APR, 2020.

²⁸¹ MOE APR, 2018.

²⁸² RECOFTC APR, 2021.

190,000 hectares of forest through CPA and CF structures, with biodiversity monitoring teams tracking wildlife and forest health.²⁸³

The government integrated biodiversity considerations into national planning, identifying 3,500 ecologically important areas and launching 23 new community conservation initiatives.²⁸⁴ The country continued implementing its National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) 2016-2023, participating in international dialogues, including the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework process. Over 13,600 permits supported regulated access to natural resources in conservation areas. The national SMART deployment began in Keo Seima Wildlife Sanctuary and expanded with support from development partners.²⁸⁵

Several REDD+ projects demonstrated significant biodiversity conservation impacts. Projects safeguarded hundreds of thousands of hectares of forest habitat for threatened species, implementing thousands of ranger patrols to prevent deforestation and poaching. The Keo Seima Wildlife Sanctuary REDD+ project protects over 290,000 hectares of forest and is home to more than 950 species, including globally threatened species. REDD+ revenues supported forest patrols, biodiversity monitoring, and conservation research.²⁸⁶

Government-supported community-led projects have also contributed to forest ecosystem recovery. Examples include restoration of degraded forest using native species, planting thousands of seedlings with survival rate tracking, implementation of community-based fire management plans, and sustainable forest management improving biodiversity and ecological integrity over thousands of hectares.²⁸⁷

Summary of any remaining issues and challenges

While REDD+ has generated important conservation outcomes, some challenges remain. REDD+ interventions are situated within broader landscapes subject to external pressures, including encroachment, illegal logging, and infrastructure development, which pose risks to biodiversity conservation beyond the control of REDD+ activity implementers. Integration of biodiversity objectives into community-level management plans remains limited in some REDD+ areas.

The capacity for systematic biodiversity monitoring varies among projects, and national systems for tracking conservation outcomes are still under development. There is a need to harmonize data collection and reporting across all REDD+ interventions and link these efforts with national biodiversity monitoring systems. In certain areas, the expansion of conservation zones has raised concerns among local communities regarding access to traditional use areas.

Weak law enforcement capacity continues to hinder control of illegal logging, wildlife trafficking, and land encroachment, with high rates of forest crimes in protected areas and REDD+ zones. Snaring remains high and persistent, and limited deterrence exists as patrols alone are insufficient without arrests and punishment.

²⁸³ ADP BCCP Completion Report, 2025.

²⁸⁴ MOE APR, 2021.

²⁸⁵ MOE APR, 2022.

²⁸⁶ WA APR, 2021. CI Consolidated Report of village consultation on FPIC, 2023. CI JCM Safeguard Annual Report, 2023.

²⁸⁷ RECOFTC/UNDP, Restoration in Stung Treng CPA Pursat, 2020-2021.

²⁸⁷ RECOFTC, Quarterly Reports, 2022. RECOFTC, SMC-ICFMP Annual Report, 2018.

Next steps to improve conformance

To further strengthen biodiversity and natural forest conservation through REDD+ implementation, Cambodia will advance the following priorities:

- Continue to prioritize REDD+ activities in high-biodiversity landscapes, particularly areas of ecological connectivity and endemism;
- Integrate biodiversity indicators into the SIS and project-level monitoring frameworks, including the tracking of key species and habitat conditions;
- Strengthen national coordination between the REDD+ Secretariat, Carbon Crediting Secretariat, Ministry of Environment, and conservation partners to align REDD+ outcomes with broader biodiversity and protected area targets;
- Expand community-based biodiversity monitoring and enforcement, and provide necessary training and equipment to local rangers and community patrol teams;
- Facilitate regular information exchange and lessons learned between REDD+ implementers and conservation stakeholders, including PDoEs, NGOs, universities, and protected area managers.

E.2 REDD+ interventions have not incentivized the conversion of natural forests***Summary of context and actions taken to meet the safeguard sub-element***

The government recognizes the critical importance of ensuring that REDD+ interventions do not incentivize or result in the conversion of natural forests. In line with the Cancun Safeguards, Cambodia's REDD+ framework explicitly prohibits any activity that would cause deforestation, degradation, or replacement of natural forest ecosystems with plantations or non-forest land uses. The ESMF explicitly prohibits conversion of natural forests for any purpose under REDD+ interventions, ensuring that REDD+ is used only to protect, not replace, natural forest ecosystems.

The government demonstrated a strong commitment to preventing natural forest conversion through multiple coordinated approaches from 2018-2022. Cambodia's REDD+ strategy aligned with national land-use planning that prioritized forest protection, with more than 3.3 million hectares of forest placed under protection via zoning within protected areas and biodiversity corridors.

The MoE strengthened Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) processes and site-specific forest zoning to identify and exclude primary forest areas from development schemes.²⁸⁸ The CPA Establishment Guideline provided a legal framework that explicitly prohibited the conversion of CPA lands to private ownership or commercial use.

Government-coordinated community patrols played a crucial role in preventing illegal forest conversion, with commune and ranger coordination ensuring fines, arrests, and confiscations when illegal clearing was detected. Community awareness of the ecological impact of forest loss was high, including recognition of erosion and flooding risks from deforestation.

Several specific projects demonstrated effective forest conversion prevention. The SMCF-ICFMP project explicitly regulated harvesting and prohibited unauthorized land conversion through Community Forest Management Plans²⁸⁹. Projects established zoning plans and core zone boundaries

²⁸⁸ MAFF APRs, 2020-2021. MoE APR, 2018.

²⁸⁹ RECOFTC, SMCF-ICFMP Annual Report, 2018. Lomphat REDD+ Project established zoning plans and core zone boundaries patrolled using SMART tools, with project design documents developed according to Verra's Verified Carbon Standard, which prohibits forest conversion NatureLife Cambodia Annual Report 2022. BirdLife Cambodia Annual Report 2021.

patrolled using SMART tools, with project design documents developed according to international standards, which prohibit forest conversion. Projects promoted natural regeneration, community reforestation, and forest conservation as a source of climate resilience and livelihood.²⁹⁰ Sustainable timber harvesting was piloted to strengthen legal, sustainable use while avoiding conversion and degradation²⁹¹. Alternative livelihood options financially incentivized communities to protect rather than convert forest lands.

Summary of any remaining issues and gaps

While the REDD+ Programme has not contributed to forest conversion, Cambodia's broader land-use environment presents ongoing challenges. REDD+ projects operate in landscapes where external pressures on land, such as illegal encroachment, economic land concessions, and infrastructure development, remain threats that can undermine conservation efforts even when REDD+ itself does not cause forest loss.

There is a need to strengthen the enforcement of land-use laws in and around REDD+ project sites to prevent encroachment or unauthorized activities that may be perceived as contradictory to REDD+ goals. Continued vigilance and improved coordination between REDD+ implementers and government agencies responsible for land administration, protected areas, and agriculture remain necessary.

Next steps to improve conformance:

To maintain and strengthen assurance that REDD+ does not incentivize the conversion of natural forests, the Royal Government of Cambodia will prioritize the following:

- Continue to respect and increase enforcement of legal prohibitions against forest conversion in all REDD+ project areas and other areas designated for conservation or protection, including through improved coordination between national and subnational authorities;
- Improve the integration of project-scale REDD+ data and other subnational-scale data on protected area management with the NFMS to ensure timely alerts and transparency on land cover change;
- Strengthen engagement with communities and local authorities to prevent unintended land use pressures and clarify the legal status of REDD+ areas;
- Support implementers in conducting site-level risk assessments on forest conversion threats and integrating prevention measures into REDD+ management plans;
- Conduct periodic independent reviews of REDD+ compliance with safeguards against conversion, using standardized methodologies and verifiable indicators.

E.3 Enhancement of ecological, biological, climatic, and socio-cultural benefits

Summary of context and actions taken to meet the safeguard sub-element

The government is committed to ensuring that REDD+ interventions not only deliver emissions reductions but also enhance a range of co-benefits that contribute to national development and global environmental goals, including biodiversity conservation, ecosystem integrity, climate resilience, cultural preservation, and community well-being. Beyond emissions reductions, REDD+ projects in Cambodia are designed to deliver multiple co-benefits, including ecosystem services, biodiversity protection, and preservation of socio-cultural values linked to Indigenous and forest-dependent communities.

²⁹⁰ UNDP SGP Final Report ARD, 2020. UNDP SGP Final Report CFI Phum Thmey Project, 2020.

²⁹¹ RECOFTC APR, 2020.

Government led REDD+ interventions during 2018-2022 demonstrated significant progress in generating ecological, biological, climatic, and socio-cultural benefits beyond carbon reduction. In 2021-2022, comprehensive ecosystem service assessments were expanded under the Cambodia Sustainable Landscape and Ecotourism Project (CSLEP) and landscape restoration initiatives, focusing on watershed protection, climate resilience, and ecotourism income generation. REDD+ pilot projects in northern provinces documented carbon sequestration benefits while promoting cultural heritage conservation through co-management with community forest groups.²⁹²

The Keo Seima Wildlife Sanctuary (KSWs) REDD+ project exemplified comprehensive co-benefit delivery, supporting household livelihoods through eco-agriculture, savings groups, health/education programs, and tenure strengthening.²⁹³ Notably, 95 % of surveyed households in KSWs reported benefits from forests, including timber, food, ecosystem services, and medicinal plants, while recognizing negative environmental impacts of deforestation, such as erosion and flooding.

Specific benefit categories achieved included ecological and biological benefits through reforestation and fire management activities that supported habitat regeneration, reduced forest fires, and protected sensitive areas, including wetlands and fish conservation zones.²⁹⁴ Climatic benefits were achieved through large-scale tree planting initiatives, protecting forest carbon stocks, and restoring degraded forest ecosystems serving as carbon sinks.²⁹⁵ Socio-cultural benefits included recognition of community resource use rights, support for customary practices, and integration of traditional knowledge in fire and forest management.²⁹⁶ Projects generated multiple simultaneous benefits with habitat protection, forest-based livelihoods enhancement, and traditional indigenous practices protection.²⁹⁷

Summary of any remaining issues and gaps

While delivery of co-benefits has been significant, several challenges remain. The ability to monitor and report on co-benefits consistently across all REDD+ interventions and projects is limited, with currently no national framework or common indicators for assessing non-carbon benefits. Some community members have raised concerns about access restrictions in protected areas, where REDD+ objectives may prioritize forest conservation over traditional resource use unless carefully managed.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, several co-benefits were impacted considerably due to reduced activity, such as ecotourism.²⁹⁸ This led to a significant loss of income and the inability to maintain some infrastructure.²⁹⁹

There is a need to ensure that socio-cultural benefits, particularly those tied to spiritual forests and traditional livelihoods, are formally acknowledged and protected within REDD+ implementation frameworks.

²⁹² MAFF APR, 2022. MoE APRs, 2021-2022.

²⁹³ WCS KSWs Benefit Sharing Manual, 2019.

²⁹⁴ RECOFTC Quarterly Reports, 2022.

²⁹⁵ RECOFTC/UNDP, Restoration in Stung Treng CPA Pursat, 2020-2021.

²⁹⁶ MoE, CPA Establishment Guideline, 2017. RECOFTC Quarterly Reports, 2022.

²⁹⁷ PaFF Operational Report, 2022. UNDP SGP Project End Report SFMTR+ Chrok La Eang, 2020.

²⁹⁸ World Bank, Enabling ecotourism development in Cambodia, 2020.

²⁹⁹ <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/432031595575149623/pdf/Enabling-Ecotourism-Development-in-Cambodia.pdf>

²⁹⁹ WA APR 2020 and 2021

Next steps to improve conformance:

To ensure continued and equitable enhancement of REDD+ co-benefits, the RGC will prioritize the following actions:

- Develop a national co-benefits monitoring framework, including indicators for ecological, climatic, and socio-cultural impacts, integrated into the SIS;
- Train REDD+ implementers on documenting and reporting socio-cultural and ecosystem service benefits;
- Promote broader integration of traditional knowledge, cultural values, and recognition of sacred sites into REDD+ planning, mapping, and monitoring activities, in collaboration with Indigenous communities;
- Facilitate inter-project learning to share successful models of co-benefit delivery, such as the community benefit-sharing systems used in Keo Seima and community patrol initiatives in the Southern Cardamom;
- Host annual REDD+ sharing events for all developing, active, or recently closed REDD+ projects as a platform for cross-learning.
- Strengthen reporting on REDD+ co-benefits as part of Cambodia's NDC implementation and international safeguard reporting obligations.

Safeguard F: Actions to address the risks of reversals are taken***Summary of context and actions taken to meet the safeguard***

The government recognizes that permanence of emissions reductions achieved through REDD+ must be safeguarded through targeted policies, planning, and on-the-ground measures. Reversals, also referred to as "non-permanence risks", may occur due to deforestation, degradation, natural disasters, or institutional instability. Key national frameworks, including the NRS, prioritize long-term forest protection and sustainable forest management, with risk assessment embedded in project design and national-level instruments such as the NFMS serving to detect early warning signs of reversals.

The government implemented multiple strategies to address risks of reversals and ensure permanence of REDD+ emissions reductions during 2018-2022. The government prioritized proactive measures including fire prevention, forest zoning, and reforestation activities to reduce future forest degradation risks.³⁰⁰ Restoration and capacity-building at the community level were used to reduce ecosystem degradation and enhance climate resilience.³⁰¹ Fire management plans were developed for high-risk dry forests in eastern provinces, incorporating community fire brigades and restoration protocols.

The NFMS was regularly updated with satellite and field data to detect deforestation and forest degradation, with early warning systems implemented in REDD+ zones to detect illegal forest clearing.³⁰² Regular forest monitoring was enhanced with upgraded logistics, including vehicles and tracking tools, improving enforcement response³⁰³. Integration of SMART into national law enforcement systems ensured continued monitoring and accountability.

³⁰⁰ MOE APR, 2018.

³⁰¹ MOE APR, 2020.

³⁰² MOE APR, 2019.

³⁰³ MOE APR, 2022.

The Department of Geospatial Information Services (DGIS) of MOE plays a crucial role in managing and operating a central portal for environmental geospatial data and managing the forest monitoring-related system to provide a reliable basis and geospatial information for decision-making, supporting environmental protection, natural resource management, biodiversity conservation, and sustainable development.

Government-supported site-based planning and co-management agreements improved long-term protection of forest areas.³⁰⁴ Evidence from patrol effectiveness studies showed that while patrols alone have limited deterrence, when combined with arrests and penalties, repeat logging drops significantly. Community patrols, SMART analysis, and ranger motivation strategies were identified as key to preventing reversals.

The government facilitated long-term sustainable finance mechanisms, including CF credit schemes and mini trust funds, which were established to incentivize protection and continuity in REDD+ outcomes.³⁰⁵ These mechanisms helped reduce the likelihood of abandonment or unsustainable practices that could reverse mitigation gains.

Several specific projects demonstrated effective reversal prevention measures. Examples included tree planting followed by multi-year maintenance and fire prevention plans, with patrolling against illegal logging. When seedling mortality occurred due to drought, replanting and continued community engagement addressed the issue³⁰⁶. Projects implemented community-based fire management plans, identifying fire-prone areas and creating firebreaks, patrolling systems, and replanting programs³⁰⁷. Projects included explicit mitigation measures such as buffer credit allocation, long-term community engagement, strengthened law enforcement, fire prevention plans, and biodiversity monitoring with climate risk assessments³⁰⁸.

Summary of any remaining issues and challenges

While substantial measures have been taken, several challenges remain in mitigating reversal risks. External threats to forest integrity, such as infrastructure development, land disputes/encroachment, and climate-induced events (e.g., wildfires), illegal logging operations, can pose risks beyond direct control of REDD+ projects. Limited enforcement capacity at local and provincial levels may constrain ability to prevent illegal activities that could compromise forest permanence.

The institutional mechanisms to address reversal risks at national level are still developing and not yet fully harmonized across ministries. As REDD+ scales up, there is need to ensure that risk management approaches are harmonized and well-coordinated across multiple implementers and jurisdictions. Long-term funding and policy stability are essential to sustain project operations and maintain forest protection measures beyond initial phases of implementation. Technical capacity and human resources of MRV technical team is limited. In need of technical expertise in utilizing and analysis of spatial data to produce high-quality and reliable data.

³⁰⁴ MOE APR, 2021.

³⁰⁵ RECOFTC, APR 2021.

³⁰⁶ RECOFTC/UNDP, Restoration in Stung Treng CPA Pursat, 2020-2021.

³⁰⁷ RECOFTC, Quarterly Reports, 2022.

³⁰⁸ NatureLife Cambodia Annual Report, 2022. BirdLife Cambodia Annual Report, 2021.

Next steps to improve conformance:

To further strengthen the long-term integrity of REDD+ emissions reductions and manage reversal risks, the RGC will prioritize the following actions:

- Strengthen national monitoring and early warning systems (fire, encroachment), including through the continued development of the NFMS and integration with REDD+ project-level data;
- Support the implementation of Cambodia's REDD+ Nested System, ensuring alignment of subnational and national strategies for carbon accounting, risk management, and policy coherence;
- Strengthen national inter-ministerial coordination to prevent competing land use decisions, especially in areas already designated for conservation;
- Enhance law enforcement collaboration and forest protection capacity, including by supporting community patrols, joint enforcement strategies, and better coordination among line ministries;
- Facilitate long-term sustainability planning, including diversified financing mechanisms, to ensure the durability of conservation outcomes and REDD+ investment results.

Safeguard G: actions to reduce the displacement of emissions are taken***Summary of context and actions taken to meet this safeguard***

The government acknowledges that REDD+ interventions must be designed and implemented to prevent unintended displacement of emissions, where forest protection in one area results in increased deforestation or degradation elsewhere. Through its Nested REDD+ System, Cambodia aims to integrate individual REDD+ projects within a national framework to ensure consistency of emissions accounting and coordination of efforts, enabling better monitoring of land-use dynamics at multiple scales.

The government implemented a progressive approach to reducing forest pressure through alternative livelihoods during 2018-2022. Community ecotourism, sustainable agriculture, and handicrafts were promoted to reduce reliance on forest extraction.³⁰⁹ NTFP-based livelihoods and agroforestry models were developed to provide economic alternatives.³¹⁰ Small-scale enterprises like honey production and eco-farming were launched in REDD+ landscapes.³¹¹ By 2022, livelihood training and micro-enterprise support were expanded to reduce the risk of leakage, particularly in protected area buffer zones.³¹²

Government-led land-use planning tools and buffer zone management minimized leakage risks. REDD+ safeguards assessments included leakage risk analysis, particularly around rubber and cashew expansion zones near protected areas³¹³. Cross-sectoral coordination mechanisms were reinforced under the REDD+ Taskforce Secretariat to integrate planning and reduce displacement risk³¹⁴. Over 50 Community Forest Management Plans (CFMPs) were integrated into Commune Investment Plans (CIPs) for clear forest-use zoning³¹⁵. National SMART expansion enabled real-time detection and mitigation through centralized command centres.

³⁰⁹ MOE APR, 2018.

³¹⁰ MOE APR, 2019.

³¹¹ MOE APR, 2020.

³¹² MOE APR, 2022.

³¹³ MOE APRs, 2019-2020.

³¹⁴ MOE APR, 2019.

³¹⁵ RECOFTC APR, 2020.

Summary of any remaining issues and gaps

While considerable progress has been made, several challenges remain. National-level tracking of displacement of emissions is still under development, with currently no standard system for aggregating leakage data across all REDD+ projects. The ongoing risk of encroachment, illegal logging, and land conversion in areas adjacent to REDD+ zones can undermine emissions reductions if not properly managed.

Cross-boundary land use pressures remain difficult to monitor and control, especially near provincial borders or in areas with overlapping jurisdiction. Limited livelihood alternatives in some forest-adjacent communities may contribute to the persistence of pressure on natural forests outside REDD+ project areas. As new REDD+ projects are initiated, there is a need to ensure that landscape-level coordination is maintained to minimize inter-project leakage.

Next steps to improve conformance:

To further reduce the risk of emissions displacement, the Royal Government of Cambodia will prioritize the following actions:

- Strengthen the design, analysis and evaluation of the REDD+ Nested System, including providing guidance on how to identify, account for, and address potential inter-project and jurisdictional leakage, as well as leakage from project to non-project areas;
- Promote sustainable livelihood and land-use alternatives in areas surrounding REDD+ projects to minimize the drivers of leakage and support community resilience in project and non-project areas;
- Enhance law enforcement collaboration and forest protection capacity.
- Enhance coordination between REDD+ implementers and subnational authorities to ensure consistent land-use planning, enforcement, and outreach efforts;
- Develop and implement consistent data collection protocols and methodologies for assessing and mitigating leakage across REDD+ projects and across the national jurisdiction, including development of national guidelines for leakage monitoring and response;
- REDD+ project implementers to engage with neighbouring jurisdictions and land users through integrated landscape planning to promote shared conservation objectives and limit external displacement pressures.

5. Cambodia's Safeguard Information System (SIS)

5.1 Scope and objectives of the SIS

The development of a SIS is one of the three safeguard-related requirements³¹⁶ outlined by the UNFCCC and is linked to the delivery of RBPs³¹⁷ from REDD+ PaMs.

From a UNFCCC perspective, the objective of an SIS is to provide accessible information to all relevant stakeholders. This demonstrates that the seven Cancun safeguards are being addressed and respected throughout REDD+ implementation.

The UNFCCC requires countries to submit the most recent Sol on how all the Cancun safeguards are being addressed and respected.³¹⁸ Cambodia intends to use the information compiled and managed by the SIS as the basis for preparing its future summaries for the UNFCCC. Additionally, noting that Cambodia seeks access to GCF RBPs, this information will also be used for reporting to the GCF.

An initial design and website for the SIS were developed in 2019.³¹⁹ However, the system was not operational or not used to gather regular information on REDD+ implementation from government agencies and partners. In 2025, updates are being made to address these issues. The Cambodia SIS website is accessible at: <https://cambodia-redd-safeguards.org/>

The SIS is structured around the Cancun safeguards and sub-elements, based on Cambodia's national interpretation outlined in Section 3. Safeguard reporting will be conducted using the indicators listed in Annex 1, which must be regularly completed by government agencies and partners implementing REDD+ activities. To facilitate this process, the SIS platform offers detailed guidance for each indicator, including suggested means of verification (MoVs) and monitoring and reporting arrangements. Importantly, the UNFCCC recognizes a country's NFMS³²⁰ as a relevant information source for the SIS and encourages synergies between the two systems. Accordingly, Cambodia will consider using its NFMS to provide quantitative data for the SIS, particularly for safeguards E, F, and G.

5.2 Institutional arrangements and functions on the SIS

The institutional arrangements for the SIS in Cambodia are based on the structure of the REDD+ programme (see section 2.4). The Safeguard Unit/RTS will host and operationalize the SIS, with implementers of REDD+ interventions reporting information directly to the RTS at the national level.

The core functions of the SIS in Cambodia are described below.

- 1. Collection of information.** This function refers to the process of collecting information/raw data on the ground and is linked to the monitoring and reporting responsibilities under the implementation of REDD+ PaMs. It was determined that the collection of information is to be carried out by the REDD+ implementers as a component of their monitoring and reporting responsibilities under the implementation of REDD+ PaMs.

³¹⁶ The other two being: 1) ensuring consistency of the REDD+ PAMs with the Cancun safeguards throughout the implementation of REDD+, and 2) the provision of a summary of information demonstrating how the safeguards have been addressed and respected to the UNFCCC.

³¹⁷ UNFCC Decision 2/CP. 17, paragraph 64

³¹⁸ UNFCC Decision 12/CP.17, paragraph 3 and Decision 9/CP.19, paragraph 4

³¹⁹ Cambodia's first Sol, 2019. https://redd.unfccc.int/media/6_cambodia_1st_summary_of_information_on_safeguards-final-oct-2019.pdf

³²⁰ UNFCC Decision 11/CP.19 paragraph 5

To be able to collect the necessary information for purposes of the SIS, REDD+ implementers will be required to log-in to the SIS database and report on each of the REDD+ safeguard indicators.³²¹ Information will be collected and reported every 12 months, allowing the NRS to analyse it and prepare a national annual report.

REDD+ implementers will collect information directly from their existing reports or activities. The database is organised per safeguard and sub-element (according to Cambodia's national interpretation outlined in section 3), with specific reporting indicators. Implementers will be required to explain results (qualitative reporting), provide statistics (quantitative), and upload means of verification.

- 2. Aggregation and repository of information.** This function refers to the process of aggregating the information from all PaMs at the national level through the SIS central database, with the purpose of being able to report on the application of the safeguards at the national level. The SIS database will provide options to compile information per implementer, per safeguard, per PaMs, which will facilitate the processing of information for the NRS.

The Safeguard Unit/RTS will be responsible for the aggregation of the information. This will involve a process of verification of data/quality assurance that has been collected and requesting any missing information from implementers.

- 3. Analysis of information.** The function of analysis aims to offer a qualitative and quantitative assessment of the information in order to determine to what extent the safeguards are being addressed and respected at the national level. The Safeguard Unit/RTS will analyse all information collected through the SIS database. The updated IT system will provide functionalities to process and organise information in various forms and structures.

Then, this function will consist in generating yearly reports on safeguard implementation. This yearly compiled data will then form the basis for the preparation of future SOIs, and/or reports to specific donors.

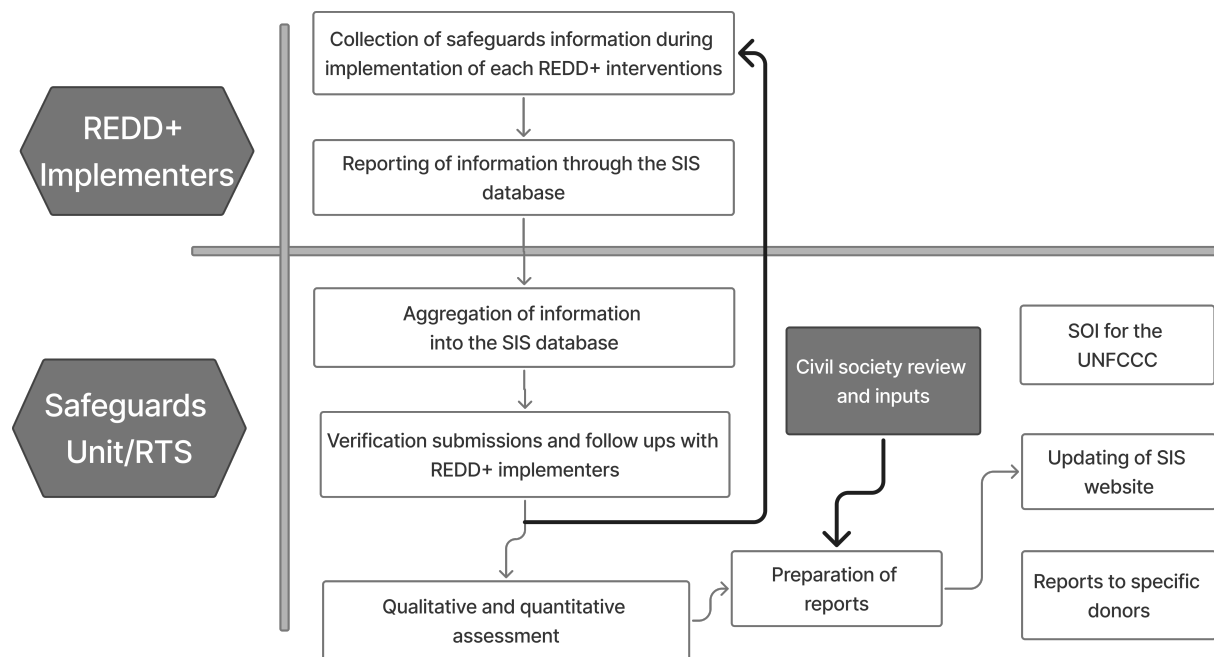
- 4. Dissemination of information.** This function refers to the process of disseminating the information through the SIS. Although UNFCCC guidance is not detailed in relation to this function, it requested that the SIS should: "provide transparent and consistent information that is accessible by all relevant stakeholders." For Cambodia, this means that there is an expectation that SIS information will be disseminated both internally (national level and sub-national) and externally (international reporting) through appropriate means (e.g., website, etc.).

At the national level, once the RTF/RTS endorses the final report, it will be published as a final version on the SIS website. Information and updates on the SIS website will be done frequently, and a national report will be published every year. The report will also be sent to the National Council for Sustainable Development (NCSD) to trigger the reporting to the UNFCCC for the preparation of the summary of information.

Cambodia has put in place appropriate institutional arrangements linked to each of these functions. Once the updated SIS is operational, the RTF/RTS, government agencies, and partners will be trained to access and use the database, to ensure relevant information is collected annually. Further information on the SIS will be made available on the SIS website.

³²¹Cambodia SIS website: <https://cambodia-redd-safeguards.org>

Diagram 1. Cambodia's SIS information flow



6. Conclusion

This Second Summary of Information has presented Cambodia's progress in addressing and respecting the Cancun Safeguards in the implementation of REDD+ interventions from 2018 to 2022. During this period, the government has demonstrated a commitment to integrating safeguards into its REDD+ policies, measures, and projects, while identifying areas that require continued attention and improvement.

One of the key developments has been the strengthening of Cambodia's policy and legal framework for REDD+. The adoption of the National REDD+ Strategy, its accompanying Action and Investment Plan, along with improvements to other REDD+ Warsaw Framework components and innovative tools such as the Guidelines on REDD+ Greenhouse Gas Mechanisms, has laid a solid foundation for integrating safeguard requirements into the national climate policy framework. These instruments provide both the strategic vision and practical guidance needed to embed safeguards into REDD+ implementation at all levels.

In parallel, the government has made meaningful progress in recognizing and formalizing community rights. The number of Community Protected Areas (CPAs) and Community Forests (CFs) has grown, contributing to increased legal recognition of local and Indigenous peoples' rights to manage forest resources. Local communities and Indigenous peoples have been actively engaged in REDD+ planning, implementation, and monitoring, reflecting a commitment to participatory governance. Progress in recognizing Indigenous Communal Land Titles (ICLTs) and in supporting initiatives that integrate traditional practices and knowledge into conservation work further reflects the government's commitment to safeguarding rights while strengthening forest stewardship.

At the same time, Cambodia has also piloted and refined several benefit-sharing mechanisms, tailoring approaches to the needs and capacities of different REDD+ sites. These include performance-based systems like those in Keo Seima, community-based financing models, and schemes that reinvest carbon revenues into locally identified development priorities. Collectively, these approaches are helping to ensure fair distribution of REDD+ benefits, contributing not only to climate mitigation but also to inclusive and sustainable development.

Progress is also evident in gender equality. Women now comprise nearly half of all members involved in Community-Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) structures and occupy roughly 30% of leadership positions in community forest governance bodies. This growing participation signals a positive shift toward more inclusive decision-making and benefit-sharing.

From a conservation perspective, REDD+ has supported the protection of Cambodia's natural forests and biodiversity. Monitoring data from REDD+ project sites show lower rates of deforestation compared to areas outside the REDD+ framework, suggesting that these initiatives are contributing to improved forest stewardship and ecological integrity.

Despite these achievements, Cambodia continues to face important challenges. Institutional capacity, particularly at subnational levels, remains a limiting factor, with insufficient technical expertise and financial resources hampering the effective implementation and monitoring of safeguards. The pace of formalizing land tenure—especially communal land titles for Indigenous communities—has been slow, leaving many communities without the legal security needed to engage in and benefit from REDD+ fully. Coordination among ministries and between national and subnational actors also requires improvement to ensure that safeguards are consistently applied.

Another important gap during the reported period is the full operationalization of the Safeguards

Information System (SIS). A functioning SIS is essential for tracking progress, reporting to stakeholders, and ensuring transparency in how safeguards are being addressed. In addition, inconsistencies in how safeguards are applied across REDD+ projects—particularly in the areas of Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) and grievance mechanisms—underscore the need for more standardized and harmonized approaches.

Looking ahead, Cambodia is focused on consolidating and expanding these achievements. Priority actions include fully operationalizing the SIS by 2025, enhancing monitoring and reporting, and strengthening the national grievance redress mechanism with clearer, standardized procedures across all REDD+ initiatives. Accelerating the Indigenous Communal Land Titling process while expanding the Community-based Forest Management, will be critical to ensuring tenure security, improving livelihood and equitable participation in REDD+.

Improved inter-ministerial coordination, ongoing capacity-building for government staff and local stakeholders, and further development of benefit-sharing mechanisms will also be central to the next phase of safeguard implementation. At the same time, the government aims to deepen the integration of gender considerations across all aspects of REDD+ planning and execution.

Through these efforts, the Royal Government of Cambodia reaffirms its commitment to implementing REDD+ in a manner that aligns with the Cancun Safeguards—protecting rights, promoting equity, and enhancing environmental integrity. Importantly, Cambodia intends to build on this progress by pursuing Results-Based Payments (RBP) from the GCF. By demonstrating that safeguards are not only being addressed but also strengthened, the country seeks to translate REDD+ achievements into tangible climate finance that will reinforce national climate action, sustain biodiversity, and improve the livelihoods of forest-dependent communities.

Annex 1 – SIS reporting indicators

The following indicators are integrated into the SIS platform and will be used for reporting. Additional guidance and MoVs for each are provided in the SIS platform.

Safeguard sub-elements	Reporting indicators
A.1 The REDD+ activities are consistent with the objectives of the national forest relevant policies	- Describe how the REDD+ activities align with national forest-related policies, plans, or sub-decrees - Provide examples of specific national policies or strategies supported by the REDD+ activities
A.2 The REDD+ activities are consistent with relevant and applicable international conventions and agreements	- Describe how REDD+ activities align with relevant international conventions and agreements ratified by the country - Provide examples of how REDD+ activities contribute to the objectives of these international instruments
B.1 Right to access information is promoted in the context of the implementation of the REDD+ activities	- Describe how information about the REDD+ activities was shared with stakeholders and communities - Provide examples of materials used and dates of outreach events
B.2 Accountability is guaranteed in the context of the implementation of the REDD+ activities	- Describe how the distribution of benefits (monetary and/or non-monetary) related to the implementation of the REDD+ activities (including results-based payments) has been carried out in a fair, transparent, and accountable manner - Provide examples of actions taken to ensure transparency, oversight, and answerability to stakeholders - Number of REDD+ activities monitoring reports publicly disclosed
B.3 Right to access justice is recognized and protected in the context of the implementation of the REDD+ activities	- Describe how access to justice/conflict resolution is ensured for stakeholders affected by REDD+ activities? - Provide examples of cases where stakeholders sought and obtained redress or resolution of complaints - Provide data/statistics on grievances received/resolved (number of grievances received, addressed, resolved)
B.4 User rights over forest land (particularly of IP and women) are recognized and protected in the context of the implementation of the REDD+ activities	- Describe how user rights over forest land were recognized, protected, and promoted during REDD+ activities - Provide examples of measures taken to strengthen land tenure security for Indigenous Peoples, women, and local communities - Number of complaints or documented conflicts relating to land or resources
B.5 Gender equality is promoted and ensured in the context of the implementation of the REDD+ activities	- Describe how gender equality considerations were integrated into the planning, implementation, and monitoring of REDD+ activities - Provide examples of specific measures taken to promote the participation, leadership, and benefit-sharing of women - Provide data/statistics on women participation in REDD+ activity (% of participation, % of beneficiaries, etc.).
B.6 Fair distribution of benefits is recognized and promoted in the context of the implementation of the REDD+ activities	- Describe how benefit-sharing arrangements were designed and implemented to ensure fairness and transparency - Provide examples of how different stakeholder groups, particularly Indigenous Peoples, women, and marginalized communities, accessed benefits from REDD+ activities - Number of beneficiary households, disaggregated by gender/IP status
C.1 The rights of original ethnic minorities, indigenous peoples and local communities are promoted and protected in the context of the application of the REDD+ activities	- Describe how the rights of Indigenous Peoples, original ethnic minorities, and local communities were recognized, respected, protected, and promoted during REDD+ activities - Provide examples of measures taken to uphold collective and individual rights, including rights to land, resources, culture, and participation - Number of FPIC processes conducted with IP/local communities
C.2 Traditional knowledge is recognized and protected in the	Describe how traditional knowledge relevant to forest management and conservation was recognized, respected, and integrated into REDD+ activities

context of the application of the REDD+ activities	• Provide examples of actions taken to protect traditional knowledge and ensure the rights of knowledge holders • Number of protocols or agreements protecting traditional knowledge
D.1 Relevant original ethnic minorities, indigenous peoples and local communities have the right to participate in the implementation of REDD+ activities	• Describe how Indigenous Peoples, original ethnic minorities, and local communities participated in the planning, implementation, and monitoring of REDD+ activities • Provide examples of mechanisms established to ensure their effective and meaningful participation • Number of meetings held, number of participants (organized according to categories of participant), and disaggregated by gender.
D. 2 Right to a Free, Prior and Informed Consent is recognized and protected in accordance with the relevant legal obligations.	• Describe how the right to Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) was respected and implemented for Indigenous Peoples, original ethnic minorities, and local communities in REDD+ activities • Provide examples of FPIC processes carried out and how consent or lack of consent was documented and respected • Number of FPIC processes completed in accordance with national/international standards
E.1 The conservation of natural forests and biological diversity is recognized and protected in the context of the implementation of REDD+ activities	• Describe how the conservation of natural forests and biological diversity was integrated into the planning, implementation, and monitoring of REDD+ activities • Provide examples of measures taken to avoid adverse impacts on natural forests and biodiversity • Hectares of natural forest protected/restored
E. 2. REDD+ activities will not incentivize the conversion of natural forests	• Describe how REDD+ activities were designed and implemented to avoid incentivizing the conversion of natural forests • Provide examples of safeguards or policies put in place to prevent the replacement of natural forests with plantations or other land uses • Spatial information on the REDD+ activity area forest cover before and after implementation • Number of detected land use violations involving conversion
E.3 Enhancement of ecological, biological, climatic, and socio-cultural benefits	• Describe how REDD+ activities have contributed to generating and enhancing multiple benefits beyond carbon (ecological, biological, climatic, socio-cultural) • Provide examples of co-benefits achieved or expected from the implementation of REDD+ activities • % of REDD+ beneficiaries reporting improvement in ecosystem or cultural services
F.1 Addressing risks of reversals is required by the REDD+ strategy	• Describe how the REDD+ activities identify and address the risks of reversals (i.e., loss of carbon benefits after emission reductions are achieved) • Provide examples of specific measures taken to mitigate or manage the risk of reversals • Number of tCO₂ reduced since REDD+ activity implementation
G.1 Addressing risks of displacement of emissions is required by the REDD+ strategy	• Describe how the REDD+ activities identify/incorporate and address the risks of displacement of emissions (i.e., shifting deforestation or degradation to other areas) • Provide examples of measures taken to minimize or prevent the displacement of emissions