

“Sustainable Financing for Climate Change through Community Forestry in the Prey Lang Landscape”

Photo: Aerial picture of O Taneung community forestry

Community forest (CF) is a legally recognized framework that aims to place local people at the center of decision-making processes and natural resource management in Cambodia. The Cambodia Climate Change Alliance - phase 3 (CCCA3) funded by the EU, Sweden, and UNDP, has been supporting the Regional Community Forestry Training Center for Asia and the Pacific (RECOFTC) to pilot an innovative approach, introducing climate change actions into a community forestry credit scheme (2020-2022). The scheme is used to generate capital for community forestry activities that contribute to climate change mitigation and adaptation, including forest restoration, patrolling, and financing sustainable livelihood activities of 10 CFs in Kampong Thom and Kratie Provinces.

The O Taneung community forest, one of the CFs supported by the RECOFTC covers 248 ha about 65 kilometers outside Kratie city in Northeast Cambodia. Local people manage the forest and harvest natural foods and medicines. The Ministry of Agriculture Forestry and Fishery (MAFF) recognized this community forest (CF) in 2012, and a 15-year agreement for a forest management plan was signed on 2015. Today, the community forest group has 245 members in Kbal Damrey Commune of the Sambo District in Kratie Province. the Sambo District in Kratie Province.

The Regional Community Forestry Training Center for Asia and the Pacific (RECOFTC) has been supporting the CF since the beginning. In 2018, O Taneung has also been making use of a community credit scheme, a scheme that members of community can borrow to serve their livelihoods purpose and pay back with interest which later will be used for community forest management.

Ray Seakla and others hope the growing capital pool from the credit scheme, and the money made on interest, can fund more activities in the management plan including the maintenance of the tree planting and refreshment for patrolling team monthly meetings.



Photo: Ray Seakla, member of the O Taneung community forestry

“We are optimistic on the future of our community.” Seakla said. “We have money, we can plan for more activities to manage our forest.”

Since 2018, O Taneung has been running a community credit scheme that members of the community can borrow from to serve their livelihoods purpose and pay back with interest, which is used for community forest management. With CCCA support, the scheme has been extended and climate change-related activities have been introduced in the management plan.

“Tuy Sophon, chief of the credit scheme in O Taneung community forest, said the fund has already expanded from US\$ 1,000 in 2018 to more than US\$5,000 and now serves 58 out of 250 families from the forest community.”



Photo: Tuy Sophon, Chief of the CF credit scheme, inspects O Taneung community forest

In July 2021, community generated income from interest in total amount of USD 69. Among that, USD 21 is used for implementing forest including patrolling and tree planting maintenance. As of now, he explained, the loans have mostly been to fund agricultural projects outside the forest, such as small investments of seed, fertilizer, and other materials used by the villagers.

Beyond this support to increasing CF credit capital, the project also successfully helped the O Taneung community to restore 10.8 ha of their community’s degraded forest area during the Covid-19 outbreak, contributing to climate change mitigation and adaptation for the local community.

In addition, this replanting activity also provided much needed cash-for-work support to reduce the impact of Covid-19 for community members who participated in the tree planting.

“We lost our job during Covid-19,” Mok Sithon, a member of the community said. “Joining with the project to plant trees can reduce the difficulty for us in some ways.”



Photo: Mok Sithon, member of the O Taneung community forestry, joins tree planting, June 2021

