

# “The Effectiveness of Learning Visit Approach in Protected Area Management and Development”

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Preah Sihanouk Province established the **Koh Rong and Koh Rong Samloem Archipelago as a Marine Fisheries Management Area (MFMA)** in 2016, with the support of the Fishery Administration and development partners giving an important positive sign in order to sustain the further development of Cambodia’s fishery sector. Recognizing the importance of fishery resources, and coastal and marine biodiversity, Preah Sihanouk has continued to work collaboratively with the Fishery Administration of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries funded by the Cambodia Climate Change Alliance (CCCA3) to establishment of **Prek Kampong Smach** as the second marine fisheries management area of Cambodia after Koh Rong and Koh Rong Samloem Archipelago. The support has been funded by CCCA3.



Landscape of Prek Kampong Smach captured by drone during the study visit on 19-20 October 2022.

Prek Kampong Smach “Veal Rinh Bay” is a unique area known of its because of its abundance of coastal resources such as mangrove forests, seagrass, coral, and fishery. The canal of Kampong Smach is also known as the main source of water in Prey Nob district, receiving its water from 16 small and large rivers, particularly the river that flows from Bokor Mountain into Veal Rinh Bay. Based on the studies conducted in the Kampong Smach, there are 39 species of mangrove, including 23 replanted species and 16 original species.

Prek Kampong Smach also has sea grass and mud-flats that are home to sea snails, mud-crabs, reptiles, and birds. The 88.32-kilometer-long saltwater dam, 36 sluice gates, and the 133-kilometer-long canal, divided into six sections or so-called (Polder), are located in nine communes in the Prey Nob district. There are eight fishery communities, with one Community of Project Area (CPA) actively involved in the area’s protection and management. These nine communities are joined by nine patrol teams made up of commune members (96 men and 13 women), as well as local authorities and the Fishery Administration Cantonment.

On 19-21 October, 2022, **Mr. Prak Visal**, Director of Public Relations and International Cooperation on behalf of Mr. Kong Vitanak, Deputy Governor of Preah Sihanouk Province led the delegation of 35 officers including district administration, fishery and patrol members to visit Prek Kampong Smach. During the study visit, the participants learned about procedures, institutions, management mechanisms, and implementation of the protected and eco-tourism community areas.

The study visit aimed at providing the coastal communities and stakeholders with knowledge of protected area management, sharing experiences and telling about opportunities. During the visit, the delegation gained practical experiences from the practitioners involved. The learning visit included a meeting with the Deputy Governor of Peam Krasop District, a visit to the mangrove forest, a trail walk, to the bird watching tower, and a briefing about turtle breeding, hatching, raising. The presentation was given on how to inspire and encourage the



establishment of conservation, community, and eco-tourism areas.

After the study visit, community members told that this visit had inspired them to get involved in Kampong Smach project management, involved in particularly patrolling activities. They had compared two potential areas (Prek Kampong Smach and Peam Krasop) and discovered that the Kampong Smach mangrove forest has a lot of potential, but it requires management capacity and regular patrols to be involved. They mentioned that they had realized the need of protection in the area to ensure climate resilience, address environmental issues, and fishery management, and in order to promote local livelihood in this area. They told that according to the lessons learned from Peam Krasop, community involvement is the resource owner and is important in ensuring sustainable management of these resources.

As a summary, the local authorities, organizations, and stakeholders play an important role in providing technical assistance, leading, coordinating, and fundraising support needed in the communities, as well as building community capacity to implement priority activities to ensure sustainable management of the natural resources.



*A group of ladies, deshelling dried shrimp for selling in their local market.*

By the end of the visit, the participants had returned to their respective duties. In addition to that, a community members revealed that this

visit inspired them to get involved and participate in Kampong Smach project management, particularly in patrolling activities. They compared the potential of the two areas (Prek Kampong Smach and Peam Krasop) and discovered that the Kampong Smach mangrove forest has a lot of potential, but it requires more management capacity and regular patrols. They realized that they needed to protect this area indefinitely in order to ensure climate resilience, environmental issues, and the promotion of other sectors in this area. From what they have seen in Peam Krasop, they understand that they are an owner of a resource, thus they have to play an important role in management and used these resources in a sustainable way.

As well as this, local authorities, relevant organizations, and stakeholders will play an important role in providing technical assistance, leading, coordination, and fundraising to support the community, as well as building community capacity to implement priority activities in this area to ensure the sustainable management.



*A group of Beoung Reang Cfi members are fishing on their boat.*

One of our participants, Ms. Sin Sinsoeat, expressed her opinion that the visit provided a thorough understanding of the function of biodiversity conservation, and that mangroves play an important role in leading to ecosystem and ecotourism benefits. Secondly, in Peam Krasaop Wildlife Sanctuary has shown her a visual in relation to sources more than she had heard.

In comparison to Kampong Smach, she appreciated the resources as well as the local community's







commitment to natural resource management, particularly the participation of women in resource management.

*As a young woman, I am eager to participate in and contribute to the Kampong Smach MFMA in order to promote mangrove and fishery management in this area and ensure resource sustainability.*

Ms. Sin Socheata, one of the participant (on the left) has shared her opinion during the visit.

*“I really enjoy life in Kampong Smach, with nature and my job. I understand that we need to protect the mangrove forest in this area because mangrove area a habitat of all species that provide food for community. People can also earn from those produce including blood cackle, mud crab and other fishes.”*



Mr. Ry Rean, 57 years old, a Committe of Beoung Reang Community Fishery, shared his expression on how he and his Cfi members' living by relying on small scale fishing.

Mr. Peng Saodu, Vice Governor of Prey Nob District, shared his perspective in Kampong Smach following his visit. He appreciates the effort made by the local government to pay attention to Peam Krasop; it must have taken some time, of course. He fully supports Kampong Smach's MFMA activities as a local authority leader. Personally, he is the recipient of the benefit of mangrove resources, and we must all work together to achieve this single goal.



Mr. Peng Saodu, Vice Governor of Prey Nob District, standing in the front second left shared his perspective during his visit.

*I will encourage our commune's leader to participate in project implementation; however, public awareness among local communities must be conducted on a regular basis.*