

# The CURRENT STATUS of PREY LANG

Monitoring information from PLCN patrolling  
April 2015



On behalf of Prey Lang Community Network (PLCN)

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# Community monitoring of Prey Lang forest, Cambodia

Documentation of biodiversity, natural resources and  
illegal logging activities using smart-phones

The report provides an overview of data collected by local monitors in  
the period 1<sup>st</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> of April 2015, in Prey Lang forest, Cambodia.

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## **1. Introduction**

Prey Lang Forest complex is situated in the northern part of Cambodia stretching four provinces, Kratie, Stung Treng, Kampong Thom and Preah Vihear. The forest is of high importance to the local economies and households in Prey Lang and for the broader Cambodian public. More than 250.000 people live in 340 villages in or within 10 kilometres of Prey Lang. The forest is an intricate part of the communities' culture and spiritual life and they depend on it for their survival. The forest has numerous uses, such as cash-income for the locals (resin trees), food supply, house construction, watershed, carbon stock and is a forest of high biological value. Over the last 20 years, land grabbing has emerged as a major threat to the forest and rural livelihoods in the area (see annex 1).

Illegal logging and forest destruction has intensified over the past decades. According to Open Development Cambodia the forest covered 72 % of the country's territory in 1970, while in 2014 the forest cover has reduced to 48 %, including plantations. Moreover, conflicts has emerged between the affected local communities and the authorities as well as within communities between local citizens engaged in forest protection and citizens involved in illegal logging. Prey Lang is an important economic resource and if it is managed in a sustainable way it will be of considerable benefit to the country and contribute to national development.

### **1.1 Prey Lang Community Network (PLCN)**

Prey Lang Community Network (PLCN) is a local movement that began advocating for the protection and conservation of Prey Lang forest in the early 2000s. PLCN consist of representatives from the four provinces that stretch the Prey Lang landscape.

### **1.2 Objectives**

The present report is directed to the Prey Lang communities, the local monitors and the broader Cambodian public. It presents an analysis of the data that has been collected in Prey Lang by local PLCN monitors. The data is collected with a smartphone application. 35 smartphones, all equipped with the purposely designed application, have been divided between PLCN members living in the four provinces Kratie, Stung Treng, Preah Vihear and Kampong Thom. The PLCN monitors were given the smartphones on the 4<sup>th</sup> of February 2015 after receiving trainings on the use of the application.

The overall aim with the present report is to analyse data collected on one large patrol carried out the *1<sup>st</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> of April 2015*.

The purpose of this first report is to:

- i) Show PLCN, local monitors and the broader Cambodian public the results of the data collection.
- ii) Show how the smartphone application can support and strengthen the work that PLCN are already doing in Prey Lang.
- iii) To inform the Cambodian government, the broader Cambodian public and communities in Prey Lang about the current status of Prey Lang and the threats it faces, to help inform future management decisions.

Over the coming year, as more data is gathered, we intend to publish regular reports based on the information collected by PLCN, to create a public record of the current status of Prey Lang, regarding biodiversity, natural resources, and illegal activities.

### **1.3 Acknowledgements**

We (PLCN) would like to express our sincere thanks to the monitors who have collected data in Prey Lang forest in order to make the present report. We would also like to thank all project partners and donors for their support in order to help us in our work and effort to protect the remaining forest of Prey Lang area.

## **2. Methodology**

This project has provided PLCN members, community monitors and local villagers with knowledge and ICT tools to undertake community based monitoring of Prey Lang.

### *Community based monitoring*

Despite previous work done by PLCN on patrolling Prey Lang forest, PLCN has identified a need for more systematic data collection to give a more complete picture of the effects of the pressures on the forest regarding both



the biodiversity and the local livelihoods. The smartphone application will ensure that systematic and well-documented monitoring is conducted on these issues.

An important parameter has been to ensure long-term ownership that will support sustainable monitoring and patrolling independent of donor funding. Therefore emphasis has been on participation of community monitors and the building of their capacity. The compilation of data will take place on forest patrols as well as individual day-to-day collection.

### **3. The Prey Lang smartphone application**

35 monitors from PLCN will compile data with a smartphone application. The data collection officially began the 4<sup>th</sup> of February 2015 and is expected to be developed and expanded in the coming years. The smartphone application is able to register three main variables with further under-categorisation. Accordingly, “*Activities*”, “*Resources*” and “*Reporting*”:

- The variable *Activities* refers to extraction activities happening in the Prey Lang area. Such as, logging activities in Prey Lang area, illegal hunting and illegal fishing.
- The variable *Resources* refers to natural or cultural resources and sites found in the Prey Lang area. This includes resin trees, NTFP’s, and high value timber species threatened by logging. Additionally, information on wildlife is also collected at an ad-hoc basis.
- The variable *Reporting* refers to any interaction with authorities regarding Prey Lang. Furthermore, this attribute is used when monitors submit reports and complaints to local authorities and forest administrations.

The collected data is uploaded to a database and handled by database managers. GPS-coordinates and photos substantiate all data. Moreover, audio files are frequently added to the data point in order to include important information to the collected data.

We offer to provide documentation to anyone who wishes to investigate the correctness of our claims, but reserved the right to protect the identities of individual informants and specific locations of important natural resources.

## 4. Results

### 4.1 The ID of the results

As mentioned before, the data presented in the present report is compiled during a large patrol in Prey Lang on the 1<sup>st</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> of April in each of four provinces separately. In figure 1 the respective reported observations cases from each province are noted. These six days of patrolling resulted in 1145 separate entries of which 157 have been validated and used for the analysis (a validation rate of 13.7%). The primary reason for denied validation has been technical; information from the entries, especially photos, has not been uploaded in a timely fashion. These issues have been addressed in recent application update, and we expect to run a much higher validation rate in future publications.

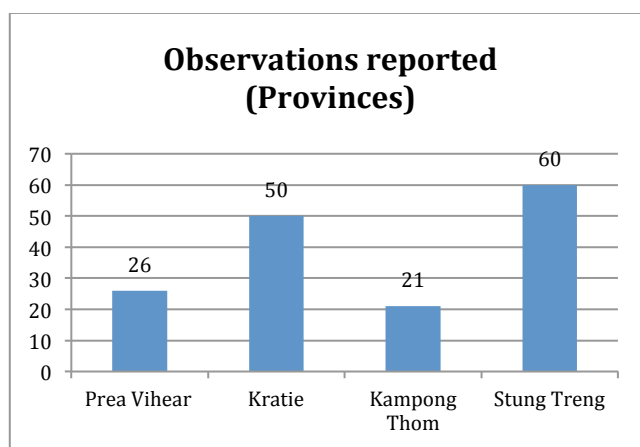


Figure 1: Observations in each province

#### 4.1.1 General findings

General findings are summarized in figure 2 below. The figure shows the four categories that the PLCN monitors documented on the patrol in April. The majority were *activities* (74%), which were followed by a smaller amount of *natural resources* (15%), *reporting* (1 %) and *other* (10 %). The high percentage of *activities* is in line with the aim of the April patrol; to monitor illegal logging activities in Prey Lang area. The monitoring data collected

before and after the April patrol contains more information on *natural resources*, and so future reports will feature more extensive information on existing natural resources. The category *other* (10%) contains mostly patrol photos and transportation of PLCN members (Photo 1), but also photos that show chainsaws confiscated by PLCN during the patrol.

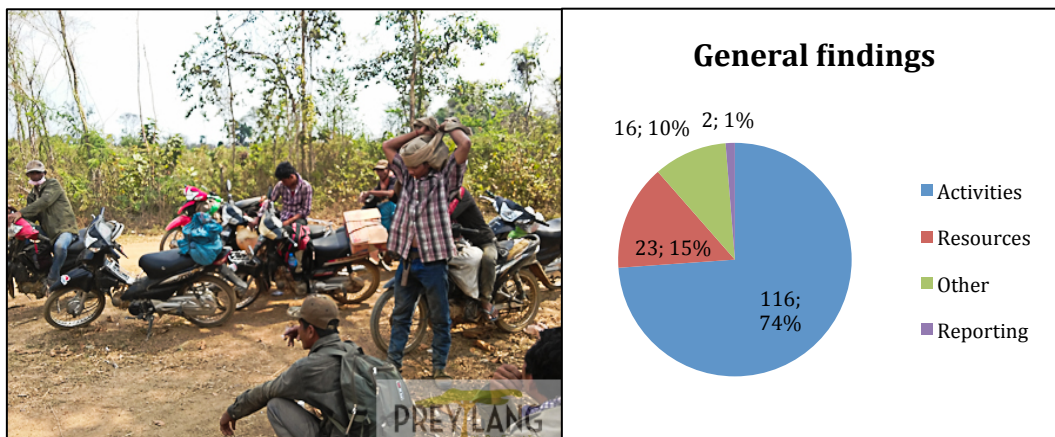


Photo 1: PLCN members getting prepared to patrol

Figure 2: General findings

There were two cases of reporting interaction with the authorities, accordingly one positive and one negative. The positive interaction with the authorities is recorded on audio, which says:

*"On April 7th at 11:00 am, PLCN has submitted 6 confiscated chainsaws to the Forest Administration (FA) on a district level."* (Photo 2)



Photo 2: PLCN members with 6 confiscated chainsaws.

The case of the negative interaction, describes an interaction between Commune authorities, the police and the PLCN members. The Commune authorities called PLCN members in order to testify PLCNs taking part in burning 9 chainsaws. The PLCN monitors considered this event as a threat towards the communities (Photo 3).



Photo 3: PLCN members testifying to authorities.

As we can see in figure 3 under *resources*, the PLCN monitors mostly collected data on resin trees (20 observations). This is expected because of the high importance of resin for the livelihoods of the Prey Lang communities (Photo 4). There were two observations of reporting sacred places (Photo 5) as well as one observation of reporting two gibbons spotted by sound by PLCN monitors. No NTFPs other than resin trees were recorded on the April patrol.

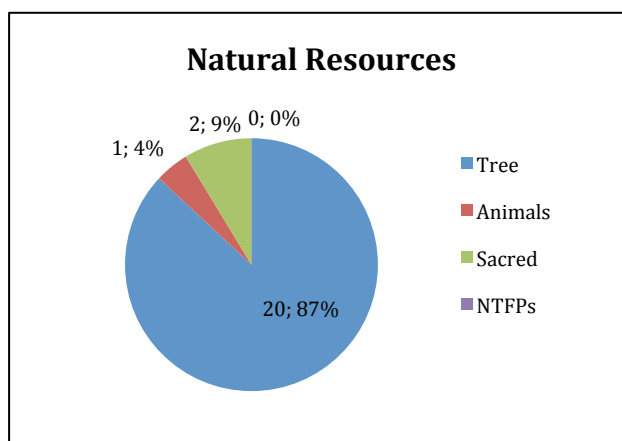


Figure 3: Natural resources reported





*Photo 4: Resin tree reported*



*Photo 5: PLCN members reporting sacred places in a ceremony before patrolling. Photo is taken outside April patrol.*

Figure 4 shows the recorded entries categorized under *activities* (117 cases in total). A large percentage of the activities were logging stumps, both single stumps and cleared areas (80 cases in total). Transportation of illegally logged wood represents 22 cases. Registration of illegal loggers represents 14 cases. Additionally, there was one case of PLCN monitors encountering a mining concession.

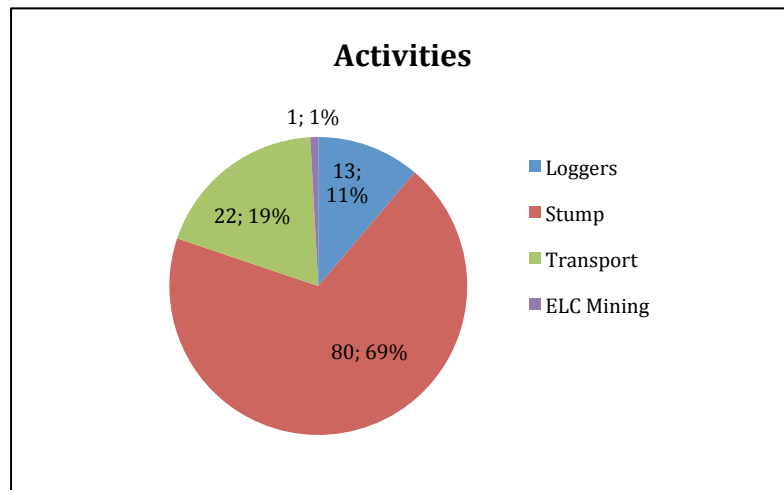


Figure 4: Reporting of activities.

## 4.2 Specific cases

In this section we will present specific examples from the entries in the dataset, to give a fuller picture of the events being reported on. This will be done as a series of cases.

### 4.2.1 Case 1

On the 4<sup>th</sup> of April, PLCN monitors confronted four ox carts with wood in O Chhnour, Kampong Thom province. After asking questions to the owner of the ox carts, the owner told that the logged wood belonged to an army general of Sandan district. According to the driver, the logged wood was going to be used for construction of an office (Photo 6).





Photo 6: Ox carts transporting wood belonging to Mr. Thea.

The PLCN monitors made an agreement with the ox cart owner not to cut more trees, an agreement, which the ox cart owner signed. This is a common practice by PLCN when they meet locals who participate in illegal logging. (Photo 7-8)

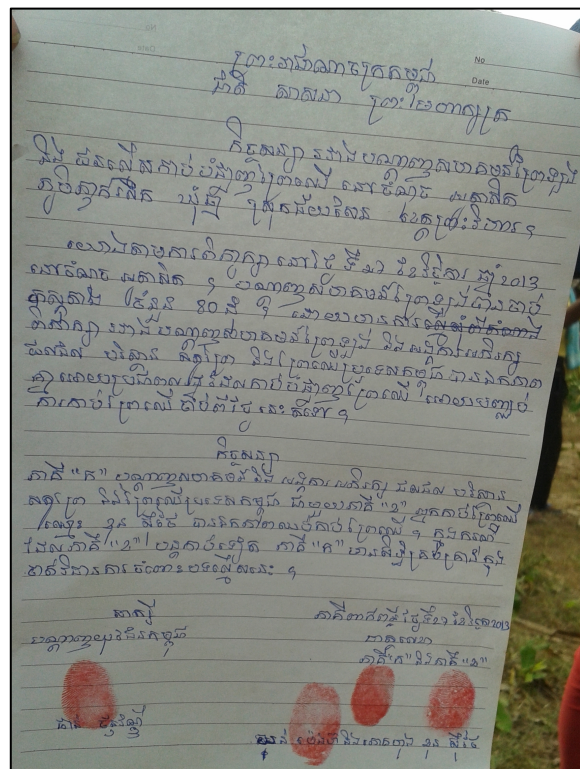


Photo 7: Example of agreement signed with illegal loggers. Photo taken outside the dates of the April patrol.



Photo 8: Women showing signed agreement. Photo taken outside the dates of the April patrol.

Ox carts are not the most common way of transporting illegal logs. As shown in figure 5, there were 13 cases of transporting illegal logs with a local tractor, (goh yun in Cambodian, a sort of ploughing machine), 4 cases with ox carts, 4 cases with a small truck and only 1 case with a big truck.

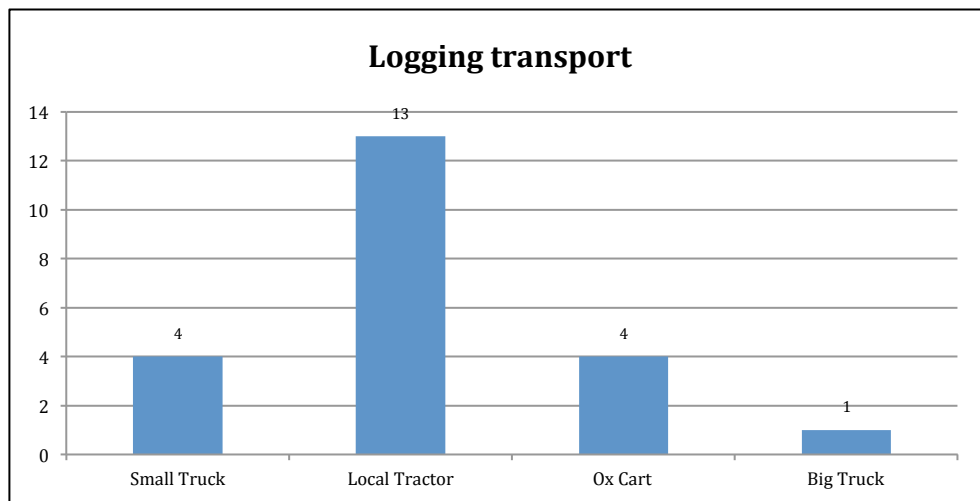


Figure 5: Reported means of transport of illegally logged wood.

Timber, even if cut with a valid permit, can be considered illegal if no permit is carried, as stipulated in the forestry law of the Kingdom of Cambodia. In a

similar case on April 2<sup>nd</sup> PLCN monitors confronted a local tractor (goh yun) transporting logs in Kbal O Theokthla village (Kampong Thom province). The driver of the machine stated that the logs belonged to the son of the Sandan district governor and is going to be used to construct a police station. This case is reported through audio by a PLCN monitor. Likewise the PLCN monitors signed an agreement with the driver to stop illegal logging, even though no written permit was presented.

#### 4.2.2 Case 2

On the 4<sup>th</sup> of April PLCN monitors reported clearance of a large forest area near Krohoum Mountain north of Chhey Mountain in Kratie. The clearance was purposed for farming. The cleared forest area covered approximately 100 hectares (Photo 9).



*Photo 9: Reported area that has been cleared.*

Photo 9 represents a characteristic example of a cleared area and likewise represents the majority of the findings of the PLCN monitors, accordingly 54 of the 80 stump cases. This is stated in figure 6. The cases registered as *single stumps* (Photo 10-11) are usually trees logged by illegal loggers and represents trees of high economical value, for example Rosewood, Beng etc. Whereas cases reported as *cleared areas* are usually aimed for plantations or land cultivation (Photo 12-14).



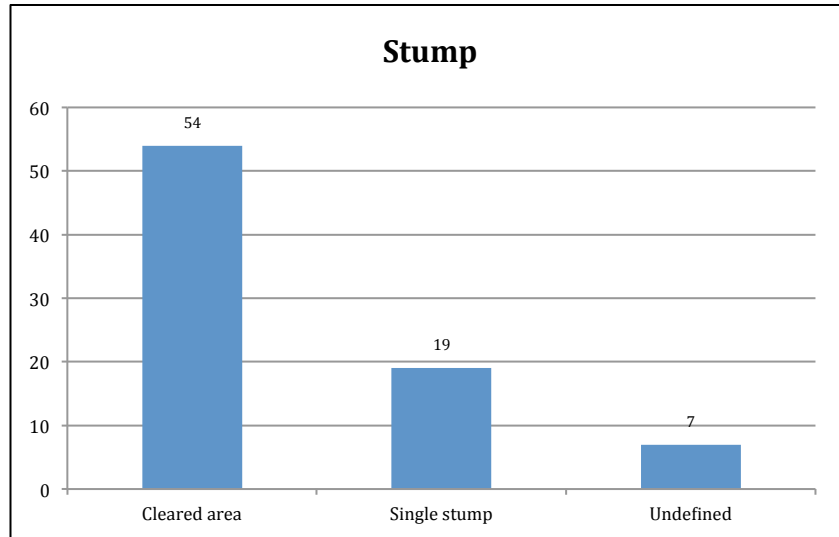


Figure 6: Reported stump categories.



Photo 10: Reporting single stump



*Photo 11: ELC boundary marker*



*Photo 12: Reporting area that is cleared.*





*Photo 13: Reporting area that is cleared.*



*Photo 14: Reporting area that is cleared.*

### **4.2.3 Case 3**

On the 5<sup>th</sup> of April PLCN monitors reported an interaction with illegal loggers who were cutting planks out of a logged tree (Photo 15). In the majority of



the cases where PLCN monitors report illegal loggers, there is an interaction with the loggers, accordingly 9 out of the 13 cases of interaction, see figure 6.



*Photo 15: PLCN members having an interaction with illegal loggers.*

## **5. Recommendations**

We hope that the present report will draw more attention to the last large intact lowland evergreen rainforest in Indochina and to its economic importance for the communities living in and around Prey Lang forest and the Cambodian public. We (PLCN) would like to express our great interest in working with the Royal Government of Cambodia in order to protect the future of Prey. To reiterate the joint statement of 26<sup>th</sup> of May 2015, to which we (the Prey Lang Community Network) are signatories (annex 2).

We do not object to development, but would like to request that proper legal procedures be followed, equity of development projects be assured, and environmental and social impacts be minimized.

We, therefore, would like to submit the following requests to Government, MAFF and FA:

1. Take measures and intervene immediately to prevent forestry offences in the Prey Lang forestry areas.

2. Intervene to have the draft Sub-Decree on Prey Lang Forestry Protected and Biodiversity Areas be disclosed for public consultations with the Prey Lang communities and other stakeholders.
3. Include the Prey Lang Community Networks in the four provinces as Prey Lang Joint Management areas by recognizing and legalizing through inserting the rights and roles of Prey Lang Community Networks in the Sub-Decree on Establishment of “Prey Lang” Forestry Protected and Biodiversity Conservation Areas.
4. Intervene to government officials at all levels to carry out investigation at the Prey Lang areas and ensure effective enforcement of laws related to the forestry sector, environmental impact assessment, granting of social land concessions, and illegal land grabbing by migrants.
5. Take legal actions against those officials and local authorities involved in timber business and illegal logging in Prey Lang areas.
6. Stop all forms of intimidation from the court and armed forces against Prey Lang forestry activists.
7. Preserve the Prey Lang areas as an academic and research zone for training of human resources in enhancing the environment, natural resources and eco-tourism.
8. Review the use of saw machines to ensure compliance with legal requirements as stipulated under Article 70, Chapter 13, Forestry Law, on Measures Governing Forestry Activities. If the governing is not effective, please suspend or stop imports of saw machines into Cambodia.

## 6. Annexes

### 6.1 Annex (1) – Baseline Study

A baseline survey was carried out in Prey Lang area in 2014 by CPN consultant in collaboration with local informants from the four provinces that stretch the Prey Lang landscape. The data was collected through interviews and focus group discussions. Furthermore, relevant documents from local authorities, village leaders and NGOs have been collected in order to contribute to the present baseline survey. The baseline survey encompasses data on demographics, human and natural resources and identification of key challenges related to natural resources. It constitutes an accurate current picture of the threats to Prey Lang and its' importance to the local livelihoods.

#### *Main findings*

The baseline survey was carried out in 69 villages, 14 communes and 7 districts across Kratie, Stung Treng, Preah Vihear and Kampong Thom province. The main conclusions from the baseline study are listed below:

- The main occupation in Prey Lang area is farming, resin collection, NTFP collection and fishing. An increasing number leave Prey Lang area in order to get cash-income.
- Communities are facing mining, illegal logging, logging concessions, migration and illegal fishery.
- Villagers cannot afford and do not have enough time to go patrol the forest with the PLCN, because they need to take care of their families.
- There is a lack of participation and engagement from provincial and local authorities as well as the forest administration (FA) regarding protection of natural resources in Prey Lang.
- No participation is offered to the local communities in managing Prey Lang, in spite of a wish to engage.
- Up to the baseline survey in 2014, there were 33 private companies with economic land concessions (ELCs) operating in Prey Lang. It is companies working with agro-industry (plantations). These companies create conflicts with the local communities.
- The biggest companies are *CRCK* in Kampong Thom, *PNT* company in Preah Vihear and *Chhun Hong Rubber* and *Think Biotic Co.ltd.* in Kratie. There are 5 mining companies in Prey Lang in Preah Vihear province.

- Community forests are not well protected and are currently facing logging problems.
- Labour companies hunt wildlife with guns and electrical traps and sell them on the markets. Especially monkeys. (Illegal hunting)
- Local communities wish to manage the forest through traditional methods.
- Resin trees are a major part of the local economies
- Resin trees are lost every day. In the present study, there were 17.010 lost among the 483.756 that are tapped from in Prey Lang.
- Increasing migration issues.
- Since 2007 150-250 migrant families moved to Preah Vihear. In Kampong Thom it is 150-300 families since 2005. In Stung Treng and Kratie 200-300 families since 2007.
- Immigrants created conflicts in local communities because of robberies, harassment, immorality and destruction of natural resources.
- Most of the families are migrants from Kampong Cham, Kandal, Prey Veng and Svany Reang provinces. They create problems for local people who protect land and forests. Some reported that migrants are hired by companies to slash and clear forest for land plantation. And some reported that migrants are hired by companies to cut down luxury wood.
- Communities in Prey Lang area are facing increasing poverty issues, because of decreasing occupation options. More people are selling trees to logging companies because they have no choice.
- Remote and isolated communities have high cost of traveling to attend at community gatherings/trainings. Lack of communication to remote villages (limited network coverage). These communities get excluded from patrol events and NGO trainings etc.
- Only more expensive phone companies have antennas in Prey Lang. This makes it harder to communicate in between villages and NGOs.
- It was reported that local authorities and the FA do not support Prey Lang communities. Also, the police are supporting illegal loggers and often corruption occurs.
- ELCs and mining companies cause forest degradations, loss of land, loss of rural livelihood and loss of income.
- PLCN communities would like to strengthen the capacity of local government in order to recognize and respect traditional

management and use of natural resources and respect the communities' property that they rely on for their livelihoods.

- The communities wish to encourage the local government to uphold and support traditional job and income practices/possibilities.
- The communities also wish to implement a community investment plan (CIP) to protect Prey Lang. The CIP should encompass patrolling events, biodiversity studies, NTFP studies, a monitoring plan through consultation and participation of Prey Lang communities.

## **6.2 Annex (2) – The Joint Statement**

### **KINGDOM OF CAMBODIA NATION RELIGION KING**

Phnom Penh, 26 May 2015

#### **JOINT STATEMENT A MARCH TOWARDS THE DISASTER OF PREY LANG**

We, monks; Prey Lang Community Networks; students; youth networks; Indigenous Peoples and Forestry Network (IPFN); and civil society organizations (CSOs), are gravely concerned over the status of intense destruction of the Prey Lang forest during the last few years, which march towards the disaster of Prey Lang forest in the near future.

Although the Royal Government of the Kingdom of Cambodia has adopted the Forestry Law, the Law on Environmental Protection and Natural Resource Management and other important regulations to protect forestry, natural resources and the environment. However, illegal logging activities have continued along with logging under the disguise of granting of economic land concessions, mining concessions, social concessions, and forestry concessions. These concessions have been seriously threatening Cambodia's forestry, in particular, the Prey Lang, the last lowland forest of Cambodia and in the Indochina subcontinent.

For the past 10 years, Prey Lang has been destroyed and cleared by concession companies and exploration activities of mining companies in the area. Hundreds of thousands of hectares of jungles have been cleared and replaced with rubber trees, tapioca, and mining of metal and other materials. A commune-level quantitative research report of the Prey Lang Community Networks published in April 2015 suggests that in 33 communes within Prey Lang forest and other communes bordering the 33 communes there are 53 concession companies in total, which have been operating in the area as of end 2013. The total concession land areas include 234,784.08 ha of economic land concessions, 264,693.23 ha of mining concessions, 932,434.20 ha of forestry concessions and 4,000.00 ha of social land concessions.

At present, besides land concession projects, we have found that loggings of forest for business and clearance of forested land for private ownership are increasing significantly. In this regard, communities claim that some government officials and local authorities have been involved. To date, tens of thousands of cubic meters of logs have been transported out of Prey Lang, hundreds of thousands of community resin trees have been felled, and hundreds of thousands of hectares of forested land have been cleared into deserts in a rampant manner without any or little control by technical officials and relevant authorities. Seeing such disaster occurring to Prey Lang, communities have been trying to protect it and prevent forestry offences and illegal encroachment, but in return they have been subjected to killing and/or intimidation from perpetrators, technical officials, and local authorities.

For many years now, the Prey Lang Community Networks, youths, and CSO networks have submitted petitions, complaints, and request for intervention to the Royal Government and technical agencies for establishment of a Prey Lang forestry protection legal mechanism, collaboration and cooperation to protect and jointly manage the forest in a sustainable manner. For instance, on 27 April 2015, 34 Prey Lang representatives submitted a petition to seek interventions from the National Assembly, Government agencies, and the two major political parties with seats at the National Assembly, but as of now, there has been no response.

We, monks; Prey Lang Community Networks; students; youth networks; Indigenous Peoples and Forestry Network (IPFN); and civil society organizations (CSOs), are seriously worried about the losses of forestry, forested land, biodiversity and aquatic resources in the near future if no timely interventions are made. This would affect the forestry coverage restoration program, the carbon credit program, and in particular, the maintenance of water equilibrium and water supply to the Tonle Sap during rainy seasons, leading to underground water imbalance. If the Prey Lang forest disappeared, what would happen to the Tonle Sap, Cambodia's heart? Moreover, this would affect or cause losses of wildlife habitats, fish spawning grounds, and occupations of tens of thousands of community people and households who depend on forestry products, non-timber forestry products, fisheries, and especially, water source for agriculture and daily consumption for the people around the area. The loss of Prey Lang forest, in particular, would affect 1.5 million of fishing people who are benefitting directly from the Tonle Sap.<sup>1</sup>

We do not object to development, but would like to request that proper legal procedures be followed, equity of development projects be assured, and environmental and social impacts be minimized.

We, therefore, would like to submit the following requests to Government, MAFF, and FA:

1. Take measures and intervene immediately to prevent forestry offences in the Prey Lang forestry areas.
2. Intervene to have the draft Sub-Decree on Prey Lang Forestry Protected and Biodiversity Areas be disclosed for public consultations with the Prey Lang communities and other stakeholders.
3. Include the Prey Lang Community Networks in the four provinces as Prey Lang Joint Management areas by recognizing and legalizing through inserting the rights and roles of Prey Lang Community Networks in the Sub-



Decree on Establishment of “Prey Lang” Forestry Protected and Biodiversity Conservation Areas.

4. Intervene to government officials at all levels to carry out investigation at the Prey Lang areas and ensure effective enforcement of laws related to the forestry sector, environmental impact assessment, granting of social land concessions, and illegal land grabbing by migrants.
5. Take legal actions against those officials and local authorities involved in timber business and illegal logging in Prey Lang areas.
6. Stop all forms of intimidation from the court and armed forces against Prey Lang forestry activists.
7. Preserve the Prey Lang areas as an academic and research zone for training of human resources in enhancing the environment, natural resources and eco-tourism.
8. Review the use of saw machines to ensure compliance with legal requirements as stipulated under Article 70, Chapter 13, Forestry Law, on Measures Governing Forestry Activities. If the governing is not effective, please suspend or stop imports of saw machines into Cambodia.

### 6.3 Annex (3) - Uploaded pictures



*Photo 18: Reporting of cleared area.*



*Photo 19: PLCN members inspecting illegally logged wood.*





*Photo 20: Reporting interaction with illegal loggers.*



*Photo 21: Reporting of cleared area.*