The CURRENT STATUS of PREY LANG

Monitoring information from PLCN patrolling
April - July 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 smartphones

This report provides an overview of data collected by local monitors in the period 8th of April - 19th of July 2015, in Prey Lang forest, Cambodia.

Table of Contents

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 a 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 4th of February 2015 after receiving trainings on the use of the application.

This report is a part of a series of reports that will be written based on the monitoring of PLCN. The present report constitutes the second of its kind. The overall aim with the report is to analyse data collected in the period *8th April – 19th July 2015.*

The purpose of this 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 4th 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 <u>*Activities*</u> 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 <u>*Resources*</u> 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 <u>*Reporting*</u> 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.

Improvements of the application and database that rectifies some of the current usage challenges will be incorporated after the period that this report covers. The following reports will thus be based on a slightly different and more efficient system of data than this report.

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

The data in this report present the data collected after the big patrol in April and before the improvements of the smart phone application in July (8th of April – 19th of July 2015). Figure 1 shows the distribution of valid entries from the four provinces. This given period of patrolling resulted in 2509 separate entries of which 210 have been validated and used for the analysis (a validation rate of 8,4%). There are two main reasons for the entries not being valid: 1) technical issues including information from the entries, especially photos, have not been uploaded to the database. 2) User problems including not completing the entries correctly and to do several entries for the same incident.

These issues have been addressed through recent application update and through continuous evaluation and training of the monitors.
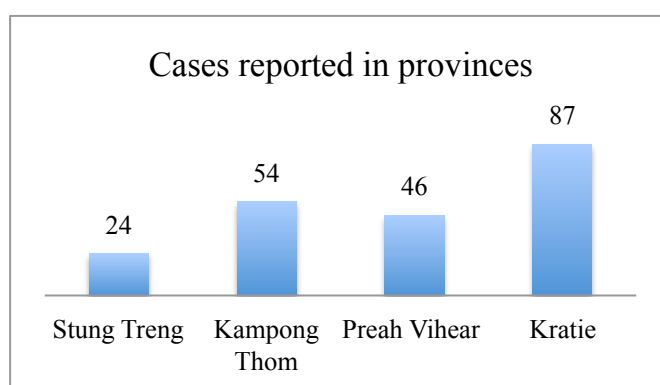

Figure 1: Distribution of valid entries between the four provinces

4.1.1 General findings

General findings are summarized in figure 2 below. The figure shows the four possible categories in the app. The two major categories include *Activities* (54%) and *resources* (38%). These will both be studied further in the next paragraphs. The remaining entries are *other* (6%) and *reporting* (3%). The category *other* contains solely pictures from the *Dharma Marching for tree blessing ceremony* conducted in the start of July. This event is described later in the report under *4.2 Specific cases*. The category *reporting* (3%) contains mainly incidents with *positive interaction with authorities*. This category also contains some positive interactions between the monitors and the illegal loggers. Examples of this include incidents were monitors get loggers to sign a contract agreeing on not to log again.
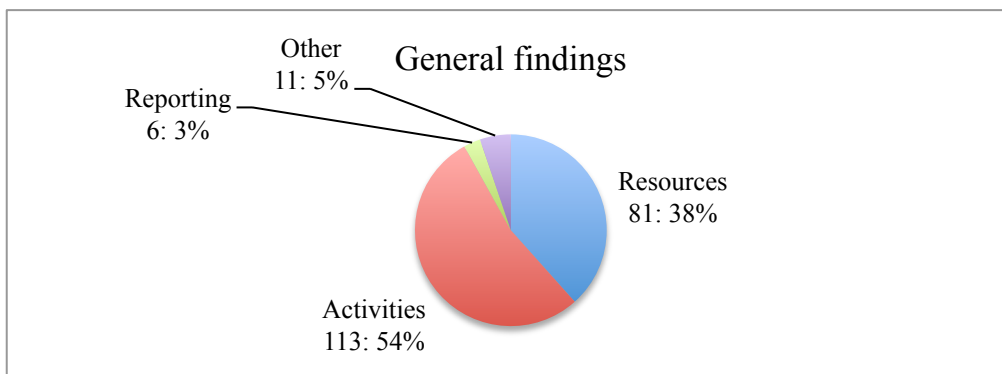

Figure 2: General findings

4.1.2 Activities

During the patrols *activities* are the category that has been used most frequently (see figure 3 below) in which the category *Stump* constitutes the majority (see 3.1.3 Stump). Timber being transported has been documented 39 times (34%). This includes transportation on motorbikes, ox carts and boats, but most frequently the transportation of wood is observed on machine cows (25 incidents). Transportation of logged wood is often documented outside the forest in the villages and not when monitors have been on an actual patrols.
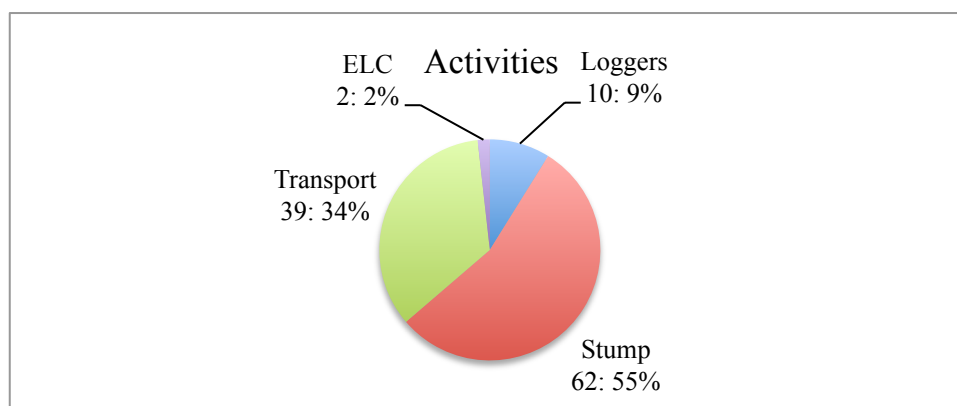

Figure 3: Activities

Photo 1: A local tractor/ ploughing machine (goh yuon in khmer, literally meaning cow machine) transporting timber in Kampong Thom Province the 15th of June.

Loggers are documented 10 times (9%). In seven of these incidents the monitors were interacting with the loggers and, where the information is available, it is described that the loggers were local people.

ELCs where only documented in two entries

4.1.3 Stump

Stump includes the categories *single stump* and *area that is missing* (more stumps in one place).
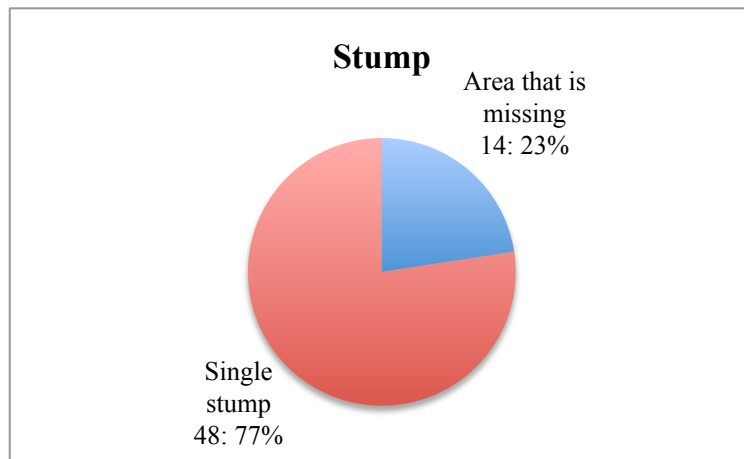

Figure 4: Stump

21% of the incidents report areas that are missing, while 79% represent single stumps. It should be noted that in the absence of the possibility to

report planks, the category *single stump* is also used for this purpose. This inaccuracy will be corrected in the coming improvements of the app.

Photo 2: The picture shows an area that is missing, 15th of June.

Photo 3: Planks found next to the cleared area on the picture above.
This has been registered has single stump due to the lack of a
suitable category

4.1.4 Natural resources

Natural resources are frequently reported during the patrols or when monitors are in the forest for other purposes than patrolling. *Trees* are the main resource documented and almost all of the tree entries (61 entries) refer to resin trees (*derm chbors*). The 7 remaining entries under *Tree* indicate *other luxury trees.*

10% of the resource entries represent NTFPs (non timber forest products), which include mushrooms, rattan and other plants that are not specified.

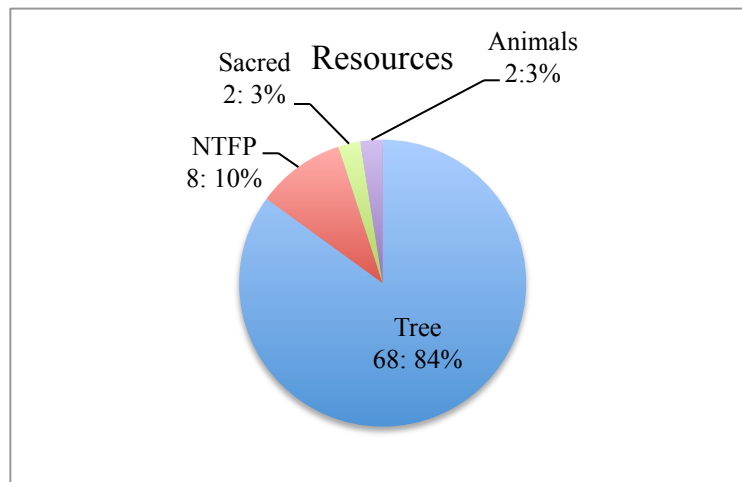*Figure 5: Natural resources*

Sacred are documented in two entries. One documenting a small building and one documenting a site in the forest used for burials. *Animals* are also only documented in two entries through a picture of a snake and a picture of deer footsteps.

Photo 4 and 5: The pictures show mushrooms found in the forest. Both found and registered the 30th of June just before 4pm.

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

100-200 monks marched the 3rd - 4th of July in Prey Lang in order to put attention to the deforestation problems in Prey Lang. This was done by blessing the trees of the forest and by patrolling together with PLCN-members. During this march 5 chainsaws were confiscated. The chainsaws were brought to the National Assembly the following Monday (see photo 7).

Photo 6: Monks are marching in the forest while blessing trees

Photo 7: Monks in front of the National Assembly with five confiscated chainsaws

Drawing attention to deforestation through spiritual and religious approaches make a big impression on people. This could be detected through the great attention that this event got through medias and Facebook.

4.2.2 Case 2

The 23rd of April at 11.20am, PLCN members confronted two machine cows transporting timber in Kratie Province. The two drivers were hired to do the job. Both of them signed an agreement on not transporting timber out of the forest anymore.

Photo 8: One of the local tractors (goh youn) carrying timber that was detected the 23rd of April

4.2.3 Case 3

The 11th of May a monitor in Kratie province documented 13 resin trees in one day.

Photo 9 and 10: Pictures show valuable trees registered the 11th of May

This is an efficient way of getting an overview of the resources and an important action in order to spread awareness of local peoples dependency of the forest. Documenting local resin trees is also a way of proving that they actually existed if the trees at some point are cut down.

4.2.4 Case 4

The 12th of April around 11.30, patrollers near Kram Doum in Kratie province documented two incidences in the same area. Five piles of planks used for growing pepper were discovered next to 25 big planks of construction wood. The loggers signed an agreement not to log illegal wood again.

Photo 11: Picture is showing a pile of wood pieces used for pepper growing purposes.

Photo 12: Illegal loggers signing agreement of not to log again, while sitting on the newly logged wood.

4.2.5 Cases from audio files

The following are examples of audio files recorded during the patrols:

- *39 PLCN members went to patrolling and saw 3m³ wood in an Economic land concession area. The community could not decide what to do with it so they left it where it was* (15/05/2015 at 12:50pm, Kratie Province)

- *The community saw more then 3m³ wood. Eventually they decided to burn it* (16/05/2015, Preah Vihear Province)

- *There are 5 machine cows transporting wood from Prey Lang across Steung Touch going towards 95 and 99 companies* (On 24/05/2015 at 2:30pm, Kratie Province)

- *A local tractor (goh youn) is transporting wood from Prey Lang across Samrong going towards 99* (company) *without any obstacles even though the provincial governor ordered to the police to stop illegal logging.* (31/05/2015 at 5:30pm, Kampong Thom Province)

- *At Pteas Neak Ta (Ou Yeav) villagers from Dom Be clean the land to make fields in Prey Lang* (31/05/2015, Kratie Province)

- *Five local tractors (goh youn) were transporting wood from Sam Rong to 99* (company) *without any obstacles. The wood is mostly Pdeak and Cher Teal.* (15/06/2015 at 7:35am, Kampong Thom Province)

- *Four chainsaws were confiscated by the military but the community do not know yet where the military will take them. Usually they keep the chainsaws in order to get money from the owner.* (11/07/2015, Kratie Province)

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 26th 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.[1]

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-

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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.