

Natural
Climate
Solutions
Alliance

Natural Climate Solutions in Action

Southern Cardamom REDD+ Project

Project/Program Type	The Southern Cardamom REDD+ Project generates carbon credits through avoided deforestation using Verra's Verified Carbon Standard (VCS).
Description	The Southern Cardamom REDD+ Project fights poaching and deforestation in one of Southeast Asia's last unfragmented rainforests, with 64 species from the IUCN Red List—including Asian elephants, Sunda pangolins and Malayan sun bears.
Location	The project is located in the Cardamom Mountains along Cambodia's western coast.
Scale	The project covers 497,000 hectares of land in Southern Cardamom National Park and the Tatai Wildlife Sanctuary.
Number of Credits Issued to Date	27,627,237 tCOe
Project Proponent	The Royal Government of Cambodia and Wildlife Alliance.



Impacts

Impact To-Date

The project has avoided the emission of more than 27 million tons of greenhouse gases. It employs 148 park rangers who have removed more than 208,231 snares from the rainforest. The project has also supported people in 29 forest villages by building wells, improving roads, awarding scholarships and supporting local enterprises.

Projected Longer-Term Impact

Cambodia's Ministry of Environment and Wildlife Alliance are expanding the project into an adjacent area called Phnom Samkos Wildlife Sanctuary; and plan to reintroduce tigers—which were last seen in the country in 2016—to Southern Cardamom National Park.



How REDD+ Is Putting an End to Poaching in Cambodia's Cardamom Mountains

Sovann On was 10 years old when his father showed him how to set snares to catch wild animals. "When I was young, my family ate wild meat every day," Sovann says. His father hunted in rainforest near their village in the Cardamom Mountains of Cambodia, one of the most biodiverse—and endangered—regions of the world. The IUCN Red List lists 35 threatened species from the Cardamom Mountains, including clouded leopards, Sunda pangolins, Asian elephants, pileated gibbons and Malayan sun bears. Conservation groups in Cambodia want to protect this natural heritage, but hunting has long been an important food source for local families living in poverty. "At that time, there was no other way to survive," Sovann says.



Sovann On
Chief of Chi Phat
Community-
Based Ecotourism

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Sovann never became a hunter. He works today as chief of Chi Phat Community-Based Ecotourism (CBET), a business that brings tourists to the Cardamom Mountains and splits the work and income between about 50 local families. The Chi Phat CBET is supported financially and strategically by the Southern Cardamom REDD+ Project, a partnership between the Royal Government of Cambodia and the conservation NGO Wildlife Alliance. Since its launch in 2015, the Southern Cardamom REDD+ Project has protected 497,000 hectares of forest in the Cardamom Mountains by selling carbon credits to corporations seeking to mitigate their greenhouse

gas emissions. With the revenue, Wildlife Alliance puts rangers in the forest to protect animals and supports local development projects and enterprises like the Chi Phat CBET. This work has helped create alternative livelihoods for people in 29 forest villages – including Sovann's father, who gave up hunting to drive a car for tourist groups.

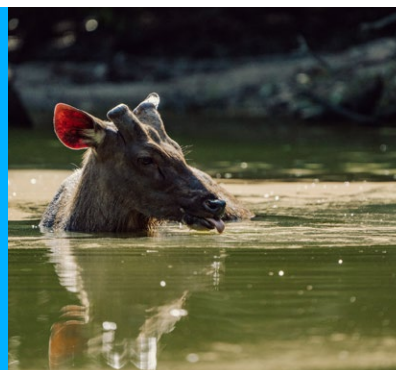
An American woman named Dr. Suwanna Gauntlett founded Wildlife Alliance in 2000 after visiting forests in the Cardamom Mountains without birdsong or insect chatter. "I've never had that experience before of a forest that had no life in it," Gauntlett says. She learned that many of Cambodia's forests were heavily hunted—and that the vast majority of hunting was done with ground snares, which do not discriminate between types of prey. The illegal wildlife trade was also rampant. Gauntlett went undercover as an animal buyer and helped bust a tiger cub-trading ring. "That was the start of Wildlife Alliance in the country," she says.

The Cambodian government asked for Wildlife Alliance's help in the Cardamom Mountains in 2002. The region was one of the largest unfragmented forests in Southeast Asia, but a newly opened freeway was making it more accessible to elephant poachers, illegal loggers, and farmers looking to burn forest for new fields. Wildlife Alliance set up five forest stations and hired and equipped rangers. By 2006, the fires had mostly stopped and elephant poaching had fallen to zero. Despite the success, Gauntlett worried about the NGO's future. "All the funding was coming from our efforts to raise funds with our donors, and there's a lot of donor fatigue," she says. "It was not sustainable financially."

The voluntary carbon market was an opportunity to secure long-term and stable financing for Wildlife



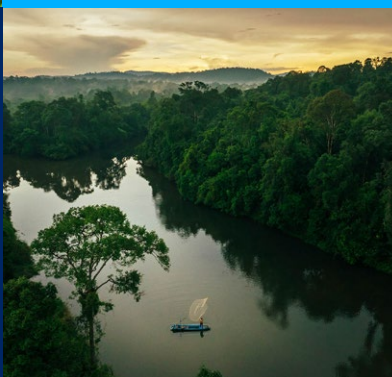
43
water wells
installed in 7 communities



>29,000
forest patrols
conducted



>\$360,000
USD in
scholarships
awarded



Improved
conservation
measures for
35 IUCN
Red List
species

Follow the
progress





Alliance and make sure the benefits of protecting forest go to local communities. The Cambodian government agreed to join the Southern Cardamom National Park and Tatai Wildlife Sanctuary under the Southern Cardamom REDD+ Project in 2015, with Wildlife Alliance implementing the project on the ground. "Wildlife Alliance's forest-protection and community-livelihood-development activities are now entirely funded through the sale of the carbon credits generated by the REDD+ project," Gauntlett says. With revenues from the sale of carbon credits, the Southern Cardamom REDD+ Project employs 148 rangers who carried out more than 6,739 patrols, removed more than 50,000 snares, and rescued 421 live animals in 2022. The rangers are led by judicial police officers of the Ministry of the Environment and can pursue criminal cases when appropriate.



Dr. Suwanna Gauntlett
Founder of Wildlife
Alliance

Wildlife Alliance's forest-protection and community-livelihood-development activities are now entirely funded through the sale of the carbon credits.

Wildlife Alliance has worked closely with local communities to provide alternative livelihoods to people, like Sovann's father, who depended on hunting in the past. They have helped farmers implement sustainable agriculture practices so they don't have to burn forest for new fields; and given out more than \$360,000 in scholarships to students in local schools. The government has also used the revenue to build infrastructure and fund development projects in forest communities. The Southern Cardamom REDD+ Project has improved water access by building 43 wells; and improved roads so that villagers can reach the hospital and other amenities in larger towns in a fraction of the time it took previously. "We get more and better



Sovann On
Chief of Chi Phat
Community-Based
Ecotourism

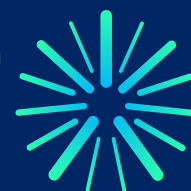
Now [community members] are done with hunting because they can feed their families with jobs in the community.

infrastructure, we get roads, and a water-well system for each village," Sovann says.

These improvements have made it easier for the Chi Phat CBET to attract tourists to the area—and, as a result, generate income for local families. The Chi Phat CBET, which started in January 2007 with support from Wildlife Alliance, splits the responsibilities for its customers between its 332 members: Some members cook meals, others provide housing, and still others serve as drivers or guides. "Now most of them are done with hunting," Sovann says, "because they can feed their families with jobs in the community."

The revenue from the Southern Cardamom REDD+ Project has helped the Chi Phat CBET sustain the business despite the downturn during the Covid-19 pandemic. Between 2017 and 2019, the Chi Phat CBET attracted between 3,500 and 3,700 tourists to the Cardamom Mountains annually, many of them from Europe, Australia, and the United States; during the pandemic, that number has dropped to about 1,500 tourists, most of them domestic, and has not yet bounced back. "Even when we have fewer foreigners and tourism, we still have support from them" Sovann says.

The Southern Cardamom REDD+ Project has been so successful that the Cambodian government plans to reintroduce tigers to the region. Their roars may one day be a part of the melody that Gauntlett now hears when she steps into the no-longer-silent forest. "Every couple hectares, you hear a pair of gibbons calling to each other," Gauntlett says. "You have bird songs and insects everywhere. It's actually quite beautiful."



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About the NCS Alliance

The NCS Alliance (NCSA) conveys the voice of businesses, NGOs and solution providers on the need to mobilize a high integrity demand for high quality Natural Climate Solutions (NCS). The Alliance focuses on identifying opportunities and barriers to investment in the NCS voluntary carbon market and serves as a forum for knowledge sharing and technical capacity building to ensure natural climate solutions reach their full potential in abating climate change, while also tackling nature loss and socio-economic issues. NCS in Action was established to showcase how NCS are making a real difference in the world today.

For more information visit www.naturalclimatesolutionsalliance.org and follow us on [LinkedIn](#).



Statement of Acknowledgment

The NCS in Action are testimonials designed to highlight the benefits for people and nature associated with NCS projects and programs financed through the voluntary carbon market. The NCS Alliance strongly believes that the voluntary carbon market is necessary for financing NCS projects and programs. It is critical however that it rests on the integrity of the climate benefits, i.e. the ability of credits to truly represent real and verifiable carbon reductions.

The NCS Alliance recognizes the importance of staying up-to-date with the latest science and best practices as carbon-crediting programs evolve. We acknowledge that there have been challenges with certain methodologies and that improvements have not always been made as quickly as necessary. However, we believe that this is a valuable learning-by-doing process and that scaling up NCS is crucial in achieving global 1.5C goals. In support of this, the NCS Alliance will continue to highlight projects and programs in this space while also advocating for consistent improvement in standards and methodologies. For more information about how and when these methodologies are updated see [Verra](#), [Plan Vivo](#), [ACR](#), [ART](#).

NCS in Action is made possible with generous funding support from the We Mean Business Coalition.

Disclaimer

Inclusion of an NCS project or program in the NCS in Action program does not imply a recommendation to purchase, trade or retire credits associated with the project or program.

The NCS Alliance and its members take no responsibility for the purchase, trade or retirement of credits from these projects and programs. Instead, it recommends that individuals, companies and other organisations procuring credits as part of their climate strategies conduct their own independent due diligence to validate the quality and environmental integrity of their purchases.

The NCS Alliance secretariat in no way benefits financially or by other means from the selection.

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