



RECOFTC

Community forestry models in Asia-Pacific

# Community forests in Cambodia



Infosheet

In Cambodia, there are three types of community forestry models: community forests, community-protected areas and community fisheries (in flooded forests). Cambodia's community forests model enables communities to manage and benefit from forest resources in forestland, including by selling timber. The model's legal basis is laid out in the 2002 Forestry Law (currently under revision), the 2003 Sub-Decree on Community Forestry Management and the 2006 Prakas on Guideline on Community Forestry, with a view to contribute to the sustainable management of forest resources. The responsible authority for community forests is under the Forestry Administration of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries.

# Key requirements

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## Who is eligible?

The legal framework provides three definitions linked to the notion of community:

- A “community” is a group of residents in one or more villages who share a common social, cultural, traditional and economic interest and use the natural resources in an area, which they live in or near, in a sustainable way for subsistence and livelihood improvement purposes.
- A “local community” is a minority ethnic community or a group of local residents with original settlement in one or more villages, where they live in or near state forest, with their traditions, customs, religious beliefs, culture and subsistence depending on the harvest of forest and non-forest products and the basic use of those forest resources.
- A “forestry community” is a community of residents who voluntarily decides to form a group under a community forest agreement to conduct development activities and use forest resources in a sustainable manner within a community forest, in compliance with the provisions of the Forestry Law.

## Allocation process

A community forest can be initiated by a local community or the Forestry Administration. The process for a community to apply for a community forest is as follows:

1. The Forestry Administration Cantonment studies, identifies and prioritizes potential areas for the development of community forests and requests approval of the potential forest areas from the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries.
2. To establish a community forest, the community must request in writing to the provincial governor through their respective village chief, commune chief and district governor. The request should be supported by at least 60 percent of the households of a village who want to establish a community forest.
3. After obtaining approval from the provincial governor to establish a community forest, the local community submits a request to the Forestry Administration Cantonment through the community's respective Forestry Administration Triage.
4. A working group, whose members represent the Forestry Administration, the community and non-government organizations, collects socio-economic information about the community and information about the community's cultural practices and use of

forest resources. The working group develops a report that will provide the basis for future management planning.

5. The community forest members elect a community forest management committee through technical coordination by a temporary election committee and the Forestry Administration Triage. The Forestry Administration Triage signs the election results to certify its participation in the election. The commune chief endorses the election result and issues a decision to recognize the elected committee.
6. The community forest management committee develops its by-laws and the community forestry regulations using templates in Annex 1 and 2 of the Prakas on Guideline on Community Forestry. Local authorities and commune councils facilitate development of the regulations. The commune chief endorses the by-laws and regulations.
7. Community members, with support from the Forestry Administration and/or non-government organizations as needed, demarcate the boundary of the community forest using GPS. This involves representatives from adjacent villages to avoid conflicts.
8. The community forest management committee drafts the community forest agreement, based on a template in Annex 3 of the Prakas on Guideline on Community Forestry and with technical support from the Forestry Administration. The draft agreement must be displayed in a public place for 30 days. If there is no objection during this period, the draft community forest agreement will be considered effective. In the event of any objection during the 30-day period, the community forest management committee must request the commune council, the district and the provincial or municipal authorities to assist in resolving the conflict or revising the draft community forest agreement.
9. The agreement is submitted to the Forestry Administration Cantonment for review. The chief of the Forestry Administration Cantonment writes to the community forest management committee about results of the review or to request revision of the community forestry agreement within 30 working days. Once the community forest agreement has been approved, the community and the chief of Forestry Administration Cantonment sign it.
10. The community forest management committee prepares a community forest management plan and submits it, via the Forestry Administration Triage and the Forestry Administration Division, to the Forestry Administration Chief for review and approval.

# Main elements



## Duration of tenure

- Up to 15 years and renewable



## Type and condition of forest

- Any type and condition of forest within production forest, under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries



## Type and duration of management plan

- 15-year community forest management plan, reviewed every five years



## Internal governance

- The community forest is managed by elected community members who live within the community and are older than 18 years. The community forest is led by a community forestry management committee, which has a five-year term.
- The community forest management committee's duties include preparing the community forestry regulations and the by-laws for its internal operations. The regulations clarify the rights of access and the duties of members and secondary users, such as user fees, benefit-sharing or fines for violations. The regulations are developed with the involvement of the community forestry members, with facilitation from local authorities and the commune councils. The Forestry Administration and/or non-government organizations provide support.
- Community forest members also develop and implement the community forest agreement and the community forest management plan.



## Gender and social inclusion

- All community members have equal rights to participate as members of a community forest and its management committee.
- The community forest management committee must encourage the participation of women as committee members and prioritize women as candidates.



## Community-based enterprises

- Enterprises selling forest products can be established once the community is implementing its community forest management plan.



## Benefit-sharing mechanism

- Benefit-sharing must be carried out between community forest members and according to the rules in the community forestry regulations.
- Royalties or premiums on forest products are set in consultation with the community and should support community development, equitable benefit-sharing and poverty alleviation.



## External support

- The community forest management committee can seek technical support from the Forestry Administration and relevant individuals or organizations and financial support from charitable individuals or organizations for the development of community forestry.



## Conflict-resolution mechanism

- The community forest management committee resolves disputes among community forest members.
- The commune authorities resolve disputes between community forest members and outsiders. If a dispute cannot be resolved, the chief of the Forestry Administration Cantonment must report the matter to the head of the Forestry Administration for further action. If the case still cannot be resolved, the Forestry Administration, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries or the community forest management committee must submit a case to the relevant court to resolve the conflict according to legal procedures.



## Rights and responsibilities of community members

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### Members have rights to:

- make traditional use of the forest, including to collect dead wood, harvest wild fruit, resin and other products, graze livestock and use timber and other products in accordance with traditional family use.
- plant, manage and use timber and non-timber forest products that can pay royalty fees in the case of commercial uses. Users can barter, process, transport and sell these products without additional permits, in accordance with the community forest management plan.
- exclude outsiders.
- continue to practise traditional agriculture in specific periods identified in the community forest management plan.
- appeal decisions that impact their rights.
- participate in managing forest resources, in compliance with the community forest regulation and management plan and with forest-sector legislation.
- participate in sharing benefits from the community forest.
- participate in monitoring the use of community forest resources by non-members.
- participate in conserving, protecting and planting the forest to ensure the sustainability of its resources.

### Members cannot:

- sell and transfer rights over the forest to other parties.
- harvest timber for sale or trade until five years after approval of the community forest management.

### Members must:

- follow the instructions of the Forestry Administration and the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries.
- participate in developing and implementing the community forestry regulations, the community forest agreement and the community forest management plan, in compliance with the 2006 Prakas.

## Links with climate change policies and targets

- There is no legal requirement for communities to integrate climate vulnerability, adaptation or mitigation activities into their community forest management plans.
- Through its National Forest Program 2010–2029, Cambodia aims to have 2 million hectares under community forestry by 2029 as part of its efforts to achieve 60 percent forest cover. In 2015, Cambodia's first Nationally Determined Contribution under the Paris Agreement on climate change referred to these targets, but they are absent from the updated Nationally Determined Contribution that Cambodia produced in 2020.
- The 2020 Nationally Determined Contribution says Cambodia would strengthen and scale up community-based forest management and enhance supplies of timber and wood-based energy from community-managed forest areas and private plantations to reduce pressure on forest areas. This is in line with the country's 2017–2026 REDD+ (reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation) Strategy.
- The Climate Change Strategic Plan 2014–2023 promotes the involvement of community-based organizations for adaptive social protection and participatory approaches in reducing loss and damage from climate change. However, the strategic plan does not mention community forestry.

## Read more

- RECOFTC, *Special Report: How community forests boosted pandemic resilience across Asia-Pacific*, [www.recoftc.org/special-report/community-forestry-boosted-pandemic-resilience](http://www.recoftc.org/special-report/community-forestry-boosted-pandemic-resilience)
- RECOFTC, *Special Report: Communities are improving lives and landscapes in Southeast Asia through social forestry*, [www.recoftc.org/stories/special-report-communities-are-improving-lives-and-landscapes-southeast-asia-through-social](http://www.recoftc.org/stories/special-report-communities-are-improving-lives-and-landscapes-southeast-asia-through-social)
- RECOFTC, *Special Report: Bridging policy and practice: RECOFTC and the story of community forestry in Cambodia*, [www.recoftc.org/special-report/community-forestry-cambodia-history](http://www.recoftc.org/special-report/community-forestry-cambodia-history)
- Find out more about RECOFTC's work in Cambodia at [www.recoftc.org/cambodia](http://www.recoftc.org/cambodia)



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