



Press Release

Embargoed until Monday 10 June 2019, 00.01am

NTFP-based enterprises by the local community create incentives for social and environmental protection

Phnom Penh - Monday 10 June 2019: Non-timber forest producer groups and associations represent important providers of social protection, while making a significant contribution to forest conservation and poverty eradication goals. In fact, about 68% of total rural households across Cambodia rely on forest resources for their livelihood activities. Aside from collecting root crops, fruit, vegetables for daily consumption, local communities sustainably harvest forest honey, rattan, bamboo, resin and *traing* for processing and selling consumable food products and daily household materials.

Protecting forest access rights for local communities, particularly for indigenous peoples are therefore crucial to ensure equitable benefit distribution through awareness raising and implementation of relevant legislations.

Speaking to nearly 200 important and relevant stakeholders from the forest sector present at the second National Forum on NTFPs today, **H.E. E Vuthy**, Deputy Secretary General of National Council for Sustainable Development of the Ministry of Environment, said: "The Cambodia's national forest programme 2010-2029 aims at increasing employment, being a national objective, through sustainable forest based activities, which include collecting and processing non-timber forest products using efficient methods and technology – increasing the value-chain – in order to enable rural people participation in their socio-economic activities."

"The national programme also supports the development of viable small and medium scale rural enterprises that add value to forest products making direct contribution toward self-sustained community forest management models," he added.

Non-timber forest producers not only promote the economic interest among their communities, but can also focus on protecting community members against risks or eventual economic shocks by creating informal social protection services such as pooling financial resources in savings and credit funds.

Under collaborative efforts with the Government of Cambodia, International and local NGO partners, and funding support from Netherlands Committee IUCN, SDC and ADB, NTFP-EP Cambodia successfully supported to-date development of a total of more than 60 community-based enterprises in Kratie, Steung Treng, Monduliri, Rattanakiri, Preah Vihea, Koh Kong and Siem Reap provinces. In 2018, the social enterprises cover a total of 379,897.74 hectares of community-based forest and fisheries management in these provinces. NTFP-EP also supports one national intermediary, *NatureWild*, whose role is supporting product distribution to markets in the country. In 2017, community incomes from their production of NTFPs such as forest honey, bamboo, resin, and *traing*, is estimated at 78,182 US dollars and 66,898 US dollars in 2018.

In parallel, the forest sector saw a significant contribution to national prosperity by rattan supply chain, which was estimated at 1.5 million US dollars.

However, in an effort to scale-up the production and increasing entrepreneurship, these community producers need to be empowered to compete in a larger non-timber and forest production chain, while gaining access to the benefits of mainstream markets. Community management and capacity building are important to ensure compliance with standards and protocols.

In her opening remarks addressing participants at the second National Forum, **Ms Femy Pinto**, Executive Director of NTFP-EP Asia, says that community producers make up an important proportion of the non-timber forest private sector and are therefore ones of the key players in realising forest conservation and poverty eradication goals, contributing to the Cambodia's Sustainable Development Goals (CSDGs).

While developing community-run enterprises for livelihoods, an understanding of markets plays a significant role in ensuring success. "In general, these community groups seek to gain more support from different development actors including the Government, private sector and other stakeholders in NTFP value chain development," Ms PINTO said.

"Lessons learned from the projects suggest that community enterprise models should be based on integrating value chains to reach the end consumer through a multi-stakeholder approach or by linking enterprises to the value chains of larger enterprises," she urged.

NTFP productions depend of course on sustainably managed natural resources. But like for other countries in Asia where the economy is on the rise, Cambodia's natural resources have been increasingly used in unsustainable way due to short-term gains such as illegal logging, wildlife trade, illegal fishing, conversions of forests to economic land concessions for crop plantations, destruction of forests for mineral exploitations, among others threats.



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"For community based forest management in Cambodia to succeed, the integration between people, economics and preservation of the natural resources must be central within every forest policies, while secured land rights and community-managed forest lands are protected by laws and reinforced by Government's national and local authorities, with continuous support from INGOs, local organisations, and development aid agencies," **says Ms Diane Caroën**, Team Leader of the LISDI project for WWF-Cambodia.

As part of its support to communities depending on Non-timber forest products, WWF and partner WCS engage with FA and MoE into the ADB funded GMS Biodiversity Conservation Corridors Project to implement the Livelihoods Improvement Strategy and upscale their activities for the promotion of NTFP value-chains in Koh Kong and Mondulkiri (wild honey, bamboo, medicinal plants). We have a fruitful partnership with specialized NGOs and we try to strengthen CPA/CFs business associations, as well as subsector marketings associations, building linkage between the communities and SMEs.

It is important for secured land tenure arrangements such as community forestry and fisheries and community protected areas to play complementary role with community based NTFP enterprise development. "These efforts will enable local people to make decisions on what the best and most productive use of their forest lands and community resources may be, so that they can continue to enjoy the social and environmental incentives now and in the long-term future," Ms. CAROEN continued.

The Cambodia NTFP Working Group, a voluntary platform comprising of NTFP experts and practitioners, and representatives from the government, community producers/entrepreneurs, CSOs and researchers, will discuss the recommendations from the National Forum in order to formulate an action plan going forward.

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Notes to the Editor:

- **What are non-timber forest products?** NTFPs are defined as biological resources extracted from forests other than timber for human uses. Examples of NTFPs include fruits and nuts, vegetables, fish, medicinal plants, forest honey, resins, and a range of barks and fibres such as bamboo, rattans, as well as palms and grasses.
- **About the National Forum on NTFPs:** The National Forum on NTFPs is initiated with the aim to showcase results and success practices that the local community achieved in developing and promoting NTFP value chains using environmentally-friendly harvest and processing practices. These community efforts support sustainable use and management of NTFPs and forest resources within their community management areas, while contributing to social-economic improvement of local community households.

The first National Forum on NTFPs was organised in 2015, which raised the importance of NTFPs and began to demonstrate encouraging results in the development of NTFP value chains in Cambodia. In this second National Forum, we will surface the continuing progress being made in NTFP value chain development such as standardizing NTFP management practices and the expansion of community enterprise models on various NTFPs such as forest honey, rattan, bamboo, resin, and *traing*.

- Partners for Forestry and Fisheries (PAFF)
- LISDI project is a project of ADB funded GMS Biodiversity Conservation Corridors Project to implement the Livelihoods Improvement Strategy
- Shared Resources, Joint Solutions (SRJS) for the IUCN support Biodiversity Conservation Corridor project.
- **About NTFP-EP:** NTFP-EP is a collaborative network of over 60 NGOs and community-based organizations working with forest-based communities to strengthen their capacity in the sustainable management of natural resources in the Philippines, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Vietnam, and Cambodia. In Cambodia, NTFP-EP has been working since 2007 with the Cambodian government, NTFP producers and entrepreneurs, private sector, CSOs and academia on NTFP value chain development and promoting community-based forestry and fisheries management.