

STORIES FROM THE FIELD...

COMMUNITY FORESTRY AS A GRASSROOTS INITIATIVE

Phum Dong, Kampong Speu, Cambodia

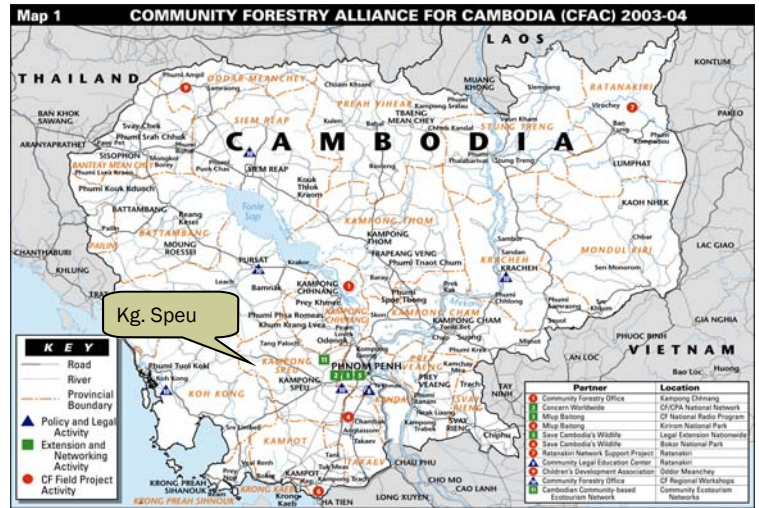
Phum Dong in Kampong Speu province is a new community forest site supported by CFI since January 2005 through Mlup Baitong, a local NGO. Phum Dong demonstrates how efficiently and effectively the CF establishment process can move with the right combination of grassroots initiative, capable and supportive village leaders, local authorities, and strategic technical support from NGOs and FA. Between January and September 2005, the Phum Dong community was able to complete most of the steps in CF establishment, including CF formulation, election of the Community Forestry Management Committee, development of By-Laws, Rules and Regulations, border demarcation with GPS, and installation of signs. Over the course of nine months, the community accomplished what other communities had taken years to do. Interviews and discussions with the community and Mlup Baitong project staff indicate that the progress is not only swift, but the participation, understanding, and commitment of the community is very high.

The Phum Dong community forestry site is 351 hectares, located about 30 kilometers south of National Road 4 in Kompong Speu. The community originally learned about CF from television broadcasts. They were eager to establish CF in order to combat rampant deforestation and protect the forest for their children, while also being concerned about land grabbing in the area and the loss of grazing land for their cattle. An active school teacher and community leader, Mr. Min Moeurn, lobbied local officials including the Forestry Administration for CF establishment, and requested the support of local NGO Mlup Baitong, a subaward recipient of Community Forestry International.



Ponreay (CFI) provides technical assistance.

There are approximately 150 families in Phum Dong, with over 300 adults applying as CF members (virtually all). Both women and men play an active role in management and daily patrol activities.



Meas Samsosheat, CF Project Officer of Mlup Baitong, feels that CF is successful in this area because the livelihoods and education levels of villagers are relatively high, so that it is easier for villagers to attend meetings and they can grasp CF concepts more quickly. He also recognizes the importance of the grassroots initiative as a factor of success. The CF area is degraded and there is currently limited dependence on forest products; however, daily patrols have curtailed illegal cutting and prevented forest fires, allowing the forest to regenerate. The CF area is well-delineated since its border is the base of a small mountain. The community has taken the initiative to post a Cambodian flag on the top of the mountain to designate the villagers' claim for the area as CF. They are awaiting the passage of the CF *prakas* which will allow official legal registration with the Forestry Administration. In the meantime, the surrounding communities in Kbal Tek Leu and Kbal Tek Kraom have started their own CF initiatives, having witnessed and been inspired by the activities in Phum Dong.



Villager collecting NTFPs

CFI is pleased to be able to continue supporting local NGOs who are making a difference in the lives of many rural Cambodians. For more information call: (855-23) 220 714.