

A photograph of a man in a forest, carrying a large, cylindrical woven basket on his back. The basket is filled with long, light-colored sticks, possibly bamboo or other forest products. The man is wearing a simple, light-colored shirt and a dark cloth around his waist. He is looking towards the camera with a neutral expression. The background is a dense, lush green forest with various types of foliage.

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**A Case Study:  
Role of Wild Foods for  
the Food Security of  
Kreung's Indigenous  
People, Chuy Village,  
Ta Veng Leu Commune,  
Ratanakiri Province,  
Cambodia**

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<b>Title</b>	A Case Study: Role of Wild Foods for the Food Security of Kreung Indigenous People, Chuy Village, Ta Veng Leu Commune, Ratanakiri Province, Cambodia
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# **A Case Study: Role of Wild Foods for the Food Security of Kreung Indigenous People, Chuy Village, Ta Veng Leu Commune, Ratanakiri Province, Cambodia**

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Non-Timber Forest Products  
Exchange Programme – Asia  
2021

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# Overview

## THE (WILD) FOOD SCENARIO IN THE ASIAN REGION AN OVERVIEW TO THE WILD FOODS, BIODIVERSITY AND LIVELIHOODS COUNTRY PAPERS

by Madhu Ramnath (NTFP-EP India; Wild Foods,  
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### INTRODUCTION

Across the indigenous and rural communities of Asia there exists a deep knowledge about uncultivated foods. In addition to this, the cultivation systems include many lesser-known crops, be they millets, various legumes, yams, and other tubers. Quite often, within these farms and fields, various freshwater snails, crab, and fish, as well as some edible plants too are harvested. Such uncultivated foods have supplemented the diets of the rural and indigenous communities for many generations; apart from the obvious nutritional values that they provide, many of these foods have cultural and sociological links to these societies, as we shall see from some of the case studies.

For the purposes of this paper, wild foods encompass all edible material that is found in the wild (both land and water) and includes leaves, flowers, fruit, seeds and stems, tubers and rhizomes, resins and gums, honey, fungi, as well as eggs, fish, and game.

Mainstream agriculture has, by emphasizing quantity over diversity and quality, delinked food production from nutrition and culture. It is almost as if food production has only one goal: the filling of stomachs! Identity and tradition, exchange, and reciprocation with food and foodways, have been left out. More importantly, wild foods and other traditional crops provide communities that grow (or collect) and consume them with several essential micronutrients necessary for health; in addition, the diversity of crops in a farm supports their food security when a certain crop fails, or if the monsoon is not as good as expected. National and international policies around food and food subsidies, and an official oversight about wild uncultivated foods in most rural diets, have led to a decline in the knowledge about wild foods in the region. In addition, the sole promotion of a skewed agricultural policy in Asian countries, has led to the expansion of monocultures, further reducing spaces where wild foods thrive.

In this series of country papers, it was found important to include all the foodways prevalent in the region. This includes rotational farming systems that focus

on several non-mainstream crops, as highlighted from case-studies from India; aquatic foods such as freshwater fish and crab from rice-fields; and forest foods, such as small game and insects, as from the various forest areas in the region. These case studies, and related fieldwork in Kalimantan and Sarawak, show the strength and the vibrancy of these food systems as they exist, and the various threats that they face while holding their own. The several forces that such food systems are up against—such as the loss of knowledge due to migration of the youth to urban centres, the intrusion of fast foods into remote indigenous areas, the expansion of palm oil and other monoculture plantations at the cost of forests, and other forces of modernity—are not easy to contend with. The modern diet is a massive trade-off: i.e., “the typical fast-food diet... now has only 40% of the wholeness of that of hunger-gatherers...”; ... changing from the hunter-gatherer diet to that of the agriculturalist was associated with a trade-off of quality for quantity, and with enormous changes in the incidence of specific diseases.” (Diamond, J., *The Third Chimpanzee*). One of the Non-Timber Forest Products – Exchange Programme (NTFP-EP)’s mandate is to revive the traditional and wild food systems among the communities it works with.

NTFP-EP’s work requires continuous updating of new food species and their status, the gaps in knowledge noticeable after workshops, and designing appropriate interventions to close them. Importantly, the link between wild foods and their nutritional and cultural values need to be also kept in mind. Other concerns, such as tenure security, climate change and biodiversity, and access to forests that have been declared Protected Areas, are equally important and will be a crucial part of the discussions as we progress in this field.

In 2020, the NTFP-EP Asia received grant support from the Swedish International Agricultural Initiative (SIANI) through its expert group program, enabling it to explore further the topic of wild foods and its links to tenure, biodiversity, livelihoods, and food security. Learning exchange and discussions were carried out through a series of focused dialogues participated in by actors from across sectors based in Sweden, Asia and beyond.

The following are some of the country highlights which will help us understand some of the overall similarities in trends, making it possible to draft appropriate interventions to some of the problems faced by indigenous and rural communities in accessing wild and traditional foods.

## **Cambodia**

Wild foods are collected from all landscapes in Cambodia and in the village documented for the case study (as well as in other forest villages), all the people harvest food from the wild. The knowledge about such foods is quite high, but there is a decline of available species due to deforestation (expansions of monocultures) as well as flooding and changes in river-flow due to hydropower dams. Rotational farming practices, though decreasing, are still being practiced, as in the case of the Kreung in Chuy Village. Many people who practice rotational farming often do so at the edge of their settlements where they gather insects, various greens (including flowers and flower-buds), mushrooms, fruit, and stems for consumption as well as for sale. In many parts of Cambodia, the indigenous people gather 'payab' leaves (*Gnetum* spp.), a local delicacy as well as an important item for sale into neighbouring Vietnam. Rattan is gathered and used as food as well as for handicraft, as it is in most parts of Southeast Asia.

## **Indonesia**

The ironic fact about the Indonesian food situation is the emphasis on rice and, more recently, wheat. Both these food crops were and are imported into the country in large quantities, despite there being other staple foods of the people. Sago has been predominantly harvested from the wild in the past (as in Kalimantan), and cultivated (as in Papua); there has been an array of forest and marine aquatic foods that have been a part of the people's traditional diets for centuries. These have included ferns, fish, a vast array of small game, wild boar, and sago, the latter two being a staple among the deep forest nomadic Punan.

Indonesia is one of the countries facing a huge challenge in terms of malnutrition which has become worse during the pandemic. Media reports confirm that thousands of families suffered from hunger in Jakarta, Depok, Bogor, Bandung, Medan, Muara Enim, Batam, Pekanbaru, Maluku, Bengkalis, and Polewali Mandar; the Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS) data shows that food export is also increasing every year. The export of fruits in 2019 was the highest in recent years (USD 1.5 billion), double the amount in 2015. However, in 2018, Indonesia imported 9.23 million tons of wheat, 4.6 million tons of sugar, 2.5 million tons of salt, and 2.4 million tons of soy. Meanwhile for rice, dependence on imports is very high, shooting up to one million tons annually at present from a figure of 990 tons in the period 1980–99. It is the primary cause of making Indonesia vulnerable to food security.

The displacement of traditional foods by rice and wheat has led to these being cultivated through subsidies even in places where they are not suitable, leading to clearing of new forest areas

and the extraction or pumping of groundwater, both detrimental to the larger ecology of the region. The country has also been made vulnerable as they depend largely on imports; this situation was accentuated during the pandemic period. An additional factor with the change in the food system is that the knowledge about traditional and wild foods is being lost; rice and noodles and various fast foods, all wrapped in layers of plastic, have invaded the indigenous territories.

## **India**

In India, cultivation and food collection occur in all landscapes and rotational farming systems, practiced by various indigenous groups in the central and the northeast parts of the country, provide a diversity of food crops. However, most government policies concerning food, with the aim of providing food security to the population, focus on the quantity of cereals distributed. In fact, the subsidised food provided by the state covers 75% of the rural, and 50% of the urban households. What is missing is that the Food Security Act has no mention of wild and uncultivated foods that supplement the diets of most rural peoples.

Much of the present-day situation regarding food systems, both mainstream and traditional, can be traced to the several decades of Green Revolution driven policies. Over these decades many mainstream foods and food patterns—rice- and wheat-based—displaced and overwhelmed traditional diets. The subsidized food distribution system as well as the compulsory education drive, which kept children away from homes and in school hostels, have been deciding factors in changing the way Indians as a people view food. Overall, one may say that diets have become more uniform across the country, also thanks to the intrusion and acceptance of fast foods. Unfortunately, many traditional foods and food systems have fallen by the wayside.

Many commercial crops, rice, sugarcane, wheat and, more recently, palm oil, have been encouraged. These ventures, many like palm oil supported by state subsidies, have drastically changed the landscape, even encroaching into the commons formerly utilized by marginalized or landless peoples to graze cattle, or to harvest various food plants. Simultaneously, Protected Areas (PAs) across the country have increased, denying indigenous peoples the access to harvest wild foods or non-timber forest produce that are used for their livelihoods. The latter move, of declaring PAs, has continued despite the assurance of tenure rights through the passing of the Forest Rights Act, 2006, a legislation meant to guarantee land rights to the indigenous and other forest dwellers in the country.

There is an overall decline in the knowledge and use of uncultivated foods in India. This is often due to the lack of access to spaces that were earlier accessible (now fenced off as protected areas, or privatized as plantations, etc.) or for various other reasons associated with modernity (migrating youth, fast foods, modern education that derides wild foods, etc.). These trends in changing diets are reflected in health. Female obesity in the country is 21% while male obesity is 19%; anemia among women and children is 50%, and 11.8% of the people suffer from diabetes.

### **Philippines**

Though field work was undertaken among the Kankana-ey of Sagada, Mountain Province and of the Higaunon in Malitbog, Bukidnon, the work also analyzed policies that impact the state of wild foods found in indigenous communities.

From the data gathered from the field as well as relevant literature it was clear that, as in other countries indigenous peoples have an inherent and intricate relationship with nature. Wild foods are used beyond subsistence alone; they are also used for their medicinal purposes and for their cultural and spiritual values. Knowing the importance of the 'wild' in their day-to-day lives, indigenous communities have developed resource management systems, practices and customary laws that have kept the forests pristine and intact.

Another key finding is that indigenous women and youth are crucial actors in sustaining wild foods and the overall traditional resource management systems. As community nurturers, indigenous women hold key roles in food and health systems. Meanwhile, the youth are expected to carry on the cultural practices which includes the sustainable use and management of wild foods. While migration for education and work significantly affects intergenerational transmission of indigenous knowledge, indigenous communities are exploring means to reintegrate the youth back to the community. One such example of this is the Higaunon's panlaoy, a traditional forest walk that enables youth to learn from elders about the biodiversity in their ancestral domains, including the wild foods and herbal plants found inside their conserved forests.

The review of legal frameworks relevant to wild foods and indigenous communities revealed that the policies meant to provide IPs protection are in place (e.g., Indigenous Peoples Rights Act of 1997 (IPRA/Republic Act 8371), Expanded National Integrated Protected Areas System Act (ENIPAS/Republic Act 11038) but do not materialize well on the ground. The FPIC process remains plagued by corruption, deforestation and plunder of natural resources remains unabated, and sustainable traditional resource rights remains curtailed and criminalized.

In addition, many indigenous communities face land use conversion due to business expansion and the encroachment of government projects that violate their right to self-determination. Communities also grapple with challenges such as tourism and the bad farming practices of non-indigenous peoples. Even with this seemingly bleak backdrop, however, indigenous communities maintain a positive outlook as they continue to assert their rights and secure their lands to maintain life in their territories.

### **Vietnam**

In Vietnam, 'wild foods' as a term has hardly found usage, even in official circles. The management of "wild foods" deals with the plants, animals, and fungi, and, at times, their relationship with their habitats and the ecosystem. However, all studies completely leave out the communities that use these foods and are closely connected to them. These communities are often the ethnic minorities or indigenous peoples who have been living in the forest areas for generations, and relying on these resources, especially for food. However, their community rights and benefits are not always included into the overall development and conservation plans of the state. Without an inclusive agenda that also cares for the indigenous people and local communities (IPLCs), their settlements will soon disappear or be replaced by the common modern forms of urban areas, causing the loss of their traditions and knowledge. This might prove to be a vital flaw in the process of sustainable development in the long term for the forest areas. NTFP Asia's work is therefore to find possible solutions by first trying to establish a comprehensive framework for inclusive wild food management that can not only cover all related aspects, but also care for all the involved parties, including the IPLCs.

Wild food has always been an important source of food for certain communities and populations, especially the vulnerable ones in forest, mountainous, or rural areas where agriculture is difficult or not allowed to develop. In times of economic difficulties, it can greatly contribute to the temporary alleviation of food scarcity. Products of wild food could also be a source of income for native and local people, mitigating the burden of poverty. Wild food plays an irreplaceable role in traditional spiritual or recreational occasions, events, or festivals of most native communities. This requires the local knowledge on how to find, gather, process, use, and preserve wild food, as well as how to organize these events. It is felt that only when wild foods are legally recognized that further actions to manage and develop it can be taken. Moreover, a legal framework on wild food, together with relevant policies, can practically help guide the implementation of effective wild food governance, especially with the inclusion of local communities and native people.

## ABOUT THE PUBLICATION

This publication presents perspectives and cases from Cambodia. It is part of the series of country papers produced by dialogue partners of the SIANI Expert Group Wild Foods, Biodiversity and Livelihoods Network. Other countries in the series include India, Indonesia, Philippines, and Vietnam.

The present paper does not attempt to provide a comprehensive review of the state of wild foods in Cambodia. Rather, it presents a snapshot of the situation of wild foods in the country, illustrated through case studies and review of available literature, and offers ideas on addressing challenges and seizing possible opportunities.

Apart from this paper, the group also produced a policy brief and discussion paper on sustaining wild food practice which highlights the key messages and insights from the dialogues and interventions of the WFBL network from 2020–2021. It is recommended that you pair the reading of this country paper with the policy and practice briefs to learn more about the wild food scenario in the Asian region.

It is hoped that the publications in the series contribute to available literature on the role of IPLCs and forests in ensuring a planet that is healthy, safe, and secure for all.

## ABOUT THE WILD FOODS, BIODIVERSITY AND LIVELIHOODS (WFBL) NETWORK, SIANI EXPERT GROUP AND NTFP-EP

### WFBL Network SIANI Expert Group

The Wild Foods, Biodiversity and Livelihood (WFBL) Network is an Expert Group supported by the Swedish International Agricultural Network Initiative (SIANI). The group is composed of individuals and organizations from multiple sectors, tied together by a common interest to consolidate knowledge about wild foods in Asia and its links to food security, poverty reduction and sustainable forest management. The network is convened by the NTFP-EP.

The group aims to consolidate traditional ecological knowledge about wild foods in Asia and bridge it with the relevant policy arenas to ensure wise, inclusive, and impactful decision making in the areas of food security, poverty reduction and sustainable forest management.

With support from SIANI, the group has facilitated and convened dialogues and knowledge-sharing activities at the regional level, engaging national and regional representatives from the forest and indigenous communities, government, science, civil society, and development agencies, creating an enabling environment for forest communities and indigenous peoples in Asia, going beyond conservation and expanding the understanding of the value of forests, especially wild foods, and traditional ecological knowledge and systems. Implementation of the activities ran from 2020–2021.

Learn more about the expert group by visiting [siani.se](http://siani.se) and [wildfoodsasia.com](http://wildfoodsasia.com).

### NTFP-EP

NTFP-EP stands as a diverse and collaborative network of over 100 NGOs and CBOs who all work with forest-based communities to strengthen their capacity in the sustainable management of natural resources in Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Vietnam.

Starting out in 1998 as an informal group of practitioners working in local initiatives in Indonesia, Malaysia, India, Vietnam and the Philippines, the group recognized the potential benefits of sharing experiences and pooling expertise. In September 2003, NTFP-EP was registered as a non-profit organization based in Manila, Philippines.

At present, NTFP-EP serves as a platform for information and knowledge exchange of appropriate resource management and forest-based livelihood techniques and experiences. It is present in six (6) countries, particularly Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Vietnam.

The network provides technical support and training, assistance in strategy formulation, documentation of best practices and success stories, mobilization of resources, advocacy for local initiatives, and lobbying efforts for enabling policies.

NTFP-EP work is focused on the following thematic outcomes: community-based conservation, indigenous food and health, tenure rights and governance, and sustainable community livelihoods, culture, youth engagement and empowerment, and gender equal community agency and voice.



# Introduction



Indigenous people in Ratanakiri province, Cambodia, in common with most of the Southeast Asian indigenous peoples, have developed cultures where forestry and its resources are at the center of their lives and livelihoods. Indeed, forest resources are used for construction; food; medicine; for their swidden fields, and special areas dedicated as important spiritual places for interacting with social lives past and present. The traditional agricultural system based on shifting cultivation has traditionally sustained communities with the capacity to increase incomes, maintain healthy diets, and become productive individuals. The system is conducive to agrobiodiversity while efficiently combining consumption and collection of wild foods collecting as part of reducing food insecurity, while also preserving their traditions.

The Kreung indigenous community is in Chuy village, Ta Veng Leu commune, Ta Veng district, Ratanakiri province, occupying a total land area of 2,803 hectares. The community is composed of 152 families, equal to 566 people; 277 are females; 95% are Kreung people. Most of the community members are engaged in farming, fishing, and collecting non-timber forest products (NTFP), which are wild foods for subsistence according to the traditional way of indigenous people

of Kreung Phum Chuy. The community areas consist of land for housing, farmland, peatland, spiritual land, burial forest land, protected forest land and reserved land for future generations. The community area is elongated and has a village hall in the center, a community meeting venue, and a traditional place of worship.

About 100 % of the total households in the village collect and consume wild foods for daily living and small sales according to the results of our focus group discussion and key informant interviews. Most of the community members are not aware of the health benefits of wild foods; instead, they see its spiritual, religious, cultural, and traditional value – some wild foods are considered part of their identity. In the last five years, wild food resources have been declining and degraded due to economic land concessions (ELC) granting for agro-industrial purpose as well as the impact of the Yalai Dam hydro power dam from Vietnam, forest clearance and population growth factors, etc. These situations have led to food insecurity, health problems and the loss of Kreung identity as most community members now buy food and vegetables from local markets, most of which are imported from Vietnam.

# Scope, Limitations, and Methodology

The methodology of this study is based on Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA). This process has allowed local communities to participate and be involved in the process of data collection, data analyses and developing possible intervention strategies. Key tools employed include focus group discussion (FGD), Key Informant Interview (KII) and field observation to extract information. Three key important questions were used to explore the topic further. These questions are: (1) How important are wild foods to you and your community? (2) What are the biggest challenges you faced related to wild foods? (3) What is your outlook on wild foods for the future?

Indeed, community mobilization around the importance of wild food was also important in the methodology. It was done through the involvement of local partner organization, Save Venerable Cambodia (SVC) and Hilander Association (HA), which have

extensive knowledge of community work in Ratanakiri and whose community facilitators are from the targeted ethnic minority, the Kreung.

Due to limited time and the difficulty of road condition to the village to do an exhaustive documentation of wild foods diversity in the study sites, a focus was given to some key species which are only plant-based food species which is available in the village. Obviously, wild food collection is a seasonal activity and it would be much better to investigate about specific species when people are actually collecting it from the forest. In addition, the botanical identification of species should be confirmed by specimen data collection by a trained botanist and this should be done at different periods of the year in order to maximize the chance to collect flowers and fruits.

## Findings


### INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE AND WILD FOODS






The Kreung Phum Chuy have traditionally lived in collective settlements along the Sesan River, and some have built houses in the forest for shifting cultivation. The relationship between natural resources and Kreung are strong, because they rely on these for survival. Evergreen forests and bamboo forests are the main assets they usually plant. Wildlife and NTFPs are used to fill out food shortage, support shelter construction, as traditional medicines, and as

the crop-protecting fence from animals. Wild foods collection been made seasonally according to each type of food available along the river and forest areas. Main areas that they frequently collect wild foods in include rotational farming areas, protected forest areas, and conserved forest areas. The collection practice they follow is the traditional way – i.e., no cutting of trees, no burning, etc.

Below are the popular wild foods that can be collected in the community:



**Table: Popular Wild Foods in Chuy Village**

No.	Local Name	Photo	Type of Use	Status
<b>Types of Leaves: Flower and Buds</b>				
1	Chrouy and Phkar Andeng		Food/Soup Fresh vegetables Selling	Average

No.	Local Name	Photo	Type of Use	Status
<b>Types of Leaves: Flower and Buds</b>				
2	An tran		Food/Soup	Average
3	Baun		Food/Soup Medicine (bark)	Average
4	Sla Leung		Food/Soup	Average
5	Nong Nong Prey		Food/Soup	Average
6	Nhchom		Food/Soup	Average

No.	Local Name	Photo	Type of Use	Status
7	Krachak Cheung Kor Ka Tiblib		Food/Soup	Average
8	Rom Vouk		Food/Soup  Fresh vegetables	Average
9	Ve Veah		Food/Soup  Fresh vegetables	Average
10	Pramoy Damri Kaoh Kem		Food/Soup	Average
11	Harbang		Food/Soup	Average

No.	Local Name	Photo	Type of Use	Status
12	Bout		Fresh vegetables	Average
13	Maddie		Food/Soup	Average (collected in dry season)
14	Breu		Fresh vegetables	Plenty
15	Krao		Food/Soup	Decrease
<b>Types of Fruits and Stems</b>				
16	Antatkor Phlei Ambok		Fresh vegetables  Medicine	Plenty




No.	Local Name	Photo	Type of Use	Status
17	Meak		Food/Soup	Average
18	Kalak		Food/Soup	Plenty

#### Type of Mushroom

19	Phsaet-Rngear-Passet-Gor		Food/Soup Fresh vegetables	Plenty
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#### Types of Rattan/Vines

20	Antounh		Food/Soup	Decrease (due to hydro power dam)
21	Pramoydamri		Fresh vegetables	Decrease

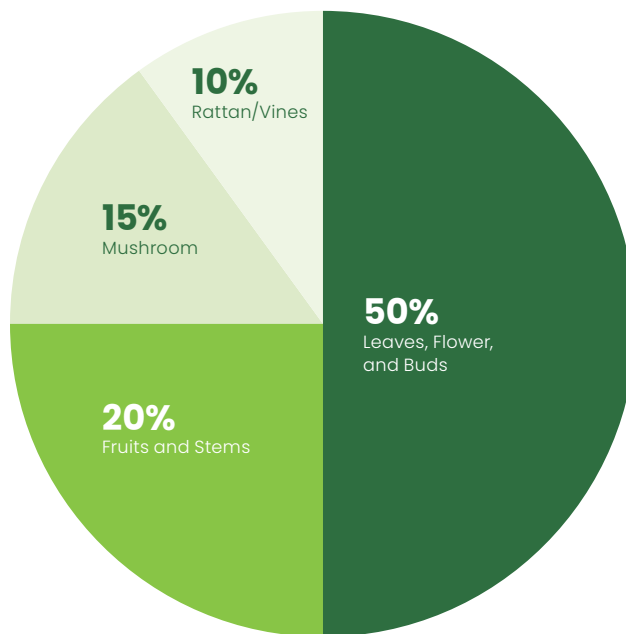
No.	Local Name	Photo	Type of Use	Status
22	Tra Saey		Food/Soup Fresh vegetables	Decrease (due to ELC)
23	Phtaw Vlli Chaveat		Food/Soup Fresh vegetables Handicraft Identity Selling	Decrease (due to ELC)
<b>Type of Edible Fruits</b>				
24	Kantuot Prey - Halao		Make jam Medicine	Average

Most of the Kreung Phum Chuy collect wild foods from plant parts—such as leaves, flowers, buds, berries, and vines—for daily cooking and small business. The Kreung ethnic group uses rattan vines in preparation of their wild foods such as Kor Kaur, boiled, soup, Chanang, and Prong, among many others. Apart from food, rattan is also used for ornaments and basket weaving and is an important part of the Kreung’s traditional identity. These traditional foods have been linked with the local spirits and culture.

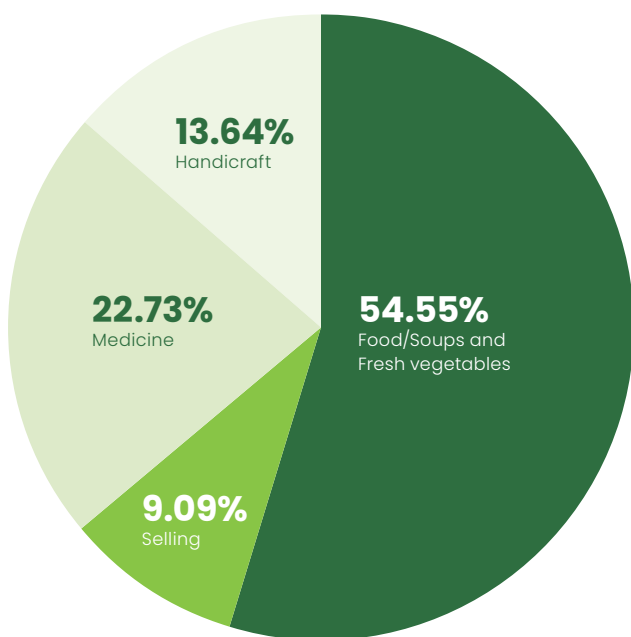
Separately, the Kreung Phum Chuy also regularly consume wild mushrooms for cooking with other wild vegetables. Rattan vines, aside from food, is also used by the community for handicrafts, particularly baskets used for sacrificial ceremonies.

On the other hand, some plants, such as wild locusts, are used to treat diseases, soaked in wines, and as a sweetener. Some villagers recognize that wild vegetables are better than vegetables bought at the market, because wild vegetables do not use chemical fertilizers and are also healthier. Women play an important role in collecting wild food to support their daily lives.

### Plant-based Foods



### Parts of Plants Used



### Economic Analysis

Traditional forests and plantation remain the main source of food for Kreung communities even though food products bought from markets are increasing. Collecting wild foods is important especially for the most vulnerable families who are unable to afford foods from the market. Some community members said wild vegetables are essential for daily consumption as they do not need to spend money to buy vegetables from the market, except for ingredients such as salt, Prahok, and sugar, which minimally cost 20,000 Riel per week. IP women in the community spend time every week to collect wild vegetables, and they are usually able to collect one basket at a time, between 2 and 3 kilograms. A basket of wild vegetables would normally last a household several days. Community members usually collect wild foods with a market price of 20,000–30,000 Riel. Some villagers sell wild vegetables—especially Pkar Andeng, which is abundant in the community—daily to middlemen between 5,000–8,000 Riel per kilogram, which are resold at the market for 15,000 Riels or more. According to key informant interviews (KII), out of 152 families in the community, 80% to 90% collected wild food for household consumption, while 10% collected to sell to the market.



## Current situation and future work

The state of wild foods at present is deteriorating due to the natural forests being cleared for agro-industrial purposes.

Threats and challenges to wild foods include land conversion for different purposes, unsustainable wild food collection, and the lack of a national guideline on the collection and development of non-timber forest products (NTFPs) – including wild foods.

In 2015, the government granted economic land concessions to Vietnamese companies to invest in rubber plantations, some of which overlap boundaries with community land. Key areas where local people used to collect for wild foods became owned by private companies, making it impossible for people to access the wild foods there.

Some villagers have also cleared the forest for plantations, shifting from the traditional practice of swidden or rotational farming to cash crops (cashew nuts) instead. Previously, the community complained on this matter to claim their land back, but it does not seem to be effective due to the lack of involvement of relevant authorities, especially since the community has not yet received their certificate of communal land titling (CLT), a legal document that recognizes their ownership of the land. They also need a forest management plan and marketing support to ensure sustainable use of their land. In addition, the floods caused by the opening of the Yalai hydropower dam in Vietnam has also resulted in wild foods decreasing along the Sesan River and depleting some species.

Whilst wild food resources are vulnerable, some people spend more time to collecting wild food from other areas or buying commercially-grown vegetables from the market.

If not addressed properly, all of these wild food sources will be completely lost in the next five years, and at the same time, community members will fall into poverty and food insecurity. “The land lost to the company is

reserved land, and the next day there are no wild food to eat, only substituted by crop planting around my home,” said Ms. Teav Thao, a women representative of the Kreung Phum Chuy.

In terms of policies, no specific guidelines are focused on wild foods other than those about forestry and protected areas, such as the sub-decree on community forestry (CF) and community protected areas (CPA) establishment, the Agriculture Strategy Development Plan (ASDP 2019–2023), the National Forestry Programme (NFP) and the National Policy on the Preservation of Cardamom species (2020).

At the regional level, the ASEAN approved guidelines for sustainable harvest and resource management protocols for selected NTFPs (October 2020). The protocols covered edible NTFPs, such as forest fruits and honey. It is hoped that such guidelines and protocols will help promote an enabling environment to strengthen wild foods and community practices pertaining to wild foods.

In Cambodia, work on wild food studies and awareness have been on-going. Some notable publications on the subject include:

- Aspects of Knowledge of Forests of the Bunnong people of Dak Dam commune, Monduliri (2012)
- Aspects of Knowledge of Forests of the Kreung people of Ratanakiri (2013)
- Cambodia NTFP database
- Participatory needs assessment of Wild Foods Diversity Towards Food Security and Climate Change Adaptation (2012)

We aim to build on the momentum of these previous initiatives and plan to conduct related interventions to further build the capacities of communities and support organizations to take on the work of research, documentation, restoration, and monitoring of wild foods for a sustained and strengthened practice.

# Conclusions and Recommendations

Currently, there are only about 60% of land remaining for shifting cultivation, but in the near future, people are worried about losing this land to traditional farming. Community members have started planting family crops around the house to overcome to the declining supply of wild vegetables, or buying food from the market to make up for dwindling supplies. For wild foods in the next five years, how does it look like? It depends on the involvement and commitment of the authorities in lobbying to have legitimacy over their tenure right.

Communities should consider developing a management plan, as well as reforestation of wild foods that are essential for the daily household's consumption. Moreover, the community should be encouraged to apply an agroforestry model to community forests as part of promoting local subsistence and rehabilitate forests. Mut Pisey, the Fundraising and Network Coordinator of Save Venerable Cambodia (SVC) recommends that *"Communities should apply agroforestry model along community forest areas linking livelihood improvement and forest restoration."*



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