

# Fighting Climate Change



The project supports a range of activities beyond environmental protection, promoting the independence and wellbeing of these communities.



## Southern Cardamom Forest Protection

Defending one of the last unfragmented rainforests in Southeast Asia, the Southern Cardamom project protects a mosaic of habitats, from dense evergreen and pine forests to wetlands, flooded grasslands, lakes, and coastal mangroves.

As well as covering parts of the Southern Cardamom National Park and Tatai Wildlife Sanctuary, the project also protects a critical part of the Cardamom Mountains Rainforest Ecoregion – one of the most important locations for biodiversity conservation on the planet. This unique project is home to at least 52 International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) threatened species of mammals, birds, and reptiles: Siamese crocodiles, sun bears, clouded leopards and one of Cambodia's two populations of Asian elephants.

## The Context

The diverse ecosystems protected by the project are some of the most important biodiversity hotspots on the planet; however, they are also one of the most endangered. Deforestation and forest degradation is driven by illegal logging and clearing forest to make way for agricultural land and plantations, as well as fuel collection and charcoal production. Largely due to a lack of alternative opportunities, many residents rely on small-scale farming for their livelihood.

## The Project

Covering over 445,000 ha in western Cambodia, the Southern Cardamom project aims to address these local drivers of deforestation. The project offers training on improved farming techniques so farmers can increase yields on smaller plots of land; and develops community-based ecotourism, increasing the economic value of keeping the forest standing. Initiatives to stimulate investment in local businesses have also been set up, helping create greater financial security for the local residents and alternative options to unsustainably clearing land. The project supports improved environmental governance and programmes to increase awareness about environmental protection.

## The Benefits

The project directly supports the livelihoods of residents living in the 21 villages surrounding the project area and has also improved healthcare facilities. By protecting the rainforest, the project ensures the vital ecosystem services continue to function: the catchment area provides fresh water to the largest mangrove forest in the region and supports the regulation of climate for the South Asian peninsula. With this unique habitat protected, the renowned wildlife in the area, including 52 threatened and endangered species – the Asian elephant, the clouded leopard and critically endangered Siamese crocodile – have a fighting chance at recuperating their numbers.

