



## **The status of Prey Lang**

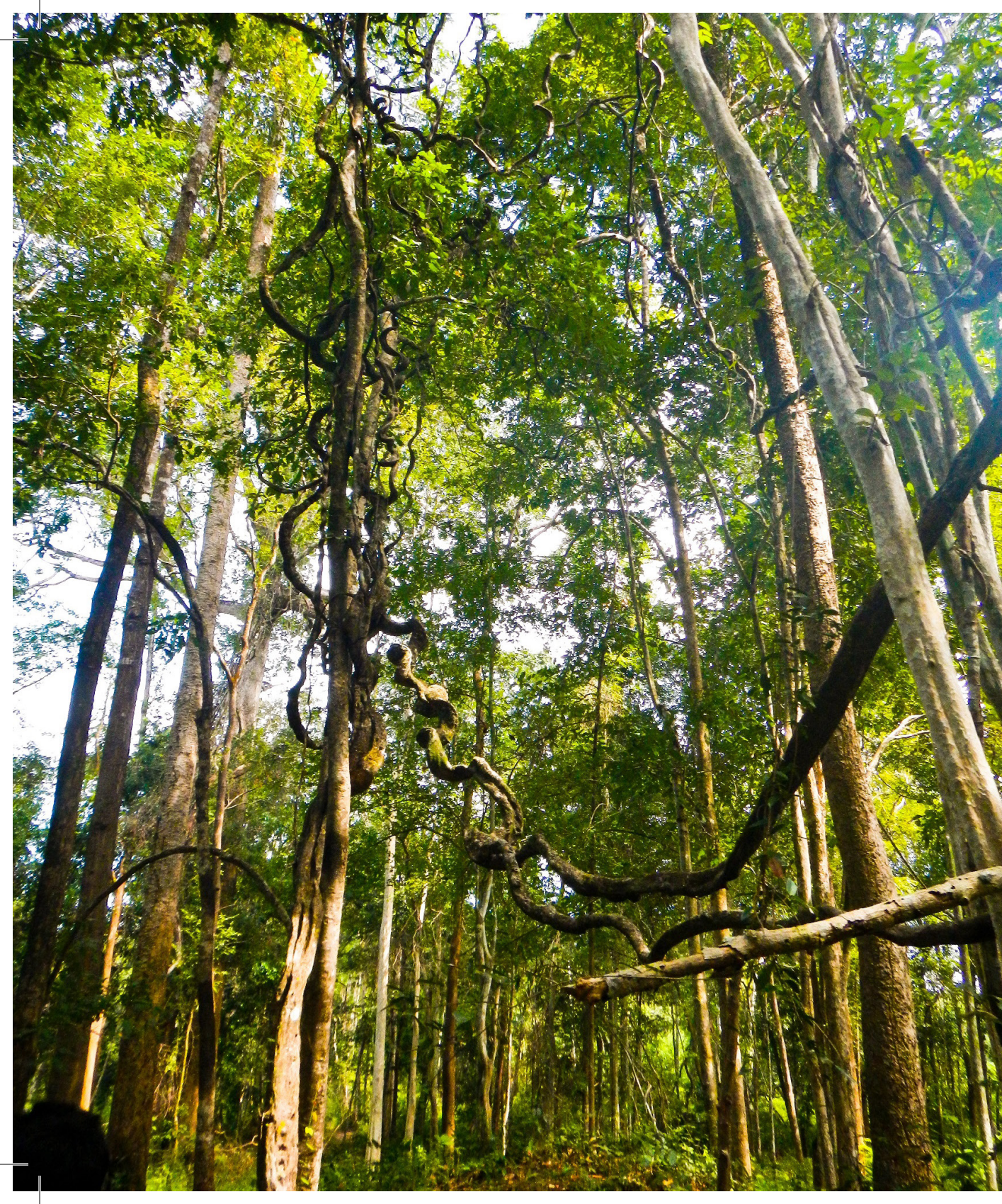
### **7th monitoring report**

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# THE STATUS OF PREY LANG

7th Monitoring Report

## Key Findings

1

ILLEGAL LOGGING IS STILL PREVALENT,  
AND HAS INCREASED IN RECENT YEARS

2

THE NEED FOR GOVERNMENT PERMITS  
TO PATROL THE FOREST, FAVOUR  
ILLEGAL LOGGERS

3

ROADS ARE A MAJOR PROXIMATE DRIVER  
OF HABITAT LOSS AND FRAGMENTATION

On behalf of Prey Lang Community Network (PLCN):  
Argyriou D., Theilade I., Ciavarella P. and Brofeldt S.





In 2001, communities living in and around Prey Lang began to advocate protecting their ancestral forest lands from large-scale illegal logging and land grabbing, which was limiting local communities' access to natural resources. PLCN is today a well-organized group of communities working to conserve Prey Lang in collaboration with other stakeholders. PLCN conducts regular forest patrols to collect data on forest resources, illegal activities and

interactions with authorities using a specially designed smartphone application (known as the Prey Lang app). The data are analysed in collaboration with researchers and students at the University of Copenhagen and the results are published in reports, press releases and on social media. PLCN's innovative approach to environmental justice continues to attract international attention and the network has been awarded four international prizes.

## PROFILE OF A PLCN MEMBER



Mrs. EANG Pisey was born in 1955. She is Kuy and lives in Kang Cham village, Kang Cham commune, Talaborivat district, Stung Treng province, together with her 8 children. Her family relies on farming, mainly rice, and harvesting of Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFPs). Pisey became an active member of PLCN in 2004. She has devoted her life to protecting the forest as it forms an intricate part of Kuy culture and spiritual life. In 2006, Pisey became an active member of PLCN due to her skills in coordination and collaboration within the network and with external partners, associations and networks. Pisey has gained respect from communities and external stakeholders alike for her persistence and hard work in protecting the forest. In 2012, Pisey was elected as one of 28 PLCN core group members and she helps coordinate and strengthen the network. Pisey is a very active member of PLCN, involved in advocacy activities, campaigns, patrols, networking and strengthening the membership base.

## WHAT'S NEW SINCE LAST MONITORING REPORT

- The government issued a **new regulation** in 2017 requiring communities to inform the Ministry of Environment (MoE) and local authorities three days prior to conducting patrols, so that MoE can assign forest rangers to join the patrols and allow PLCN to enter the forest. This requirement hampers the work of PLCN and there is a general feeling that illegal loggers are being tipped off by some local authorities and/or forest rangers, making the patrols less effective. A cross-provincial patrol planned for November 2017 was cancelled due to this new regulation.
- The Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA) released a **report on illegal exports of timber from Cambodia to Vietnam** in May 2018. This report documents how illegally felled timber is being laundered through three different sites in Cambodia and transported to Vietnam, avoiding border controls. The report urges the Cambodian government to enforce the timber export ban at all border posts, to revoke all Economic Land Concessions within protected areas, and to investigate specific individuals associated with corruption.
- The Japanese Company, Mitsui & Co Ltd., has signed an **agreement with the Government of Cambodia**

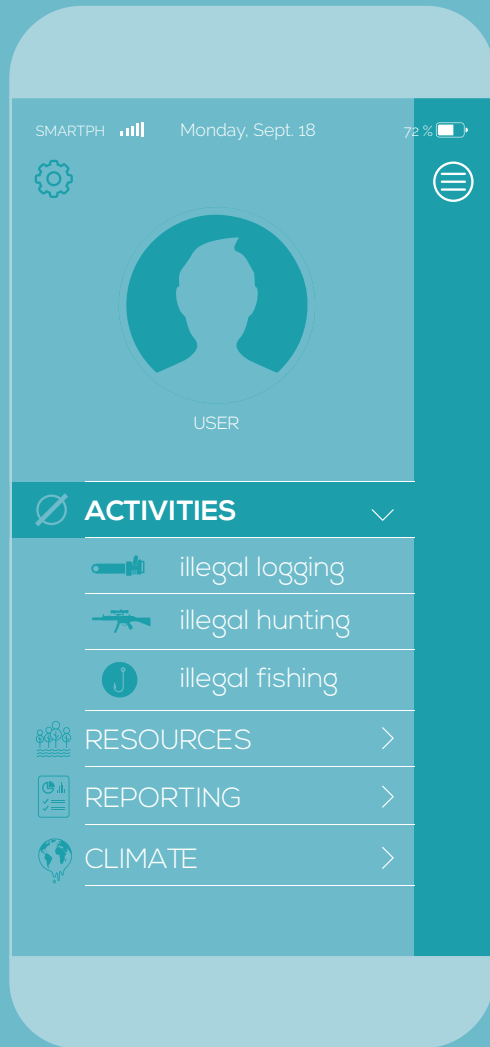
### for the implementation of a \$1.5 million forest monitoring project.

The project seeks to prevent forest crime and biodiversity loss and to improve the livelihoods of community members in the Prey Lang Wildlife Sanctuary. The first year will focus on patrols in Stung Treng and the project will expand to other provinces in the following years. Despite the fact that PLCN and the inhabitants of Prey Lang forest are the main beneficiaries, they have not been informed of this project, either by the company or the authorities.



Figure 4 (on the right)  
PLCN patrollers documenting forest crimes  
with the PL app.

# METHODOLOGY



Initially the Prey Lang app documented three major categories:

- **“Activities”** refers to **extraction activities** occurring in the Prey Lang area, such as **illegal logging** activities, **illegal hunting**, and **illegal fishing**.
- **“Resources”** refers to **natural or cultural resources** and sites found in the Prey Lang area such as **resin trees**, **medicinal plants**, **fishing grounds**, and **spirit forests**.
- **“Reporting”** refers to **interactions with the authorities** such as **reporting of illegal activities**, **confiscated equipment**, **threats to patrol members**, and **joint patrols** by PLCN members and forest rangers.

Following a request from PLCN to be able to monitor climate events, a new **climate category** was incorporated into the app in January 2018. The new feature allows PLCN members to document instances of **“climate change,”** such as **changing levels of lakes and rivers**, **extreme weather conditions**, and also **“climate adaptation” initiatives** by villagers in the Prey Lang area, for example, new farming methods, crop varieties, and water management. In addition, a new **security component** was added to the app with the support of the European Commission and released in April 2018. PLCN members can now systematically report threats, intimidation and violence related to their activities inside Prey Lang forest. Data will be used to assess the scale of threats and intimidation against members and will hopefully support members to continue their patrolling and advocacy activities. The new security component is placed under

the “Reporting” category of the app. Patrol members were trained in the use of the new features of the app in June 2018 and entries are expected to be uploaded in the near future.

For this report, all data uploaded since 1 February 2015 were re-evaluated and validated, i.e., older entries have been re-categorized and incomplete uploads and duplicates removed. In total, 18,127 observations were uploaded of which 7,038 were validated by data managers from the University of Copenhagen. The major technical issue is poor mobile coverage leading to incomplete uploads, i.e., lack of coordinates or a photo to document the observations. However, since a major refactoring of the app and training received by PLCN members, the validation rate for the last six months has risen to more than 70%, which confirms the capacity of PLCN to monitor forests.

# GENERAL FINDINGS

## TOTAL REPORTING PERIOD

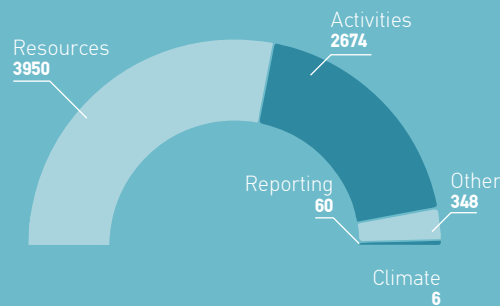
**TOTAL MONITORING PERIOD:** 1st February 2015 - 31st May 2018

**Total entries since 1st february:** 18127

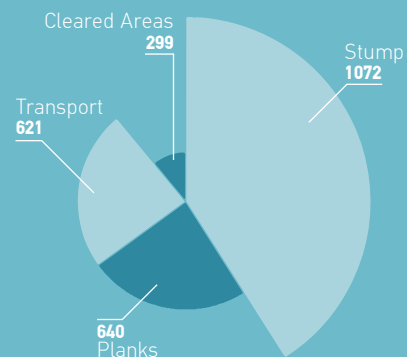
**Validated entries:** 7038

**Validation rate:** 38%

### A. Breakdown of validated entries to categories



### B. Logging



PLCN primarily uses the app to record **resources (56% of the entries)** and **activities (38% of the entries)**. Less often, reports such as documents, maps, confiscated chainsaws and general patrol photos were uploaded (**6%**) (Figure A). Only **1% of the entries report interactions** with authorities. **Six entries** have been made in the new category on **climate**. Most entries under the category "Resources" reported **trees (82%)** and **NTFPs (14%)**. Fewer observations reported **wildlife (3%)** and **sacred sites (1%)**. The monitoring of forest resources shows the importance of resin trees and NTFPs to local livelihoods. This monitoring report will focus on illegal logging, however, which is seen as the main threat to the Prey Lang forest and local livelihoods.

Illegal logging accounted for

99% of the reported activities. The remaining 1% referred to illegal fishing, illegal hunting, and Economic Land Concessions (ELCs) for mining and plantations (Graph not shown). For illegal logging, most entries reported **"Single stumps" (41%)**, most often trees harvested for luxury timber (Figure B). **"Planks" left on site for later collection by the loggers and "Transport" each represented 24% of the entries.** **"Cleared areas" made up 11% of the entries.** Unfortunately, the app is not designed to assess the area of land cleared. A single cleared area can cover 100 ha and include hundreds of single stumps.

Illegal logging activities documented by patrols are shown in Figures 5 - 6 - 7.

Figure A: Breakdown of validated entries (Feb 2015 - May 2018).

Figure B: Breakdown of entries within the logging category (Feb 2015-May 2018).



## LATEST REPORTING PERIOD

**LATEST MONITORING PERIOD:** 1st September 2017 - 31st May 2018

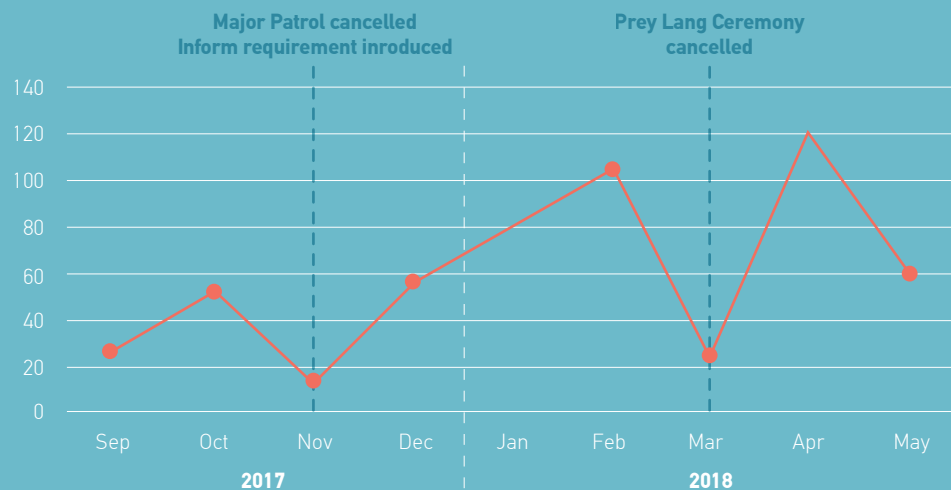
**Total entries:** 2745

**Validated entries:** 2033

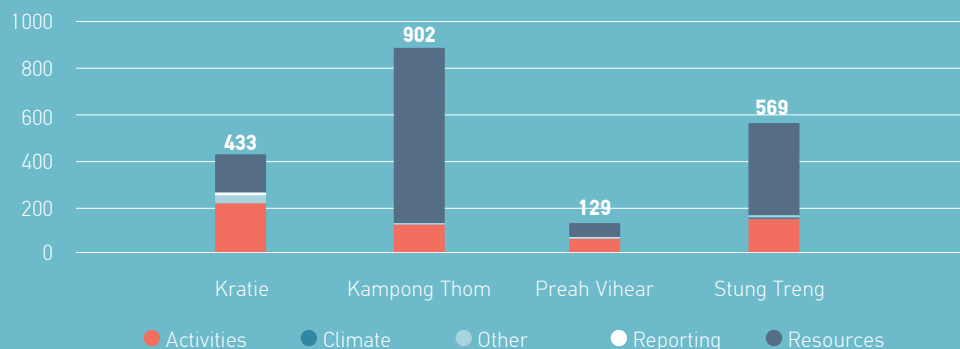
**Validation rate:** 74%

**Illegal logging entries / month:** 60

### C. Number of entries on illegal logging



### D. Entries / Province Sept 2017 - May 2018



### Illegal logging increased in 2018 compared to 2017 (Figure C).

Furthermore, the need to inform local authorities in advance of patrols has limited the work of PLCN. There was a significant decline in entries in November 2017 when a joint patrol across provinces was cancelled because the local authorities failed to issue a permit. PLCN assessed that there was a danger of the gathering being characterized as political and feared possible retaliation and harassment from the authorities. The annual Prey Lang ceremony was likewise cancelled in March 2018. Despite the limited number of entries in these two months, there was an average of 60 illegal logging entries per month during this reporting period.

Patrol members from Kampong Thom province uploaded most entries during the latest period (**September 2017-May 2018**) with **902 validated entries (Figure 6)**. **Stung Treng** increased their entries compared to the previous monitoring period (**569 validated entries**), followed by **Kratie province (433 validated entries)** and, finally, **Preah Vihear province (129 validated entries)**. The highest number of illegal logging entries came from Kratie province, highlighting the extent of illegal logging in the southern parts of Prey Lang.

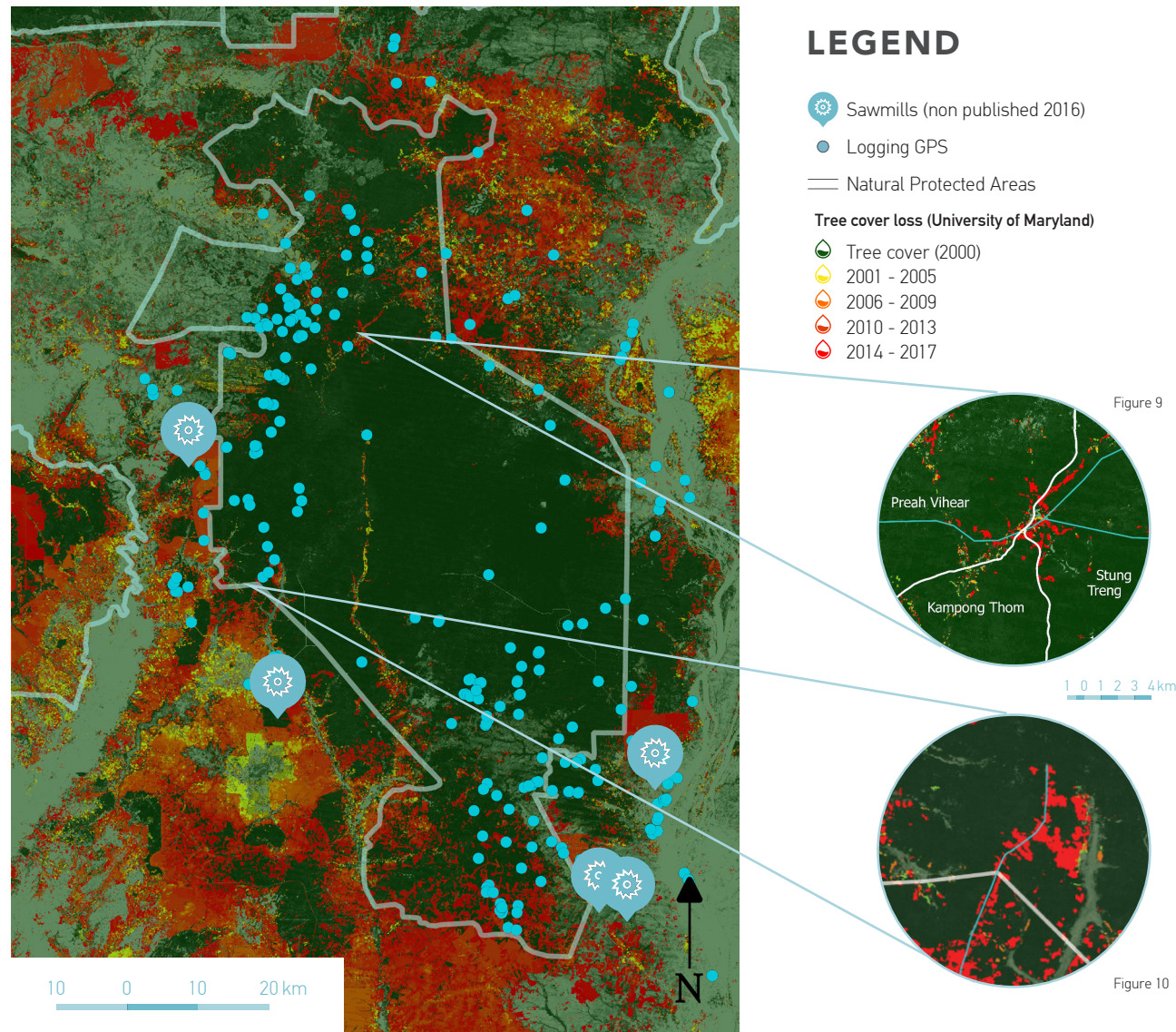
Figure C: Logging entries during the latest monitoring period (September 2017 - May 2018)

Figure D: Total entries per province (September 2017 - May 2018). Colors in bars denote reported categories



# GEOSPATIAL ANALYSIS

Figure 8

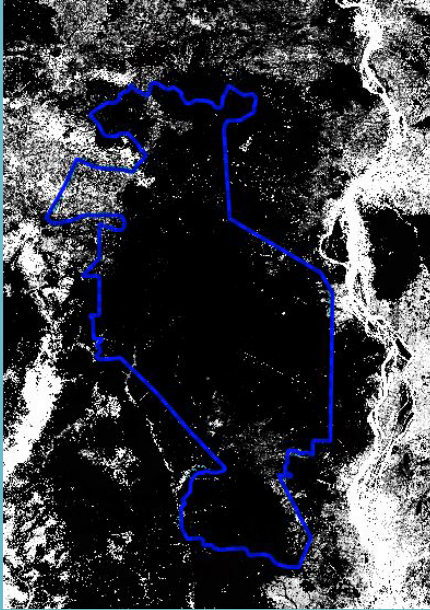


Forest loss detected by remote sensing is correlated with PLCN entries on illegal logging. In addition, PLCN has documented selective logging within closed canopy forest which cannot be detected by remote sensing. Areas of high forest loss corresponded to areas signed off to mining, plantation and timber concessions. Sawmills on the border of the Wildlife Sanctuary were found to be proximate drivers for deforestation. The mapping of illegal logging reported by patrol members is based on 1,518 validated entries uploaded since February 2015 (Figure 6).

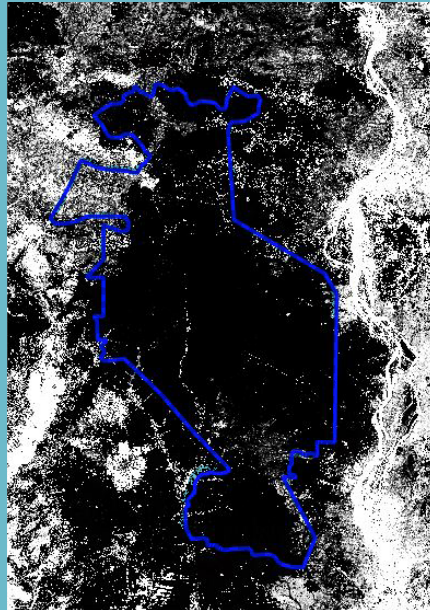
Figure 8 : Tree cover loss 2000-2017, including sawmills and illegal logging entries in Prey Lang Wildlife Sanctuary and surrounding areas. Roads were found to be proximate drivers for deforestation and forest fragmentation within the Prey Lang Wildlife Sanctuary. Areas with the highest deforestation followed the old and new logging roads in Prey Lang, as depicted in Figures 7 and 8.

Figure 9 and 10. Close-up of a roads and deforestation. Deforestation follows the old logging roads and new roads into Prey Lang.

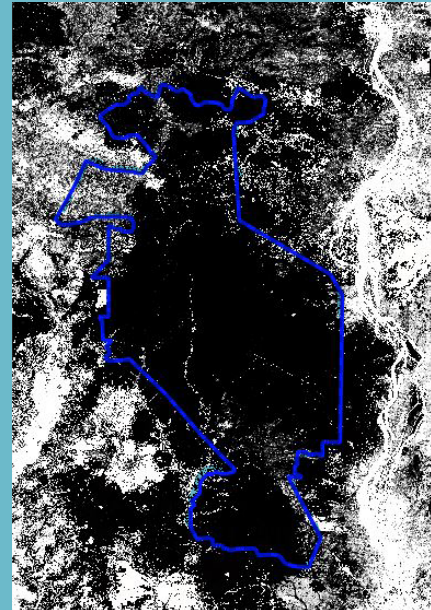
2000



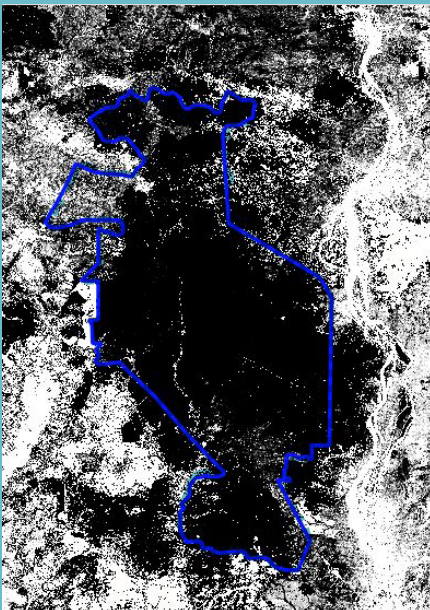
2009



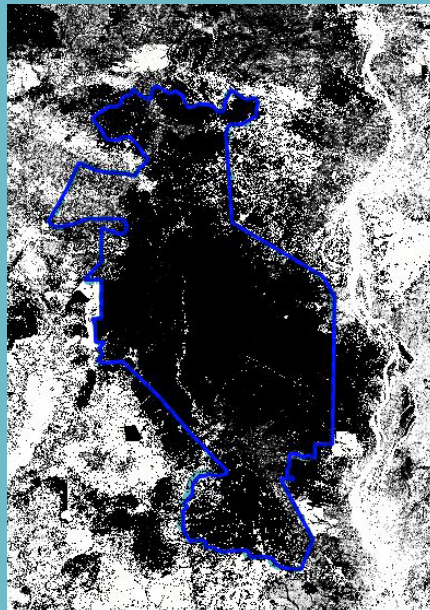
2011



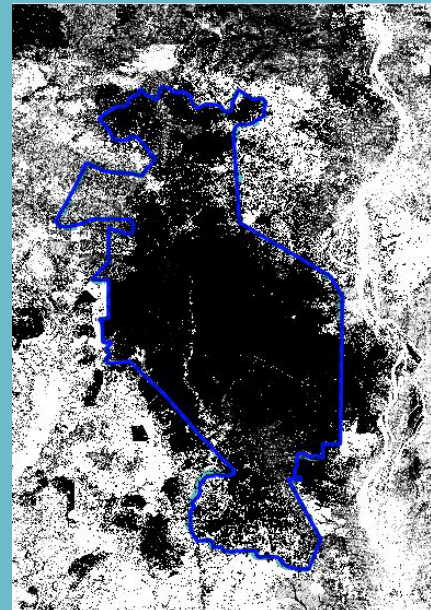
2013



2015



2017



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## LESSONS LEARNED

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Illegal logging is still happening at an alarming rate in the Prey Lang Wildlife Sanctuary and surrounding landscape. Satellite imagery showed a forest loss of 5,600 ha in 2017.

**This is equivalent** to twenty-one football fields of forest disappearing every day in 2017. Satellite imagery from 2000 through 2017 tracks the progression of forest loss (Figure 11).

10 0 10 20 30 Km



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Figure 11: Forest loss in the greater Prey Lang area from 2000 through 2017. Remote sensing data from University of Maryland (M. Hansen dataset 2018).

# RECOMMENDATIONS

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## 1. **PLCN should be allowed to patrol the Prey Lang Wildlife Sanctuary without informing the authorities**

The need to inform the provincial MoE department and local authorities in advance severely limits PLCN's efforts to stop illegal logging. This new system is time-consuming and makes it difficult for PLCN to organize patrols or patrolling teams across provinces. There is furthermore a widespread feeling that illegal loggers are being tipped off during the information process, making it harder to catch the perpetrators red-handed. We recommend:

- Removing the need to obtain prior consent from authorities to conduct patrols.
- Having a team of MoE rangers readily available to be involved in patrolling.

## 2. **Roadlessness is the best way to preserve Prey Lang forest**

Road construction into wilderness or frontier areas is a major proximate driver of habitat loss and fragmentation. Roads have been shown to lead to wildfires, overhunting and other environmental degradation, often with irreversible impacts on ecosystems<sup>1</sup>. Globally, almost 90% of all deforestation happened within 100 km of major roads established in

the years 1991-1997<sup>23</sup>. Old logging roads and newly established roads within Prey Lang Wildlife Sanctuary were found to be drivers of deforestation and fragmentation.

We recommend:

- Road building in Prey Lang Wildlife Sanctuary should be avoided if possible.
- Road building should be avoided in areas of high environmental value in Prey Lang Wildlife Sanctuary.
- Old logging roads leading to areas of high environmental importance should be closed.
- Further geospatial analyses could map areas where road improvements could improve agricultural development with modest environmental costs.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.nature.com/articles/nature13717>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/01431160110096791>

<sup>3</sup> Gopalasamy Reuben Clements Clements GR, Lynam AJ, Gaveau D, Yap WL, Lhota S, et al. (2014) Where and How Are Roads Endangering Mammals in Southeast Asia's Forests? PLoS ONE 9(12): e115376. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.011537

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Figure 12 (on the right)  
Cleared area inside Prey Lang forest





## STATEMENT

### PREY LANG COMMUNITY NETWORK

PREY LANG, IT'S OUR FOREST, TOO

We, the members of Prey Lang Community Network (PLCN) from the four provinces, Kratie, Steung Treng, Preah Vihear and Kampong Thom, **would like to appeal to the Royal Government of Cambodia, Ministry of Environment and relevant authorities to take more actions on the illegal logging that has been taking place anarchically in the Prey Lang Wildlife Sanctuary.**

The government designated the south Kravanh forest, Preah Rokar forest, West Siem Pang forest and Vern Say forest as protected forests on May 9, 2016. The government developed a number of mechanisms to protect natural resources in those areas. Those mechanisms include: 1) National Task Force Against Illegal Logging and Natural Resource Destruction; 2) Circular No. 05 on necessary measures to strengthen natural resource management; 3) National Forum on Natural Resource Protection and Conservation; 4) Provincial Forestry Committee, initiated by the Forestry Administration; 5) dialogues between civil society organizations, communities and ministries, organized twice a year by the Ministry of Environment; and other measures carried out by relevant ministries.

As these natural resource protection efforts are being pursued, we have observed that a number of illegal activities in Prey Lang forest, including logging, timber exportation, land clearing, mining exploration, and social land concessions, are still taking place. It seems there are no specific measures being taken to address these violations.

Remarkably, every day, many tractors loaded

with timber pass unencumbered through forest ranger checkpoints. The timber is not being confiscated and the offenders face no legal consequences for their crimes. However, when the Prey Lang Community Network voluntarily patrols the forest, it is required to obtain permission from the Ministry of Environment officials and local authorities. This seems to be in stark contrast to the Royal Government's mechanisms, community collaborative management and the measures taken by the Royal Government in their strong efforts to protect Cambodia's natural resources. During patrols to prevent illegal logging, Prey Lang Community Network members have discovered numerous copies of logging permission letters issued by local authorities and allowing local people to cut trees in the Prey Lang area to obtain house construction materials. Cutting the trees in protected forests is not permitted for any reason.

According to the 2017 activity monitoring report, which contains data collected on volunteer patrols in good cooperation between the rangers and local authorities, **56 chainsaws, 11 traditional hand-made guns, 50 traps, 24 plough machines and 6 "cow" tractors, 9 electric fishing shocks, 59.7 cubes mater of planks and 225 pieces of timber were discovered, confiscated and handed over to the rangers. The volunteers drew up written agreements with the offenders to stop logging activities.**

July 13, 2018

# VOICE OF PLCN

We, the members of Prey Lang Community Network, would like to request that the Royal Government of Cambodia, the Ministry of Environment and relevant authorities:

1. Stop requiring the communities to obtain permission for forest patrols and strengthen further collaboration for natural resource protection in Prey Lang.
2. Ensure that the confiscated materials are not returned to the illegal loggers  
(A number of chainsaws that had been handed over to the rangers were passed back to the loggers).
3. Investigate and close all sawmills surrounding Prey Lang.
4. End the buying and selling of all types of wood, both legal and illegal, around Prey Lang.
5. Administrative authorities must stop issuing permits to community members to log in protected areas.
6. Rangers must stop accepting bribes and work to end all logging and wood/timber transportation in Prey Lang.
7. Rangers must investigate the community people who have resin trees and are operating chainsaws in Prey Lang to clear farm land, cut trees, and trap animals.
8. Officials at all levels must effectively enforce the laws on natural resource management in Prey Lang.
9. Investigate and find out who attacked the forest activists in 2016.
10. Inspect and confiscate all kinds of hand-made guns in the villages around Prey Lang.
11. Confiscate all the chainsaws from villages, communes, districts, provinces and wood trading locations around the four provinces and stop imports of chainsaws.

TOGETHER WE ARE PROTECTING PREY LANG, BECAUSE IT'S OUR FOREST TOO!



[HTTP://PREYLANG.NET](http://PREYLANG.NET)  
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The report exists in two versions (Khmer and English), with the English version being the original.

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This report wouldn't be possible without the help of them.

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