



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs



Darwin Initiative Main: Final Report

To be completed with reference to the “Project Reporting Information Note”:
(<https://www.darwininitiative.org.uk/resources/information-notes/>).

It is expected that this report will be a **maximum of 20 pages** in length, excluding annexes.

Submission Deadline: no later than 3 months after agreed end date.

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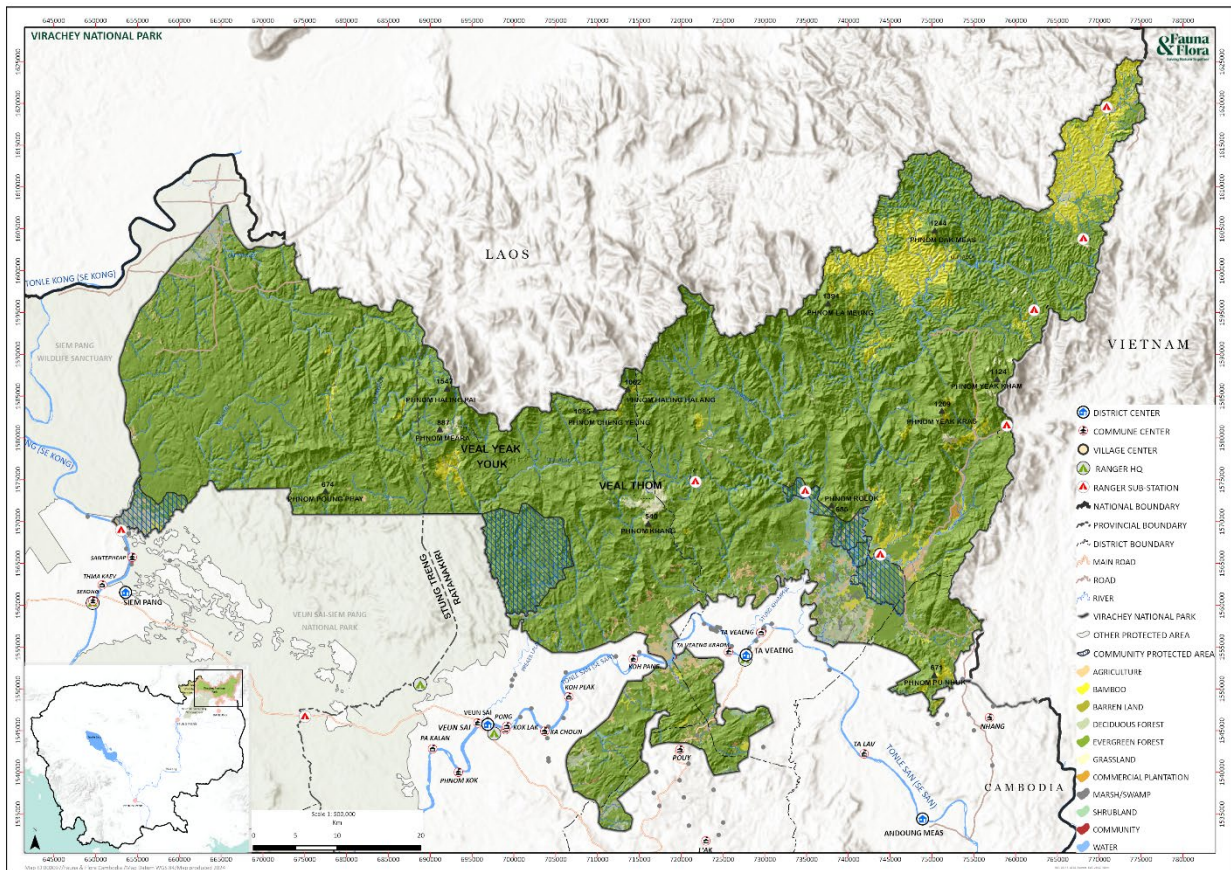
Darwin Initiative Project Information

Project reference	28-027
Project title	Strengthened livelihoods and Conservation Management in Virachey National Park
Country(ies)	Cambodia
Lead Organisation	Fauna & Flora International (FFI)
Project partner(s)	Cambodia Ministry of the Environment (MoE); local NGO Non-Timber Forest Products Organization (NTFPO)
Darwin Initiative grant value	£497,244.00
Start/end dates of project	1 Dec 2021 to 30 June 2024
Project Leader name	Vanny Lou
Project website/blog/social media	
Report author(s) and date	<div style="background-color: black; width: 100%; height: 40px;"></div> 31 July 2024

1 Project Summary

Virachey National Park (VNP) is one of Cambodia’s largest protected areas, out of 73 across the country. VNP is one of only two ASEAN Heritage Parks in the country. Part of the Annamite range, it forms the core of a vast Cambodia-Lao/PDR-Vietnam forest landscape, one of the most biologically-important and endangered tropical forests in the world. It supports large-antlered muntjac (*Muntiacus vuquangensis*), northern yellow-cheeked crested gibbon (*Nomascus annamensis*), clouded leopard (*Neofelis nebulosa*), Asian elephant (*Elephas maximus*), dhole (*Cuon alpinus*) and Sunda pangolin (*Manis javanica*), amongst other threatened wildlife, and is deeply connected with Indigenous Peoples’ cultures and livelihoods.

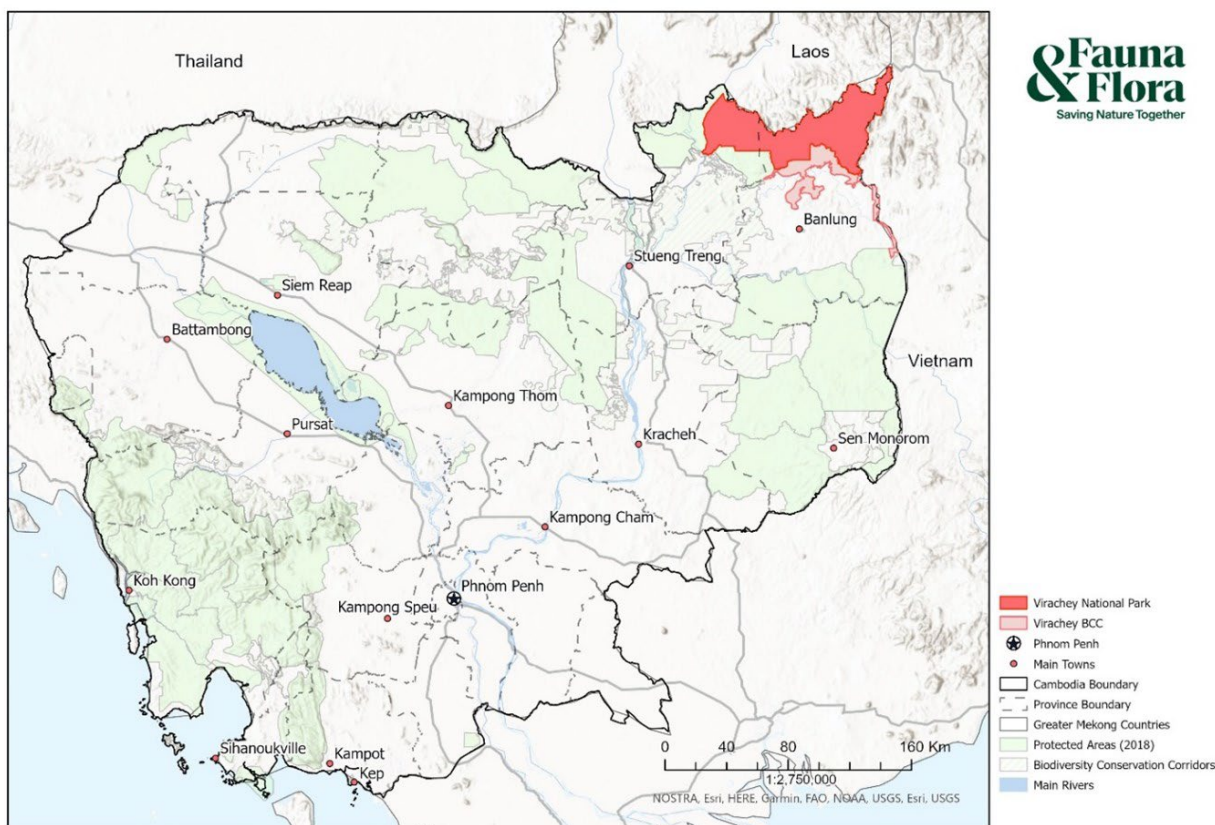
Despite its biodiversity value, transboundary importance and carbon sink function, Virachey has received little conservation attention and is far from secure, with Economic Land Concessions (ELCs) such as licensed rubber plantations operating within its boundaries and accelerating development activities leading to land conversion and deforestation, particularly on its periphery. This is exacerbated by inadequate management and growing pressure from external actors. These pressures are leading to irreparable habitat loss, pushing local people towards unsustainable practices, and possibly increasing the risk of zoonotic disease transfer due to increasing nature/human interaction.



Map 1: Map of Virachey National Park and location, as of 2023. See Annex 5.0.4 for greater resolution.

Formerly spanning 3,325 km², the park was expanded in July 2023 to 4057.66 km² as part of a country-wide initiative to incorporate Biodiversity Conservation Corridors (BCC) into the existing formal protected area system, due to their questionable legal status and protection. The new park boundary consists of settlement and agriculture areas, which necessitates a review of the zonation to ensure rights and access of the local residents are being respected. See Map 2, below, for the former areas under the BCC adjacent to VNP.

A lack of zoning and management planning means that land use decisions disregard natural capital, and those engaging in unsustainable/illegal activities do so with relative impunity. Whilst there are five Community Protected Areas (CPAs), designated to support sustainable resource management, including the harvest of non-timber forest products (NTFPs; not to be confused with NTFPO), by Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IP&LCs) along the southern boundary of VNP, they require strengthened management and capacity to optimise their contribution to conservation and livelihoods. The indigenous communities manage the harvesting of the NTFPs and have bylaws and fee systems for their collection. The project is working with them to improve both production and marketing. CPA members are also allowed to occasionally cut timber and poles in CPAs for personal use. This has led to a degradation of the natural forests within CPAs.



Map 2: Location Map for Virachey National Park and the BCC in north-east Cambodia.

The indigenous communities have been marginalized from development in Cambodia, and many basic services are lacking or underdeveloped. This is especially true for education, resulting in most adults being illiterate and only 40% of children having access to basic primary school education. With children not being in school, child marriage and child labour are still the norm for most children. FFI has engaged with the existing primary schools and has introduced an environmental education and eco-club programme to seven primary schools (exceeding our original target of four schools). Children are sharing the conservation and environmental messages from this programme with their parents, using project posters and exercise books as reference materials. The aim is to get children involved in conservation and have them champion conservation within their communities. Since these educated children will become future leaders, this will have positive and long-term impacts on conservation both within the protected area and the communal lands.

When Virachey National Park was declared in 1993, the indigenous people who were living inside VNP were relocated to areas adjacent to VNP but outside the then-boundaries of VNP. The land allocated to these indigenous communities nonetheless tended to be suitable for agriculture and indigenous peoples were generally able to continue their traditional agricultural practices of swidden agriculture, although there was also increased adoption of new cash crop agriculture. However, the resettlement also restricted the indigenous people to continue their traditional practices within the park. The Government of Cambodia has since recognized indigenous peoples and has signed the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in 2007. The indigenous communities have, or are in the process of applying for, communal land rights to their allocated lands. With more secure land rights, indigenous communities are investing in cash crop agriculture, mainly focused on high-value tree crops. The project is supporting the establishment of sustainable agroforestry systems combining principles of agroecology and climate-smart agriculture with traditional indigenous knowledge. Initially, this involves the establishment of seed orchards of clonal planting stock, which can be used by local indigenous communities to prepare their own high-quality, clonal planting stock. This will improve the quantity and quality of products produced, resulting in increased income and improved livelihoods for indigenous households.

Climate-change is affecting the climate in Cambodia with hotter and longer dry seasons, and growing season varying in rainfall during the wet season. There is a recognized need for climate-smart agriculture, diversified livelihoods, and the use of agroforestry to mitigate and adapt to climate change. The project

provided training and technical support to indigenous farmers to adopt best climate-smart and agroecology practices.

2 Project Partnerships

Cambodia's Ministry of Environment (MoE) was a key partner, and the project worked closely with their central office in Phnom Penh as well as with its Provincial Department of Environment (PDoE) in Ratanakiri and Stung Treng Provinces. Project conceptualisation was undertaken in partnership with the Ministry of Environment, who sought Fauna & Flora's support to strengthen management of Virachey National Park. FFI has a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the MoE to cover conservation work throughout Cambodia, and a project-specific joint Letter of Agreement (LoA) with the Provincial Department of Environment in Ratanakiri Province. Under this Agreement, PDoE provided the project with office space in its office complex in Banlung, Ratanakiri, and facilitated meetings and engagement with other key government stakeholders. This made project coordination relatively easy, and improved project implementation.

As noted in the Y1 Annual Report, FFI dropped the original proposed local NGO partner (Save Cambodia's Wildlife – SCW) due to potential integrity and corruption issues. FFI proposed to replace SCW by another local NGO, Non-Timber Forest Products Organization (NTFPO) and this change was approved by the Darwin Initiative. Due diligence has been carried out for NTFPO, and a sub-contract agreement was signed between FFI and NTFPO to cover the period 01 June 2022 to 30 June 2024.

The process of changing the project's local partner initially delayed implementation of some project activities, and thus many of the planned Y1 activities were postponed until Y2, and some Y2 activities shifted to Y3 and Y4. This was a significant but necessary delay given the circumstances and explains the delayed implementation of planned Y1 activities and accelerated implementation during Y2.

NTFPO is a Cambodian NGO that has worked with local communities living within and adjacent to VNP to improve local livelihoods through sustainable agriculture and capacity building in the project site. Their main office is based in Banlung town, Ratanakiri. NTFPO supported the implementation of several Output 2 activities, focused on CPA management, and Output 3, on resilient and sustainable livelihood strategies. FFI's field staff worked closely with NTFPO to support implementation and to ensure the smooth operation of the project. NTFPO has the trust of local indigenous communities and indigenous language skills, with many on-going activities focused on indigenous rights, informal education, health, gender inclusiveness, and livelihood initiatives. However, they required technical support from FFI for baseline surveys and gender analysis, CPA capacity building and planning, NTFPO's production and marketing, and sustainable agriculture and marketing. This was provided by FFI's Conservation and Livelihoods Team (Technical Advisor, Livelihoods Coordinator, and Community Engagement Lead) through monthly field visits. A Tree Crop and Nursery Technical Officer was also recruited and posted full-time to provide technical support for Outputs 2 and 3. The salaries for the team were not funded by this Darwin Project.

NTFPO were crucial in providing reports that are the basis for this Final Report, most notably the reports on training of CPA committee capacity (Activity 2.2) and the CPA trainings on climate-smart agriculture (Activity 3.4), along with providing general information and holding ad hoc meetings with FFI staff for reporting inputs.

Under Output 1, FFI involved Park Rangers in biodiversity surveys carried out within VNP, and the results of all surveys are shared with MoE and PDoE. This contributed to capacity building for government staff. FFI worked in partnership with MoE and PDoE on the zonation and management planning process for VNP. The aim was an inclusive and participatory process involving all stakeholders.

The project engaged with the local indigenous communities and their governance systems, both formal and informal, for activities under all three Outputs. This includes commune government, traditional indigenous chiefs, CPA committees and members, and other community groups, both men and women. O'Khampha, Mondul Yorn, O'Tung and O'Tabok Community Protected Areas (CPAs) in VNP were officially registered with 15-year agreements signed with the MoE to co-manage areas of 2,382 ha, 550 ha, 9,862 ha and 2,600 ha, respectively, for sustainable use and biodiversity protection (See Annex 5.0.4 for map of VNP, including CPAs). FFI, NTFPO and the PDoE worked together to support these CPAs in updating their boundaries, committee structure, by-laws/regulations and management plans to be endorsed by the PDoE.

Inclusive and participatory processes were designed to improve the knowledge and capacity of indigenous communities and get them more involved in decision-making. Women have traditionally been marginalized from decision-making, both within formal and traditional governance systems, and it is challenging to ensure their inclusion in the participatory processes that can give them a voice and to benefit, equitably,

from project activities. However, this remains a focus of our work, as FFI and partners have a strong commitment to bring about transformational changes, especially for marginalized indigenous women.

The project enrolled the help of various technical specialists in the biodiversity survey work through consultancies, including Sam Veasna Conservation Tours (bird survey), NatureMetrics (environmental DNA survey), Jeremy Holden (camera trapping and herpetological survey) and Neil Furey (bat surveys), among others (see biodiversity survey report for more details).

Going forward, FFI is leading the implementation of the UK-government funded tri-border project, Biodiverse Landscapes Fund (BLF) - Lower Mekong Landscape, with its' consortium partners — International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) and SNV Netherlands Development Organisation (SNV) — to protect VNP, and the broader Annamite landscape, and improve the livelihoods of IP&LCs through strengthened management governance of the park, better access for local products to improved market linkages, and ecotourism. Given the long track record of its community work with CPAs within VNP, NTFPO has been identified as a valuable potential local partner, to support field activities related to sustainable agriculture and capacity building.

On 19-20 March 2024, Fauna & Flora and SNV hosted an official visit for the British Ambassador to Cambodia and his senior staff to Virachey National Park. They had an opportunity to learn about the Darwin project first-hand, including to interact with a group of CPA committee members and IP&LCs to understand about the Darwin project impacts on CPA work and enhanced livelihoods of IP&LCs from sustainable collection of Malva Nut and climate-smart agriculture. The UK Ambassador to Cambodia also supported IP&LCs to promote malva nuts through his own social media platform to get more public attention to this local product.

3 Project Achievements

3.1 Outputs

Output 1. Zonation and management plan developed and being implemented for Virachey National Park.

Indicator 1.1 By end of Y1, generation and dissemination of data and knowledge to inform evidence-based zonation of the national park.

Under Activity 1.1, the project, in partnership with MoE, PDoE rangers and local indigenous community members, conducted multiple biodiversity surveys, targeting a range of taxa. Two tranches of camera trap biodiversity surveys were conducted, targeting terrestrial mammals and ground-dwelling birds; the first with seed funding from the British Embassy in Cambodia, and finalized with support from the project, and the second fully supported. Additionally, bat surveys, herpetological surveys and crocodile surveys were conducted.

The full survey reports of each of the biodiversity surveys were shared with MoE and PDoE in a timely manner. Surveys were used by the MoE during the zonation process, and for decision-making around the inclusion of the BCC into the park expansion, which led to the inclusion of some high-conservation value forests, along with community areas.

Additionally, a full biodiversity report consisting of these surveys and others undertaken across taxa with additional support (including birds and trees) has been compiled at Project End, and will be shortly disseminated to government partners and other key stakeholders such as conservation NGOs and researchers, along with open access online. The full 2023 Camera Trapping Report is attached (Annex 5.1.2), along with the full Virachey Biodiversity Report (Annex 5.1.4).

Indicator 1.2. By end of Y1, draft and zonation maps incorporate input provided by indigenous community representatives (at least 30% women) through active participation in zonation workshops.

Due to quicker than anticipated movement from MoE on the zonation process, FFI was not fully engaged with early community-level zonation consultations, as they had occurred by project start. Therefore, despite being members of the technical team for park zonation, FFI could not be involved in the consultation process, which was already completed with financial support from other stakeholders, predominately the ASEAN Center for Biodiversity (ACB). As we were unable to monitor the process, some uncertainty remains around how the zonation was fully decided, and we are unable to fully confirm that the zonation map accurately accounts for the needs and rights of IP&LCs, especially women, as it may have been

largely led by village leaders and commune authorities. However, we have since engaged more fully with the process, and were able to work in partnership with MoE to support the national stakeholder consultation workshop, where FFI presented the key results from our biodiversity surveys.

Indicator 1.3. Zonation map finalised by end Y2, taking into account needs and rights of IPs.

A draft zonation map was produced by MoE in Y3, in the context of the previous park boundary. From our engagement with the national and sub-national stakeholder workshop and support, the draft zonation map was produced. The zonation allocated the following zones in line with Cambodian Protected Area Law: Core Zone (134,417 ha, 40.42%); Conservation Zone (109,293 ha, 32.87%); Sustainable Use Zone (87,908 ha, 26.43%), and Community Zone (882 ha, 0.26%).

However, in July 2023, BCCs across the country were either fully degazetted or incorporated into existing protected areas, as part of a substantial reform. This included incorporation of much of the BCC adjacent to VNP into the national park, which expanded from 332,500 ha to 405,766 ha. Please see the Draft Zonation Map attached (Annex 5.1.5).

This expansion came from high levels of government and passed legally by Prime Ministerial Sub-Decree, and it was not subject to consultation. It has created the need for further consultation and zonation work in the context of the new expanded boundary areas.

The key results from the biodiversity surveys were shared to the MoE by the project and facilitated the continued protection of high-conversation value areas in the BCC, instead of their degazettement, as happened with BCC areas elsewhere in the country. FFI will continue to collaborate with MoE and PDoE, with an emphasis on and commitment to participatory zonation of VNP under the UKAID BLF project.

Indicator 1.4. Management plan produced and implementation initiated by project end.

The MoE's Technical Guideline for Development of Protected Area Management Plan states that management plans must be produced based on protected area zonation, and therefore the continuation of the zonation process likewise affected the production of the management plan. FFI will continue to work closely with the Zoning and Management Plan Technical Working Group, chaired by MoE and including sub-national stakeholders such as PDoE. Likewise, we will work closely with IP&LCs to engage them in the process and support the development of the management plan once the zonation is finalized.

Output 2. Revised CPA management plans established and implemented by indigenous communities.

Indicator 2.1. Management plans for the four CPAs in Ratanakiri Province revised by end Y2.

Management plans for all four target CPAs have been revised in terms of management procedures and content. Two of which, Mondul Yorn and O'Tung, will be submitted to PDoE for endorsement after the final consultation workshop scheduled for late Q3 of 2024, post project-end. The revised management plans for Mondul Yorn and O'Tung are attached in Khmer language (Annexes 5.2.4 & 5.2.5).

Official endorsement of the revised management plans will take slightly longer than originally anticipated for these management plans, as the endorsement procedure has now changed. At project end, legal change, in the form of the new Code on Environment and Natural Resources 2023 (active in late June 2024), meant that the responsibility for endorsement transferred from MoE to PDoE. Therefore, further stakeholder workshops are required and will continue after project end, but are anticipated to go smoothly and the official endorsement of the management plans will be straightforward due to decentralized decision-making as laid out by the Code on Environment and Natural Resources.

For the two remaining CPA management plans for CPAs O'Tabok and O'Khampa, the park boundary expansion affected agricultural land of members of the two CPAs, and therefore afforded the opportunity for the in-kind expansion of these two CPAs under the zonation process. This has resulted in the delay of finalizing the management plan revisions. A study to identify community land use inside the Virachey National Park must be conducted, which will look at the possibility of expanding the community zone to take into account communities' historical land use and promote the community's participation in conservation. Management plans of these two CPAs are expected to be approved in Q1 of 2025 under the BLF. This is a positive development that allows greater ownership over traditional natural resource use by IP&LCs.

All four management plans, when officially endorsed, are expected to strengthen sustainable natural resource management and therefore improve livelihoods of IP&LCs in the CPAs in perpetuity.

Indicator 2.2. 70% of CPA Committee members (c. 27) upskilled in CPA management by end Y3.

The latest CPA committee member election was held in 2023, facilitated by FFI, PDoE and NTFPO, with all elected members then recognized by commune authorities. There was a total of 51 CPA committee members elected (19 women): 13 from O'Khampha (5 women); 11 from O'Tabok (3 women); 7 from Mondul Yorn (3 women), and 21 from O'Tung (7 women). The proportion of female members is currently 37.25% of the committee members, based on recommendations and guidance from FFI and NTFPO. Since the election, 40% female membership quotas have been incorporated into the revised CPA management plans to better promote gender equity. These quotas will become active during the next election, or in the instance of a standing member resigning. Prior to the project's guidance and support, there were 34 committee members, 8 of whom were female (23.5%).

All 51 CPA committee members were received technical trainings by FFI, PDoE and NTFPO on CPA management structure, roles and responsibilities, work plan, by-laws and regulations, patrol and conflict resolution procedures and report writing.

The post-training result indicates that 67% of all participants gained skills and retained knowledge. The CPA Committee Training Report is attached (Annex 5.2.1).

Indicator 2.3. Number of snares and other threats to biodiversity recorded per unit of effort by CPA members (at least three per CPA) taking part in monthly community patrols is reduced by 50% by end Y3.

This indicator was unfortunately not achieved by the project, as the assumption that regular and organized patrolling could be supported purely by CPAs did not hold true. The members of the CPA committee have been carrying out community patrols on a volunteer basis. CPA committees collect fees for the extraction of malva nuts and cobra mushroom from both members of CPAs and from outsiders, but such financial contributions are not sufficient to cover CPA costs, or the cost of patrols, and therefore no regular patrolling or record keeping has been kept or shared with the project. In Y3, CPA committee trainings incorporated patrolling procedures to improve CPA patrols, but these have not been fully implemented by project end due to funding gaps. In future, greater support for patrolling will be considered by FFI and we are exploring sustainable financing options such as REDD+ and ecotourism.

Indicator 2.4. By end of project, 75% of 500 community members of all genders within the CPAs demonstrate increased understanding of the ecological values of the forest and the rationale for its protection, and self-report adherence to CPA rules and regulations.

A total of 528 participants from local communities, including 235 females (44.5%) attended a series of gender-inclusive workshops in the four target CPAs. These workshops focused on several key topics: the importance of Virachey National Park, the integration of gender perspectives in CPAs, the importance of CPAs and community participation for both present and future generations, and a review of the implementation of the management plan. Based on the survey conducted by the end of the project, CPA members perceived the numbers of illegal activities have reduced during the project (from 82% to 72%). They are also more willing to report to CPA committees (from 29% to 81%) for illegal incidences, suggesting an improved effectiveness or accessibility of law enforcement by CPA committees. Gender-Inclusive Workshop Reports are attached (Annex 5.2.6).

Output 3. Resilient and sustainable livelihood strategies adopted by women and men in target households in indigenous communities.

Indicator 3.1. At least two climate-smart agriculture techniques are applied by 200 trained producers (at least 50% women) by end Y2 and 400 trained producers (at least 50% women) by end Y3.

The project ensured that livelihood strategies were adopted by both women and men, and had tangible impacts on food security and livelihoods in indigenous communities around VNP. To improve the livelihoods of households in indigenous communities, the project focused on building the capacity of local households in Climate-Smart Agriculture, primarily through agroforestry practices. This approach, emphasizing mixed tree-crop plantations, aimed to enhance climate resilience by sequestering carbon, improving nutrient retention, and supporting watershed management and wildlife habitats. By integrating agroecological principles with indigenous knowledge, the project sought to establish sustainable models applicable on a broader scale. Phase 1, conducted in 2022 (Y2), focused on crop planting techniques, crop care, and natural fertilizer production, involving 162 farmers with 74 women (45.7%) participating. Phase 2, carried out in 2023 (Y3), expanded on these foundations by addressing advanced topics like agro-chemical use, natural pesticide alternatives, and compost production. This phase saw increased participation, with 344 farmers involved, including 169 women (49.1%). A total of 506 producers (including 243 women, 48.02%) were trained by the project. Climate Smart Agriculture Training Reports are attached (Annex 5.3.5), along with Khmer language training manuals (Annex 5.3.6).

Indicator 3.2. 400 households, 1,600 people (50% female members) have increased annual income from existing land holdings and sustainable NTFP use and sale, by 10% by end Y2 and 20% by end Y3.

The project identified three agricultural commodities and NTFPs as the main potential products for generating income for households residing in VNP through the attached Market System Assessments (Annex 5.3.3). These are cashew agroforestry, and the collection of two NTFPs, malva nut, *Scaphium affine*, and cobra mushroom. In the Khmer language, these mushrooms are referred to as “*samrong*” and “*phsaet pous vek*”, respectively.

Over the project period, household income derived from cashew planting on existing land holdings increased by 93% compared to the baseline, due to improvements in variety selection and routes to market, both facilitated by the project. Meanwhile, income from the collection of malva nut and cobra mushrooms increased by 48% and 70%, respectively over the same period. These income increases far exceeded the anticipated 10% increase by the end of Y2 and 20% increase by the end of Y3. This can be attributed to support from project activities (e.g., CPA management practices, market access, and climate-resilient cashew varieties), as well as the influence of external factors. For example, increased market value of products, more suitable climatic conditions during key stages of flowering and fruit production, and greater NTFP abundance due to mast fruiting in Y3-4 (i.e., years in which trees produce a much larger quantity of seeds). These factors combined likely contributed to the overall greater yields and income obtained by farmers and collectors in Y3-4 compared to previous years. Income increases were captured by a survey of representative and randomly selected households (n=152) across the beneficiary communities. The survey was completed with 82 female (53.95%) and 70 male interviewees. Please refer to the Project Impact Assessment for further detail (Annex 5.0.3).

Indicator 3.3. 400 households improve their food security by decreasing the number of hungry months by at least 10% by end Y3.

The Project Impact Assessment survey likewise assessed food security among the 152 aforementioned households. The baseline data highlighted seasonal fluctuations in food security, with peaks of sufficient food access (32-33% of households) in early months dropping significantly to 15% during August and September. At the baseline, only 58% of households reported having adequate food year-round, with 42% having inadequate food security due to low agricultural yields and reliance on seasonal forest products.

At project-end, due to FFI and NTFPO’s interventions on livelihoods and natural resource management by CPAs, food security has improved drastically, with the average number of days of insufficient food in households decreased by 19%, from 54 to 35 days. Furthermore, 87.5% of households were able to avoid skipping meals throughout the year entirely, a notable improvement of 29.5%. Additionally, 70% of respondents reported seeing improvements in food security from the project baseline, indicating that the majority also felt that food security had improved. Please refer to the Project Impact Assessment Report for more details.

The remaining 12.5% of households that still reported food insecurity stated that they resorted to borrowing rice from neighbours or relatives, a norm in these communities when facing food insecurity, with an average of these borrowing 61.7 kilograms annually. This borrowing practice highlights a reliance on social networks to mitigate food shortages among a segment of surveyed households. This reveals

a persistent need for further interventions to fully address seasonal variations and enhance overall food security.

3.2 Outcome

Outcome: Management of Virachey National Park is strengthened and well-being of indigenous communities is improved.

Outcome Indicator 0.1. Rate of annual forest cover loss in Virachey NP and associated biodiversity corridor is reduced by at least 20% by 2024 compared to 2020 baseline.

Total annual forest loss in VNP declined by 40.09% between the 2020 baseline (2,918 ha) (0.71% of VNP area) and 2023 (1,748 ha) (0.42% of VNP area). Among the four CPAs directly involved in this project, three showed 0.00% forest loss between 2021 and 2023. However, the fifth CPA, O'Chay (situated in Stung Treng province) was not engaged in project activities, and demonstrated significant forest loss between 2020 and 2023, with 0.37% of forest lost in 2023. It's possible that the spike in forest loss activity in 2016 in VNP correlates with the planned establishment of the Biodiversity Conservation Corridor, triggering land grabbing activities. Additionally, the activity of ELCs close to O'Khampha may have triggered land grabbing in 2016 out of fears from communities of losing unclaimed land.

Forest loss rates were calculated using the Global Forest Change 2000-2023 dataset. The majority of the forest loss that did occur was situated in the former BCC, in areas adjacent to communities. Please refer to the Forest Loss Analysis for more detail (Annex 5.0.3). Whilst not directly attributable, improved sustainable livelihoods and greater capacity of CPA committees in natural resource management seem to have been effective in reducing forest loss in the project area. Clear cutting of forest is generally expected to rise during a zonation process, as communities stake land claims, but the opposite occurred in VNP, indicative of the project's engagement.

The forest loss analysis did not account for sanctioned clearance of traditional swidden agriculture, so actual loss of true forest is likely to be even lower, although conversely the 30m resolution dataset used would not account for forest degradation, and only captures clearance of forest, so logging or small-scale clearance activities may be ongoing.

Project-end surveys detected a significant increase of 52% in households reporting rule-breaking to the CPA committee, from 29% to 81%, both inside and outside of the CPA. Conversely, reporting to rangers and park staff has decreased significantly from 56% to 30%, suggesting a potential shift in perceived effectiveness or accessibility of law enforcement by CPA committees. Perceptions of the efficacy of enforcement responses towards protected area rule violations have increased by 14% but overall remain low, from 10% to 24%. The reasons for hunting and logging have shifted, with a 27% decrease in attributing such actions to poverty (down from 45% to 18%). Please see the Project Impact Assessment Report for further detail (Annex 5.0.2).

These changing attitudes towards rule-breaking and unsustainable use of natural resources may explain an overall reduction in forest loss, although areas outside of CPAs may continue to suffer deforestation due to a lack of management and a lack of trust towards government law enforcement. Future interventions to improve ranger-community relationships may be beneficial.

Indicator 0.2. At least 75% of both female and male members of 400 participating households report positive multi-dimensional well-being outcomes (e.g., income, food security, social status, gender equality, agency, and/or cultural values) by project end.

The project has yielded significant and tangible improvements in household wellbeing across multiple dimensions over its lifetime, as evidenced, with 78% of households surveyed after project implementation reporting positive multi-dimensional wellbeing (i.e., material, relational and subjective measures), compared to 66% reported at project start, a total increase of 12%, and over the target indicator of 75%. A representative and random sample of 152 project beneficiary households, including 82 female interviewees (53.95%), were surveyed across the communities. Please refer to the Project Impact Assessment Report (Annex 5.0.2) for more detail.

Households experienced enhanced food security, with a decrease in the average number of days of insufficient food from 54% to 35%. Additionally, households stated improvements in maintaining diverse and balanced diets, consuming substantial quantities of various food items annually and a stable rice consumption. Increased revenue from NTFPs and agricultural products (Indicator 3.2) played a key role in enhancing food security, as confirmed in the Project Impact Assessment.

Access to informal education was reported to have improved, particularly among married women and female dependents, where disparities in access to formal education persist. Despite the continuation of these barriers, positive trends in attitudes towards education have been observed, especially among household heads, indicating progress in educational attainment. The findings from Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) underscore the importance of targeted interventions aimed at addressing educational disparities and promoting socio-economic development within households. Professional training programs have been instrumental in enhancing knowledge and skills among community members, particularly in natural resource management, thereby positively impacting livelihoods and overall wellbeing. Increased food security and reduction in poverty was also linked to improved access to education.

Household living standards improved noticeably over the project period, with significant increases in sanitation facilities, access to basic facilities and services, and housing quality. Monetary assets remained consistent, with notable improvements in households' financial status. Community dynamics also showed positive trends, with improvements in trust and respect among residents and resolution of conflicts within the community. Overall satisfaction and engagement in decision-making processes within households increased over time, reflecting a positive trend in overall wellbeing.

3.3 Monitoring of assumptions

Outcome Assumptions

Outcome Assumption 1: The strong political will to sustainably manage Virachey National Park continues.

The expansion of VNP to include the significant high conservation value areas of the adjacent BCC indicate a strong high-level political will to continue to manage Virachey sustainably. VNP is one of two protected areas of Cambodia's current 73 protected areas officially registered as ASEAN Heritage Park, and the ongoing commitment of the government to this is indicative of this assumption holding true. The new Minister of Environment has a new conservation vision and strategy, the Circular Strategy on Environment 2023-2028, to protect and manage all protected areas. For example, all ranger activities need to be effectively conducted in close collaboration with all key sub-national stakeholders.

Furthermore, the Ministry of Environment is considering using IUCN's Green List to upgrade Virachey's status and ultimately add it to the Tentative List for Nomination as a UNESCO Natural Heritage Site. In addition, the Ministry of Environment has discussed their plans with FFI and IUCN to develop a long-term strategic plan for ecological connectivity and ecosystem protection between Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam to protect the landscape and promote ecotourism development opportunities for IP&LCs.

The risk of further unsustainable development does remain, exemplified by a possible mining concession in the northeast of the park potentially being issued a license. This explorative license would cover 20,000 ha. FFI and the BLF consortium partners will continue to monitor any possible developments into the future.

Outcome Assumption 2: The existing environmental legislative framework is maintained or improved, and is upheld by government and industry actors.

Environmental legislative frameworks in Cambodia have been widely updated towards the end of the project, indicating an ongoing commitment by the government. As part of a wider update on government strategy under the Pentagonal Strategy Phase 1, championed by new Prime Minister, Samdech Thipadei Hun Manet, the new Circular Strategy on Environment has focused on the Green Strategy, which highlights the priority of conservation and forest restoration to sustainably manage all protected areas in Cambodia. This strategy fully aligns with the goals of the Darwin Initiative and the upcoming BLF.

New legislation in the form of the new Code on Environment and Natural Resources has recently come into effect. There are many positive improvements in legislative framework, and some that may raise concern in future, such as possible sanctioned hunting, and a lack of mention of Indigenous Peoples. Further legal review will be required to fully understand these implications for conservation, both of VNP and across Cambodia, and it remains to be seen how industry actors may operate under this Code. One notable positive change under the Code on Environment and Natural Resources directly relevant to VNP is that CPAs have longer agreements with the government. This allows communities to have greater ownership of their natural resources into the future, increasing from 15 year to 25-year agreements.

Outcome Assumption 3: Cambodia continues to effectively contain and mitigate the community spread of Covid-19, such that human, material, and financial resources remain available for conservation and livelihoods improvement activities.

This is no longer of relevance to the project. Cambodia's response to Covid-19 was amongst the best at containing and mitigating its spread, with a comprehensive vaccination campaign. In 2022, Cambodia ended all Covid-19 restrictions and things are now fully back to normal, with resources available and full freedom of movement and ability to hold gatherings once again possible for conservation and livelihood improvement activities.

Output 1 assumptions

Assumption 1.1. Government remains committed to the development of a zonation and management plan for Virachey National Park.

The achievement of the draft zonation map for the previous boundary of VNP shows the government's commitment to the zonation process. However, whilst PDoE and MoE officials engaged by the project remain committed to the development of a zonation and management plan, and the process was moving quickly enough to secure the zonation by Y4, the aforementioned park expansion led to further consultation work required for the expanded area of the park. This additional zonation work thus led the management plan to be put on hold in the immediate future. The project adapted to this change and provided biodiversity data (Activity 1.2) to government counterparts, allowing them to confirm the high biodiversity value of the former BCC and secure its ongoing protection.

Assumption 1.2 Government processes move at sufficient pace to approve zonation and management plans within the life of the project

The Technical Working Group on Zonation and Management Plan for Virachey National Park remained engaged with by FFI, and all involved remain committed to the development of a zonation and management plan. The process moved quickly enough to secure the zonation by Y4, but the aforementioned park expansion led to the need for further consultation work required for the expanded area of the park, and thus the management plan. Therefore, this assumption did not hold true, but FFI remains engaged in the process, and will continue this work after the project lifetime with support from the BLF to ensure that both the zonation and management plan are finalized.

Assumption 1.3 Indigenous community members feel they have their platforms recognised, see value in and positive incentives associated with developing and complying with zonation.

This process may have not been fully participatory with IP&LCs for the previous boundary of the park, due to consultations occurring prior to the engagement of FFI and the project in the process, and thus may not feel that their platforms are recognized. Going forward, FFI and the BLF consortium partners will work closely with government partners to ensure that park zonation processes continue to be based on participatory principles that recognise the rights and needs of IP&LCs, and thus ensuring that IP&LCs feel recognized and that zonation is legitimate and worthy of complying with.

Output 2 assumptions

Assumption 2.1 CPA legal status is upheld

All four CPAs signed 15-year agreements with the Ministry of Environment in 2014, which will remain valid until 2029. Within the agreements remain clauses that if CPAs are not actively managed, they can be revoked prior to the end of these agreements, based on monitoring and evaluation conducted by PDoE and the MoE. If the management plan revision process had not been supported by the project, the CPAs may have been revoked, due to their inaction. Prior to the project, the CPAs rarely had meetings, but are now much more engaged in participation, thus also improving governance.

The four CPA's legal statuses were unaffected by the park boundary change, but the need to restart the zonation process and properly map community land use resulted in a delay in the process of the government endorsing the management plans for O'Tabok and O'Khampha. FFI are adapting and

mitigating this by continuing to support the process going forward, under the BLF project, in partnership with the CPAs, MoE and PDoE, with further stakeholder consultation workshops planned for August 2024.

Assumption 2.2 CPA members are able to meet

The CPA members remained able to meet as they are legally recognized by Commune Authorities, and Cambodia removed all Covid-19 restrictions in 2022. Prior to the project, the CPA members were unable to meet regularly, due to a lack of resources and capacity. Both of these latter issues were directly addressed by the project, by improving capacity through trainings and providing funding through improved natural resource management, thus ensuring that CPA members can meet regularly.

Assumption 2.3 CPA Committees continue to equitably and transparently represent their local constituency

The committees continued to equitably and transparently represent their communities, elected by free elections. However, registered CPA members are mainly men who represent households as Head of Household. Women and the poor tend not to be involved, and these groups are marginalized. To mitigate this, the project supported each CPA instituting up a female quota of 40% into the structure of committees, thus improving, although not fully reaching, gender equality. Evidence is attached in the form of Khmer-language Revised CPA Management Plans (Annex 5.2.4 & 5.2.5).

Output 3

Assumption 3.1: Innovative practices introduced through the project are appropriate to the cultural, socio-economic and agro-ecological context and hence readily adopted by indigenous women and men.

High levels of adoption of climate-smart agricultural techniques indicate that the practices were appropriate to the contexts of IP&LCs in VNP, achieved by careful consideration of appropriate practices by the FFI and NTFPO teams, in consultation with local communities. A total of 506 producers (including 243 women, 48.02%) were trained by the project in innovative agricultural practices (Indicator 3.1), and 45 families changed cashew varieties, from the traditional variety utilized in the landscape to a more climate-resilient variety, M23.

Pathway to Change

As all of the assumptions of the Pathway to Change have largely held true, the foundations for stronger management of VNP have indeed been laid due to the project interventions, albeit with some limitation around the participatory process. Improved management is still predicted to mitigate the risks of habitat degradation and unsustainable resource use, especially through the empowerment of IP&LCs, including women, through the support and recognition of the CPAs and their improved capacity for management of natural resources. The tangible impacts of the project on poverty alleviation through improved food security and income from sustainable agriculture and the collection of NTFPs have indeed secured the rights of IP&LCs. This has likewise allowed them to utilize natural resources sustainably, and safeguard Virachey National Park along with their cultures and identities. Ongoing work in VNP and continued engagement with government partners will allow us to monitor the Pathway to Change into the future.

3.4 Impact: achievement of positive impact on biodiversity and poverty reduction

Impact: VNP biodiversity and cultural values are safeguarded, enabling the recovery of depleted wildlife populations and securing the future of the northern yellow-cheeked gibbon, alongside enduring livelihood improvement amongst indigenous communities.

The project has contributed to preserving the forest cover in VNP, with a reduction of 40.09% in the rate of loss against the baseline forest cover data in 2020 (Indicator 0.1, Annex 5.03), which shows a positive impact on key habitat protection and management for the endangered northern yellow-cheeked gibbon *Nomascus annamensis*, along with the newly reported large-antlered muntjac *Muntiacus vuquangensis* and a further 23 vertebrate species and at least 8 tree species that are globally threatened on the IUCN Red List (please refer to the Virachey Biodiversity Survey Report, Annex 5.1.4).

Forest loss trends across VNP and the BCC (established in 2016) from 2010-2020 show forest loss steadily rising, and then declining each year of the project, indicating that the project may have contributed to this impact. A spike in deforestation in 2016 may be explained by both the establishment of the BCC and activity in an ELC bordering O'Khampha CPA, as communities stake land claims to ensure that their traditional lands are not lost during zonation processes or taken by outsiders. Additionally, changes in attitudes towards natural resource management and enforcement action by CPA committees (see Outcome Indicator 0.1) indicates that communities are generally more in favour of preventing forest loss, attributable to project engagement and support of improved capacity in CPAs. More broadly, reduction in forest loss has contributed to Cambodia's commitment towards carbon neutrality by 2050, with a target of 60% forest cover nationally. Future work will identify areas of VNP suitable for reforestation, beginning under the BLF and will work in partnership with CPAs and sub-national stakeholders.

Participating households showed a quantifiable impact on their improved livelihoods which contributed to poverty reduction. As indicated at the outcome level, households experienced enhanced food security, with a decrease in the average number of days of insufficient food from 54 to 35 days (Indicator 3.3). Additionally, households showed improvements in maintaining diverse and balanced diets, consuming substantial quantities of various food items annually. There has been increased revenue from sales of better access to NTFPs and agricultural products due to the project interventions. Attitudes towards management of natural resources have changed, with a significant increase in support for implementing high entrance fees for outsiders (i.e., not IP&LCs) travelling to the CPAs to collect NTFPs, rising from 37% to 62%. This indicates a shift towards stricter controls on NTFP access to protect resources. The project has also contributed to the community and cultural values of IP&LCs, and their commitment to their natural resources. Before the project, the CPAs were largely inactive but are now galvanized, with 51 newly elected committee members. The committees are operating with increased management capacity, and of the 51 members, 19 are women (37.25%), improving representative and indigenous leadership in natural resource management and creating a path forward for further poverty reduction in their communities. All of these changes combined led to a perceived 12% increase in multi-dimensional wellbeing amongst the communities (Outcome Indicator 0.2).

4 Contribution to Darwin Initiative Programme Objectives

4.1 Project support to the Conventions, Treaties or Agreements

The project has contributed to the 2016 NBSAP, especially Theme 1: Protection of Biodiversity and Theme 2: Threatened species. The project has allowed FFI/MOE to continue to carry out biodiversity surveys in VNP which have confirmed the presence of many threatened and endangered species including large-antlered muntjac, red-shanked douc langur, Asiatic black bear. These surveys serve as information inputs for the on-going zonation and management planning process. This will contribute to NBSAP Target 8 (Aichi Target 11): *In 2020, at the latest, existing protected areas and conservation areas, including community-based natural resource management areas, have management plans and have started implementation.*

The project has not actively contributed to the NDCs, but the promotion and adoption of mixed-agroforestry systems will lead to more carbon sequestration in agroforestry systems and associated soils. In the future, this can be quantified as part of Cambodia's NDCs, as they are in other countries such as Vietnam.

The project also contributed to the new CBD Global Biodiversity Framework and Targets, especially Target 3 and Target 22, by ensuring the active and inclusive participation of indigenous peoples in the management of protected areas (i.e., Virachey National Park).

In addition, the project attended the national Zero-Snaring campaign, led by the Cambodian government, in an effort to prevent illegal wildlife trade and eliminate bushmeat consumption, especially in restaurants.

4.2 Project support for multidimensional poverty reduction

The northeast provinces are the poorest in Cambodia, with poverty rates of about 22%, and within these provinces, indigenous communities tend to be the poorest and most marginalized. Project beneficiaries and communities were predominately indigenous peoples. Of the 273 people surveyed under the Socio-Economic Survey (Annex 5.0.1) at project start, 98.53% were from indigenous groups: Brao (56.41%); Kavet (41.39%); Tumpoun (0.37%); and Kreung (0.37%). The remainder of those surveyed were Khmer, the majority group in Cambodia (1.47%).

78% of surveyed in the target communities reported an increase in multi-dimensional wellbeing compared to the start of the project, although this perception varied somewhat by gender. 84.29% of male respondents (n=59) and 73.17% of female respondents (n=60) reported positive multi-dimensional wellbeing.

wellbeing at project end, showing some level of gender disparity in perception of improvements (DI-D03a – Indicator 0.2).

The communities’ food security has improved, with communities experiencing fewer days of insufficient food supply (from 54 to 35 days). In addition, the percentage of households that reported never skipping meals increased from 58% to 85% by the end of the project (DI-D04a – Indicator 3.3). Enhanced in food security were associated with increased income from agriculture and NTFPO products. Income from several notable products were increased significantly, for example cashew (by 93%), malva nut collection (by 48%), and cobra mushroom (by 70%) (DI-D03b – Indicator 3.2). Communities perceived these changes occurred due to favourable weather conditions for cashew and a mast fruiting season for malva nut, along with improved agricultural techniques, improved land use, and improved governance of CPAs. In addition, significant increases in household incomes have been associated with the establishment of livelihood activities (weaving baskets and chairs) and reinforced by the diversity of agricultural products and livestock they produce.

The wellbeing improvement is beyond income and food security (DI-D03a – Indicator 0.2), the survey and group discussions highlighted improvements in the management of CPAs, along with higher levels of participation in the CPAs amongst community members and perceived improvements (89%) in the decision-making process. CPA members increased from 671 households in 2019 to 998 in 2023 (48.73% increase).

4.3 Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI)

Please quantify the proportion of women on the Project Board ¹ .	The project does not have a Project Board, but is led by a working group consisting of FFI, NTFPO and PDOE, with monitoring and technical support from MoE. About 40% of key staff assigned by the working group have been women.
Please quantify the proportion of project partners that are led by women, or which have a senior leadership team consisting of at least 50% women ² .	FFI, MOE, PDOE and NTFPO are all led by men. FFI’s Senior Leadership Team, based in Cambridge, are 57% women (4 out of 7, 57.14%). Women play an important role in project planning and decision-making. The Community Engagement Lead for FFI is a woman, and is responsible for designing and facilitating community engagement activities for Output 2 and 3. FFI’s country staff involved in the project were 4 women of a total of 10 (40%). From NTFPO, one of three staff engaged with the project is a woman.

GESI Scale	Description	Put X where you think your project is on the scale
Not yet sensitive	The GESI context may have been considered but the project isn’t quite meeting the requirements of a ‘sensitive’ approach	
Sensitive	The GESI context has been considered and project activities take this into account in their design and implementation. The project addresses basic needs and vulnerabilities of women and marginalised groups	

¹ A Project Board has overall authority for the project, is accountable for its success or failure, and supports the senior project manager to successfully deliver the project.

² Partners that have formal governance role in the project, and a formal relationship with the project that may involve staff costs and/or budget management responsibilities.

	and the project will not contribute to or create further inequalities.	
Empowering	The project has all the characteristics of a 'sensitive' approach whilst also increasing equal access to assets, resources and capabilities for women and marginalised groups	X
Transformative	The project has all the characteristics of an 'empowering' approach whilst also addressing unequal power relationships and seeking institutional and societal change	

The project was designed to ensure that it integrates marginalized groups and both women and men in all its activities, that they have equal access to project resources and information, equal participation, equal opportunity to benefit from project activities. This includes taking gender into account at all stages of the project cycle, including assessment, planning and design implementation, monitoring and evaluation through collection of sex-disaggregated data to monitor gender-differentiated impacts, making adjustments where necessary to guarantee gender equity and reduce inequality.

The project has identified women, indigenous people, and youths as the ones who are more marginalised in the landscape. Within indigenous communities, women are largely marginalized from governance and decision-making. Most indigenous women are illiterate and cannot speak the national language (Khmer). It is therefore difficult for them to access information and knowledge, but they themselves have valuable contributions to and knowledge about natural resource management and are key in passing knowledge to future generations. The project engaged indigenous women and men in agricultural activities focused on agroforestry and climate-smart agriculture. Better educated indigenous youth (male and female) were recruited to translate and facilitate livelihood activities so that indigenous women can be meaningfully involved. The project also conducted separate sessions for women and youths. We addressed barriers to women's and youth's participation by ensuring that the timing, location and format of activities were tailored to their needs. Initially individual engagements were also needed to convince women to join meetings for CPA governance by providing information of activities and creating a friendly space for sharing their views and experiences. Involvement of women has also been encouraged by both traditional leaders and CPA leaders. We ensured women and youths were informed about the project and engaged in the project activities, and they provided their inputs and needs. After the completion of the project activities, they also joined the reflection and evaluation of the project by sharing strength and weakness of the project implementation. At project end, 47% of those directly involved in agroforestry seed orchard establishment have been women. Women are also participating equally in training on climate-smart agriculture (**DI-A01/DI-D05a – Indicator 3.1**).

The project empowered indigenous men and women to take charge of their own development, through gender-inclusive workshops (Activity 2.5), and capacity building and trainings of CPA committees (Activity 2.2). The workshops promoted women's participation in community governance system for community protected areas by creating a friendly space for sharing their views and experiences to identify the role of indigenous women in the community governance. Likewise, the project identified a lack of female representation in CPA management committees and in natural resource management. To address this, the project conducted a study to analyse and monitor gendered aspects of natural resource use, disaggregating roles in livelihoods and community governance. The study gave practical recommendations to address this by setting up female quota of 40% into the structure of CPA committees. Currently, the committees are 37.25% women (n=19) (**DI-B05 – Indicator 2.2**). By the end of the evaluation period, there were notable perceived improvements in gender equality amongst communities, 67.4% of female interviewees and 60.88% of male interviewees stating an improvement.

The Project Impact Assessment (Annex 5.0.2) showed that communities associated the increases in income to gender-inclusive initiatives supported by the project and other initiatives implemented by NTFPO (e.g., mixed-gender training and education workshops, increasing school attendance amongst girls). As a result, both women and men reported positive changes in social cohesion within communities, including more equitable decision-making, distribution of work, and an increase in women in community leadership positions (e.g., commune chiefs, assistants). These changes have led to overall improvements in relational wellbeing and gender-based participation in income-generating activities. For example, some women's groups now have more available time to produce handicrafts from NTFPs (usually only done when women

have free time), which has become a more important source of income to communities since the project's inception.

In many ways, the project has helped to change the roles of women and men in society, with more women in leadership positions within the CPA and men and women sharing reproductive responsibilities, giving women more free time. As the project was implemented in a relatively short period of time, we were not able to completely change gender norms and policies. However, the project has laid the foundation for future transformative change, which we will continue with BLF.

4.4 Transfer of knowledge

The project supported representatives of two community protected areas and one provincial department of environment to attend a national forum organized by the Ministry of Environment, where they learned about the revised CPA guidelines and implications of Code on Environment and Natural Resources which just came into effect on 28 June 2024. All CPA committee structures have been updated to reactivate the functions of those CPAs. The project provided a total of three on-site trainings to 51 CPA committee members (19 female) per CPAs on roles and responsibilities, by-law and regulations, reporting writing and law enforcement procedures (**DI-B05 – Indicator 2.2**).

Knowledge in the form of biodiversity surveys, including discoveries of the Critically Endangered large-antlered muntjac, was transferred through the dissemination of reports to stakeholders, including government partners, as well as presented at a national-level workshop (**DI-C02 – Indicator 1.1**). A full, printed Virachey Biodiversity Survey Report is being published for a wider audience, including researchers and other NGOs.

The project produced training manuals in Khmer language on climate-smart agriculture techniques, that can be used beyond the project lifetime (Annex 5.3.6).

4.5 Capacity building

Kanitha Chap, the Community Engagement Lead, has been promoted to a more senior role as the Social Equity and Rights Specialist for the BLF project in Cambodia. This is due to her demonstrated competence in promoting gender and social inclusion through engagement with local communities and our partners. This position has greater responsibility for overseeing the implementation of governance, Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) and social safeguards of three key partners, IUCN, SNV and NTFPO.

Our partner, NTFPO, increased the salary of all three staff members (one woman) engaged with the project based on their experience gained. Additionally, FFI provided financial management and reporting training to NTFPO staff.

Biodiversity survey techniques, and in particular camera trapping, were taught to national and sub-national staff including PDoE rangers and local community through the intensive training before the field biodiversity survey. The front-line staff have increased capacity and understanding to plan and implement biodiversity surveys, an important component of protected area management. All of these partner staff trained in field survey techniques were male, due to entrenched cultural gender norms. Going forward, FFI will work to promote gender inclusivity in project partners, including government partners, where possible.

5 Monitoring and evaluation

The impact, outcome, outputs and targets for the project remained the same. Therefore, there has been no changes to the M&E system.

As noted in the project proposal, FFI adheres to the principles of adaptive management for its conservation actions, which includes planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, and adaptation. As a key component of this project cycle, FFI has in place a rigorous Monitoring & Evaluation and reporting system, that was applied to the project.

FFI's local NGO partner, NTFPO, shared in the M&E work and they monitored all their project activities. Participation/attendance lists were kept for all project activities with data sex-disaggregated. NTFPO also participated in gender-sensitive market system assessments, and recorded data on roles and responsibilities and the sharing of benefits. NTFPO and FFI facilitated baseline and endline surveys (desk reviews, household surveys, focus groups discussions and key informant interviews) which were used for final evaluation of the outputs and outcome. The M&E system proved to be robust and practical, allowing clear monitoring of measurable and specific indicators for project progress.

From 19-20 March 2024, the project hosted an official visit by the British Ambassador to Cambodia, Dominic Williams, including members of his team to Virachey National Park, where our project team presented the overview and key project outcomes and a new 7-year project, the BLF. He and his team visited one of the project target sites, the O'Tung Community Protected Area to learn about the key achievements of the project and to evaluate its impact.

A further After Action Review of the project is planned to facilitate a transition to the BLF project.

6 Lessons learnt

In the past year, progress has been made on all three outputs. For Output 1, working in partnership with the MoE and the PDoE has worked well, with progress made through field surveys and consultations. However, a key lesson was the unexpected protected area reform, which has affected multiple activities. Zonation is a complicated process, and management plan development can be very time-consuming. The next project design should consider a longer project period to enact change; ideally a 5-year project. Under the upcoming BLF project, we will be able to utilize a longer period to enact change.

For Output 2, CPAs have willingly engaged with the project, both for consultations and also for field surveys and inventories required for the revision of CPA management plans. Information is required for the preparation of truly sustainable management plans to replace existing unsustainable plans. In that vein, a lack of resourcing led to the inability of the CPAs to conduct formal and regular patrolling within the project lifetime; although the improved CPA capacity in management was predicted to lead to sufficient funding for patrols, this did not happen during the project lifetime. Moving forward, we suggest short-term external support for community patrols being built into project design is sensible, to build patrolling skills and reporting capacity of patrol members. Interim support in the short term will allow for longer-term sustainable finance to become established, such as those generated by CPA dues or access fees. Local indigenous youth are enthusiastic about participating in such surveys and inventories, which will increase capacity for natural resource management in the long term and create a strong buy-in from communities.

For Output 3, working with a local and established NGO, NTFPO, has made engagement relatively easy due to their existing trust and relationships, strengthened by their Indigenous language skills. The need to change local NGO partner to avoid reputational risk was unfortunate, but has been positive, as NTFPO have proven to be a good facilitator with IP&LCs. They have been willing to work in partnership with the FFI technical team to implement activities which contribute to the Outputs. When working with IP&LCs, trust is often more important than technical capacity. Technical expertise can be seconded from other projects, but trust cannot be quickly built. Thus, it is recommended that similar projects work with local NGO partners who have already established trust with the local indigenous communities.

Lessons-learned from the project are being integrated into proposals for future funding. For example, these lesson-learned are being used in the design for the new BLF project, especially for activities being implemented in Cambodia.

7 Actions taken in response to Annual Report reviews

The issues raised in previous annual report reviews have been taken into careful consideration by the project and addressed. Most relevant was the April 2023 review.

This review highlighted that gender-equality activities were lacking prior to that point. This comment was addressed by a renewed focus of gender inclusion in Y3 and Y4, including in the form of gender-inclusive workshops (Activity 2.5), with 528 participants (235 women, 44.5%) and CPA management committee's institution of more gender equitable quotas; 40%. Current CPA committee members are comprised of 37.25% women (Activity 2.2).

Likewise, the project has since selected and reported against Darwin Standard Indicators (see Annex 3) and fully recognized Darwin identity on all external documents and reports, including social media posts (Annex 5.4.1). The project was committed to ensure sustainability, and this is fully explored in Section 9.

In order to understand the factors contributing to the project results, we studied trends (such as climatic and seasonal factors, deforestation trends), and conducted FGDs with the project beneficiaries. We used participatory impact assessment approach to explore the changes that mattered most to community groups and to analyse why these changes occurred. This information is then triangulated with data from the quantitative surveys and external factors that may have contributed to the change.

8 Sustainability and Legacy

The intended sustainable benefits post-project are still valid. It is anticipated that increased capacity of government and communities to manage VNP with agreed zoning and management planning will lead to a reduction in the rate of forest lost and to the restoration of VNP through a combination of natural regeneration and assisted forest restoration.

It is also anticipated that indigenous farmers will have increased knowledge and skills in sustainable agroforestry, combining climate-smart agricultural practices and best agroecology principles. Improved planting stock will lead to increased quantity and quality of production and more sustainable incomes and livelihoods for indigenous households. Improved management of CPAs will allow indigenous households to maintain or increase their production and income from selected NTFPs, such as malva nut and cobra mushrooms, and explore the potential of ecotourism as an alternative income for indigenous households.

There has been increasing interest and capacity resulting from the project. Project partners including the MoE, PDoE, NTFPO and indigenous communities have all increased their capacity through participation in project activities, such as the improved capacity of the PDoE rangers in biodiversity survey techniques.

This has led to growing interest and support for the project and its activities. This is reflected in the strong support provided to the project by MoE, PDoE and the Provincial Governor, and in their contribution to the success of FFI's Biodiverse Landscapes Fund (BLF) Proposal, which began in mid-2023. This BLF project will run until January 2030 and will engage the majority of FFI and NTFPO staff, along with government partners and community stakeholders who were engaged in the Darwin Initiative project. The BLF will continue to secure the zonation and park management plan, building on the progress made by Darwin, and ensuring that these outcomes are secured in the near future.

Achievements and progress under this project will additionally contribute to the development of REDD+ project in VNP, where the Government of Cambodia is interested to set up as the long-term sustainable financing to support the VNP protection and management and improve the sustainable livelihoods of IP&LCs. FFI are committed to working with MoE to explore the possibility and feasibility of a REDD+ project to secure sustainable financing for VNP. This process would include a full FPIC with IP&LCs, if it is able to move forward.

9 Darwin Initiative identity

The Government of Cambodia, at national and provincial levels, are aware of the UK Government's contribution to the project. This started with their original letter of support for the project proposal and has continued throughout project implementation. Senior government officials from the Ministry of Environment and Provincial Government actively participated in the Inception Meeting and know UK Government's contribution. The Darwin Logo is used on banners for all project meetings at the provincial and community level. The Darwin Logo is also used on sign boards marking the establishment of seed gardens for clonal cashew nut and high-value fruit trees. Therefore, community members and beneficiaries recognized the contribution of the Darwin Initiative and UK Government.

In the project area the Darwin Initiative project is the only project being implemented by FFI and partners and is therefore not seen as part of a larger programme. Also, there are no other conservation projects being implemented for VNP by other international NGOs or donors. Thus, the Darwin Initiative is seen as a distinct project with a clear identity.

Understanding of the Darwin Initiative is strong within the Ministry of Environment and within Ratanakiri Province, but was less well-known by the general public. It is anticipated that understanding improved when FFI and partners (NTFPO and MoE) released more media about the project achievements, including social media posts (which reached 29,488 people) along with promotion by the British Embassy and in print media. FFI's social media channels demonstrate effectiveness, boasting over 200K followers on Facebook, 100K on LinkedIn, and 60K on Instagram—a testament to the broad reach across diverse target audiences. All social media posts and press releases recognized the Darwin Initiative and credited the UK Government's contribution, but did not consistently link to the Darwin or BCF accounts. For more information, please see the Darwin Social Media Promotion information (Annex 5.4.1).

10 Risk Management

No new risks have arisen in the project beyond the initial change of partner, and no significant adaptation have been made to the project design to address changes in risk.

In the proposal, the focus was on Financial Risk Management. As stated, FFI has a zero-tolerance approach to bribery. FFI's anti-bribery policy is compliant with the Bribery Act (2010) and applies to all Members of Council, employees, volunteers, contractors, partners, and any other person associated with FFI. FFI bribery procedures address the following: direct and facilitation payments; payments under duress; gifts and hospitality; procurement; conflicts of interest; whistle-blowing, et al. All aspects of this project were governed by FFI's strict financial management systems, which assure a complete accounting of all financial resources and use of time on a real-time basis and summarized in regular financial performance reports. The original project partner was replaced due to concerns around integrity.

Risk specific to this project included partners' financial management capacity. FFI requires signed sub-grant agreements, with agreed financial and narrative reporting requirements, in order to transfer funding to partners. Further tranches of funding are only released once previous tranches have been fully reported and reconciled.

11 Safeguarding

Has your Safeguarding Policy been updated in the past 12 months?	No
Have any concerns been investigated in the past 12 months	No
Does your project have a Safeguarding focal point?	<p>Yes</p> <p>Previously Garry [REDACTED], former Project Lead.</p> <p>Now Ms. Chap [REDACTED], Social Equity and Rights Specialist.</p> <p>Email: [REDACTED]</p>
Has the focal point attended any formal training in the last 12 months?	<p>Yes</p> <p>The focal point has completed all the training modules developed by FFI related to safeguarding. These are quite comprehensive, and provided to staff online.</p> <p>Most recently, the focal point completed a training in June 2024.</p>
What proportion (and number) of project staff have received formal training on Safeguarding?	<p>100% of FFI staff and consultants have received formal training from FFI headquarters. This involves on-line training packages through FFI's training system called Mangrove. 100% of staff of NTFPO have received safeguarding training from their organization. All staff are required to sign a commitment to Safeguarding principles.</p>
<p>Has there been any lessons learnt or challenges on Safeguarding in the past 12 months? Please ensure no sensitive data is included within responses.</p> <p>FFI and NTFPO have a strong Safeguarding policy and provide training to staff, and have been able to ensure Safeguarding in relation to staff and consultants.</p>	
<p>Please describe any community sensitisation that has taken place over the lifetime of the project; include topics covered and number of participants.</p> <p>No community sensitisation was conducted during the project lifetime.</p>	
<p>Have there been any concerns around Health, Safety and Security of your staff over the lifetime of the project? If yes, please outline how this was resolved.</p> <p>There were no concerns about the health, safety and security of our staff over the lifetime of the project.</p>	

Biodiversity survey teams were provided with first aid kits and satellite phones, and an agreement with a Cambodia-based helicopter company, Helistar, was in place in case of the need of an emergency medivac.

12 Finance and administration

As agreed with Eilidh Young, BCF Senior Administrator, the financial report will be compiled and amended into this narrative report by 30 September 2024.

12.1 Project expenditure

Project spend (indicative) since last Annual Report	2023/24 Grant (£)	2023/24 Total actual Darwin Initiative Costs (£)	Variance %	Comments (please explain significant variances)
Staff costs (see below)				
Consultancy costs				
Overhead Costs				
Travel and subsistence				
Operating Costs				
Capital items (see below)				
Others (see below)				
TOTAL				

Staff employed (Name and position)	Cost (£)
TOTAL	

Capital items – description	Capital items – cost (£)
TOTAL	

Other items – description	Other items – cost (£)
TOTAL	

12.2 Additional funds or in-kind contributions secured

Matched funding leveraged by the partners to deliver the project	Total (£)
TOTAL	

Total additional finance mobilised for new activities occurring outside of the project, building on evidence, best practices and the project	Total (£)
TOTAL	

12.3 Value for Money

One of key success of this project has contributed to success of another proposal led by FFI to build on what this project has achieved for the benefits of nature, climate and people.

The project has set up its field office at Ratanakiri Provincial Department of Environment, which saved on rental costs. In addition, it was very convenient to build and keep the constant working relationship with PDoE on the project planning and implementation.

FFI has selected the project site-based NTFPO as its field partner for the project activity implementation. This partnership saved a lot of administrative and staffing costs and created enable conditions for the project to build closer relationship and connection with local communities and authorities.

Additional evidence of value for money will be provided along with the Financial Report, scheduled to be submitted prior to 30 September 2024.

13 Other comments on progress not covered elsewhere

[Sensitive issue, please remove it once this report is published].

As of our final report submission on 31 July 2024, it has emerged in the past week that the government intends to improve a 166 km stretch of the road, about 100 km of which runs through VNP. It poses

concerns over the possibility of further developments, and a significant increase in the ease of access to formerly remote areas in the east of the park. Increased access and development may precipitate a possible future loss of biodiversity in the park, through increased habitat loss, poaching and logging. Under component 3 of BLF, the project needs to closely work with the government to prevent unsustainable infrastructure development from destroying biodiversity.

14 OPTIONAL: Outstanding achievements of your project (300-400 words maximum). This section may be used for publicity purposes.

I agree for the Biodiversity Challenge Funds Secretariat to publish the content of this section.

The “Strengthened livelihoods and Conservation Management in Virachey National Park” project, funded by the UK Government through the Darwin Initiative and led by Fauna & Flora Cambodia, in partnership with the Ministry of Environment and Non-Timber Forest Product (NTFP) Organization has undertaken the first comprehensive biodiversity survey of Virachey National Park, resulting in a survey report that highlights the species richness and biodiversity values of this protected area, providing an important baseline for the development of zoning and management plans for the national park.

One of the highlights from the biodiversity survey was the discovery of a population of critically endangered large-antlered muntjac, an extremely rare deer species that was previously only known from small populations in Laos and Vietnam but not from Cambodia. We have published the first assessment of this new and important population [in a peer-reviewed journal](#). This finding was captured by [national and international media](#).

Other noteworthy finds arising from the biodiversity survey work included confirmed presence of several threatened species including red-shanked douc langur, Sunda pangolin, clouded leopard, dhole, sun and moon bear and gaur, as well as new country records for two bat species, a species of glass lizard, and a species of ginger.

Over 500 local producers were trained in climate-smart agriculture techniques, and the project worked to provide market access and strategies for farmers and forest product collectors. Community Protected Area (CPA) Management Committees were re-elected, with improvements in gender representation of women in leadership, and trained in natural resource management. Two CPA management plans were revised, with support from our local partner NTFP Organization, and are expected to be adopted later this year. They will help sustainably manage these CPAs. In addition to improved management, the project achieved greater participation by local community members.

These interventions resulted in increased income from cashew agroforestry, and non-timber forest product collection for malva nuts and cobra mushrooms. Improved incomes resulted in greater food security for indigenous peoples and local communities, with a 29.5% decrease in the number of households that must skip meals due to food availability. Gender equality and multi-dimensional wellbeing were perceived by community members to have improved due to the project interventions.

Image, Video or Graphic Information:

File Type (Image / Video / Graphic)	File Name or File Location	Caption, country and credit	Online accounts to be tagged (leave blank if none)	Consent of subjects received (delete as necessary)
Video	Link	Caption: Camera traps set in remote areas of the park have recorded video of the elusive large-antlered muntjac, <i>Muntiacus vuquangensis</i> , confirming the presence of multiple individual muntjac. The recent findings	Facebook: Fauna & Flora Cambodia	N/A

		<p>confirmed the importance of Virachey National Park for this species.</p> <p>The rare species was recorded for the first time in Virachey in 2021, the only known home of the species in Cambodia. A previous Fauna & Flora survey detected a muntjac mother and fawn, showing the presence of a breeding population in Virachey. Additional records of the species are an encouraging confirmation of its continued survival.</p> <p>However, this species is at risk of extinction due to the threat of extreme poaching and snaring pressure throughout their range.</p> <p>In order to protect the large-antlered muntjac for long-term survival, this knowledge and data must be used to inform urgent on-the-ground conservation action to protect one of the final refuges of this rare species.</p> <p>Country: Cambodia</p> <p>Credit: Fauna & Flora</p>	<p>Facebook: Fauna & Flora</p> <p>LinkedIn</p> <p>X (Twitter)</p> <p>Instagram</p> <p>TikTok</p>	
Images	Link	<p>Caption: Fauna & Flora has initiated the largest-ever exploration of the biodiversity of Virachey National Park. A total of 89 species were detected by camera trapping, including 20 globally threatened species on the IUCN Red List. The survey also marks the first record of a juvenile large-antlered muntjac, indicating Virachey's importance in the conservation of this elusive, Critically Endangered deer, that remains endemic to the forests in and around the Annamite Mountains. The information generated will be essential to inform the management of this protected area.</p> <p>This project is funded by Darwin Initiative.</p>	<p>Facebook: Fauna & Flora Cambodia</p> <p>Facebook: Fauna & Flora</p> <p>LinkedIn</p> <p>X (Twitter)</p>	N/A

		<p>Country: Cambodia</p> <p>Credit: Fauna & Flora</p>	<p>Instagram</p> <p>TikTok</p>	
Image	Link	<p>Caption: As part of our ongoing survey of Virachey National Park, we have provided theoretical and hands-on training to Ministry of Environment staff, including park rangers, in survey techniques ranging from the well-established camera trapping to more novel methods like eDNA sample collection. Trained rangers are now much better prepared to carry out this work independently, and we are proud to have helped!</p> <p>This project is funded by Darwin Initiative.</p> <p>Country: Cambodia</p> <p>Credit: © Jeremy Holden / Fauna & Flora</p>	<p>Facebook: Fauna & Flora Cambodia</p> <p>Facebook: Fauna & Flora</p> <p>LinkedIn</p> <p>X (Twitter)</p> <p>Instagram</p> <p>TikTok</p>	Yes
Image	Link	<p>Non-timber forest products by local communities living in Virachey National Park are supported by Fauna & Flora in improving their market access and providing technical skills.</p> <p>Country: Cambodia</p> <p>Credit: Hem Manita/ Fauna & Flora</p>	<p>Facebook: Fauna & Flora Cambodia</p> <p>Facebook: Fauna & Flora</p> <p>LinkedIn</p> <p>X (Twitter)</p>	Yes

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Annex 1: Report of progress and achievements against logframe for the life of the project

Project summary	Progress and achievements
<p>Impact</p> <p>VNP biodiversity and cultural values are safeguarded, enabling the recovery of depleted wildlife populations and securing the future of the northern yellow-cheeked gibbon, alongside enduring livelihood improvement amongst indigenous communities.</p>	<p>A reduction of 40.09% in the rate of loss against the baseline forest cover data in 2020 (Indicator 0.1, Annex 5.03). Forest loss trends across VNP and the BCC (established in 2016) from 2010-2020 show forest loss steadily rising, and then declining each year of the project, indicating that the project likely contributed to this impact.</p> <p>Reduced threats will contribute to safeguarding the endangered northern yellow-cheeked gibbon, along with the newly reported large-antlered muntjac and a further 23 vertebrate species and at least 8 tree species that are globally threatened on the IUCN Red List (please refer to the Virachey Biodiversity Survey Report, Annex 5.1.4).</p> <p>Participating households showed a quantifiable impact on their improved livelihoods which contributed to poverty reduction. The project has also contributed to the community and cultural values of IP&LCs, and their commitment to their natural resources. Food security improved, with a decrease in the average number of days of insufficient food from 54 to 35 days (Indicator 3.3). Community members perceived that motivations for illegal forest activities (logging or hunting) had changed, with a 27% decrease in attributing such actions to poverty (down from 45% to 18%). Due to project interventions, there was a perceived 12% increase in multi-dimensional wellbeing amongst the communities (Outcome Indicator 0.2).</p>
<p>Outcome</p> <p>Forest cover in Virachey National Park is preserved through strengthened park and CPA management, and through the adoption of resilient and sustainable livelihoods, providing improved well-being for indigenous communities.</p>	<p>Total annual forest loss in VNP declined by 40.09% between the 2020 baseline and 2023 (Outcome Indicator 0.1).</p> <p>Project-end surveys detected a significant increase of 52% in households reporting rule-breaking to the CPA committee, from 29% to 81%, both inside and outside of the CPA. The reasons for hunting and logging have shifted, with a 27% decrease in attributing such actions to poverty (down from 45% to 18%). Please see the Project Impact Assessment Report for further detail (Annex 5.0.2).</p> <p>These changing attitudes towards rule-breaking and unsustainable use of natural resources may explain an overall reduction in forest loss, although areas outside of CPAs may continue to suffer deforestation due to a lack of management and a possible lack of trust towards government law enforcement.</p> <p>Wellbeing improved over the project lifetime, with 78% of households surveyed after project implementation reporting positive multi-dimensional wellbeing (Outcome Indicator 0.2). Households additionally experienced enhanced food security, with a decrease in the average number of days of insufficient food from 54% to 35% (Indicator 3.2). Household living standards improved noticeably over the project period, with</p>

	<p>significant increases in sanitation facilities, access to basic facilities and services, and housing quality. Monetary assets remained consistent, with notable improvements in households' financial status. Community dynamics also showed positive trends, with improvements in trust and respect among residents and resolution of conflicts within the community. Overall satisfaction and engagement in decision-making processes within households increased over time, reflecting a positive trend in overall wellbeing.</p>
<p>Outcome indicator 0.1</p> <p>Rate of annual forest cover loss in Virachey NP and associated biodiversity corridor is reduced by at least 20% by 2024 compared to 2020 baseline.</p>	<p>Total annual forest loss declined by 40.09% (1,170.1 ha) between the 2020 baseline (2,918 ha) and 2023 (1,748 ha). Forest loss rates were calculated using the Global Forest Change 2000-2023 dataset. Please refer to the Forest Loss Analysis (Annex 5.0.3) for more detail.</p>
<p>Outcome indicator 0.2</p> <p>At least 75% of both female and male members of 400 participating households report positive multi-dimensional well-being outcomes (e.g., income, food security, social status, gender equality, agency, and/or cultural values) by project end.</p>	<p>The project has yielded significant improvements in household wellbeing across multiple dimensions, as evidenced, with 78% of the sampled households reported positive multi-dimensional wellbeing after project implementation, compared to 66% reported at project start. A representative sample of interviewees from 152 households (82 female, 53.95%) were surveyed. 84.29% of male respondents (n=59) and 73.17% of female respondents (n=60) reported positive multi-dimensional wellbeing at project end, showing some level of gender disparity in perception of improvements.</p> <p>Please refer to the Project Impact Assessment Report (Annex 5.0.2) for more detail.</p>
<p>Output 1: Zonation and management plan developed and being implemented for Virachey National Park.</p>	
<p>Output indicator 1.1</p> <p>By end of Y1, generation and dissemination of data and knowledge to inform evidence-based zonation of the national park.</p>	<p>By the end of the project, 4 different biodiversity surveys which focused on herpetofauna, ground-dwelling animals, bats and crocodiles, respectively, were conducted in 2022 and 2023 with the participation from rangers and local communities. Those survey reports were shared to MOE to inform ongoing zoning process.</p>
<p>Output indicator 1.2</p> <p>By end of Y1, draft and zonation maps incorporate input provided by indigenous community representatives (at least 30% women) through active participation in zonation workshops.</p>	<p>In context of the previous boundary, the park was gazetted into 4 different zones in line with Cambodian Protected Area Law. The final draft map indicated that the Core Zone: 134,417 ha (40.42%); Conservation Zone: 109,293 ha (32.87%); Sustainable Use Zone: 87,908 ha (26.43%) and Community Zone: 882 ha (0.26%). FFI was not fully engaged in this process by government partners, and could not determine the level of input provided by community representatives or the proportion of women.</p>

<p>Output Indicator 1.3 Zonation map finalised by end Y2, taking into account needs and rights of IPs.</p>	<p>Zonation was delayed due to country-wide protected area boundary reforms in July 2023. The park area was expanded with from 332,500 ha to 405,766 ha. This reform has resulted in a delay in zonation process beyond the timeline of the project. FFI remains committed to working with MoE to inform participatory zonation of VNP.</p>
<p>Output Indicator 1.4 Management plan produced and implementation initiated by project end.</p>	<p>Based on management plan development guidelines, VNP needs to be zoned first and management plans will follow. Thus, the management plan will be produced in the coming years, after the zonation process is complete and will be supported by the BLF.</p>
<p>Output 2. Revised CPA management plans established and implemented by indigenous communities.</p>	
<p>Output indicator 2.1 Management plans for the four CPAs in Ratanakiri Province revised by end Y2.</p>	<p>Management plans for 4 community protected areas have already been revised, two of which will be finalized and submitted to Provincial Department of Environment for endorsement in Q3 of 2024 (Annex 5.2.4 & 5.2.5). However, it was found that the park expansion has affected and resulted in delay in the process of revising the management plans for CPA O'Tabok and O'Khampa, and a study to identify community land use inside the Virachey National Park must be conducted. This will look at the possibility of expanding the community zone to reduce deforestation for agriculture and promote the community's participation in conservation. Management plans of these two CPAs will be approved in Q1 of 2025 under the BLF.</p>
<p>Output indicator 2.2 70% of CPA Committee members (c. 27) upskilled in CPA management by end Y3.</p>	<p>All CPA committee members were trained on CPA management structure, roles and responsibilities, work plan, by-laws and regulations, patrol and dispute resolution procedures and report writing. The post-training result indicates that 67% of all participants gained skills and knowledge. (Annex 5.2.1).</p>
<p>Output indicator 2.3 Number of snares and other threats to biodiversity recorded per unit of effort by CPA members (at least three per CPA) taking part in monthly community patrols is reduced by 50% by end Y3.</p>	<p>The members of the CPA committee have been carrying out community patrols on a volunteer basis. CPAs gain fees for the extraction of malva nuts and cobra mushroom, but such funds are not sufficient to cover CPA costs or the cost of patrols and therefore no regular patrolling or record keeping has been kept or shared with the project. In future, greater support of patrolling will be considered by FFI and we are exploring sustainable financing options such as REDD+ or by matched funds for the BLF.</p>

<p>Output indicator 2.4</p> <p>By end of project, 75% of 500 community members of all genders within the CPAs demonstrate increased understanding of the ecological values of the forest and the rationale for its protection, and self-report adherence to CPA rules and regulations.</p>	<p>528 community members of all 4 CPAs (including 235 females) attended a series of gender inclusion workshops on importance of Virachey National Park, gender integration in CPAs, importance of CPAs and community participation for present and future generations and reflection of management plan implementation. 65% of attendees have gained their knowledge on the workshop contexts through group discussions and individual questions and responses. Please see the attached Workshop Reports (Annex 5.2.6).</p>
<p>Output 3. Resilient and sustainable livelihoods strategies adopted by women and men in target households in indigenous communities.</p>	
<p>Output indicator 3.1</p> <p>At least two climate-smart agriculture techniques are applied by 200 trained producers (at least 50% women) by end Y2 and 400 trained producers (at least 50% women) by end Y3.</p>	<p>In 2022, Phase 1 of the project trained 162 farmers (44.44% women) in crop planting, care, and natural fertilizer production. Phase 2 in 2023 expanded on this with 344 farmers (49.13% women) learning about agro-chemical use, natural pesticides, and composting. Overall, the project trained 506 producers, including 243 women (48.02%). Please see attached Training Reports (Annex 5.3.5).</p>
<p>Output indicator 3.2</p> <p>400 households, 1,600 people (50% female members) have increased annual income from existing land holdings and sustainable NTFP use and sale, by 10% by end Y2 and 20% by end Y3.</p>	<p>The project identified three key income-generating commodities for households in VNP based on a market system assessment: an increase of income has been observed in cashew (by 93%), malva nut collection (by 48%), and cobra mushroom collection (by 70%). Samples of project beneficiaries were surveyed (152 households; 53.95% female, 46.05% male). Please refer to the Project Impact Assessment Report (Annex 5.0.2) for more details.</p>
<p>Output indicator 3.3</p> <p>400 households improve their food security by decreasing the number of hungry months by at least 10% by end Y3.</p>	<p>The survey of 152 households indicates 87.5% never skip meals, a significant improvement of 29.5% from the baseline's 58%. Comparatively, opinions on meal skipping were generally positive, with 70% expressing improvements. The VNP baseline data (Annex 5.0.1) showed seasonal food security fluctuations, with sufficient food access peaking at 32-33% of households early in the year and dropping to 15% by August and September. The data suggested a need for interventions to address these seasonal variations. By project end, 87.5% of households had adequate meals year-round, and the average number of days of insufficient food in households decreased by 19%, from 54 to 35 days.</p> <p>12.5% of households still borrowed an average of 61.68kg of rice annually, indicating reliance on social networks to offset food shortages. Please refer to the Project Impact Assessment Report for more details (Annex 5.0.2).</p>

Annex 2: Project's full current logframe as presented in the application form (unless changes have been agreed)

Project summary	SMART Indicators	Means of verification	Important Assumptions
<p>Impact: VNP biodiversity and cultural values are safeguarded, enabling the recovery of depleted wildlife populations and securing the future of the northern yellow-cheeked gibbon, alongside enduring livelihood improvement amongst indigenous communities.</p>			
<p>Outcome: Forest cover in Virachey National Park is preserved through strengthened park and CPA management, and through the adoption of resilient and sustainable livelihoods, providing improved well-being for indigenous communities.</p>	<p>0.1 Rate of annual forest cover loss in Virachey NP and associated biodiversity corridor is reduced by at least 20% by 2024 compared to 2020 baseline.</p> <p>0.2 At least 75% of both female and male members of 400 participating households report positive multi-dimensional well-being outcomes (e.g., income, food security, social status, gender equality, agency, and/or cultural values) by project end.</p>	<p>0.1 Land cover analysis.</p> <p>0.2 End of project participatory multi-dimensional well-being assessment report.</p> <p>All relevant data will be sex-disaggregated</p>	<p>The strong political will to sustainably manage Virachey National Park continues.</p> <p>The existing environmental legislative framework is maintained or improved, and is upheld by government and industry actors.</p> <p>Cambodia continues to effectively contain and mitigate the community spread of Covid-19, such that human, material, and financial resources remain available for conservation and livelihoods improvement activities.</p>
<p>Output 1 Zonation and management plan developed and being implemented for Virachey National Park.</p>	<p>1.1 By end of Y1, generation and dissemination of data and knowledge to inform evidence-based zonation of the national park.</p> <p>1.2 By end of Y1, draft and zonation maps incorporate input provided by indigenous community representatives (at least 30% women) through active participation in zonation workshops.</p>	<p>1.1 Biodiversity survey report.</p> <p>1.2 Draft zonation maps; zonation workshops' minutes, post workshop surveys indicating participants' impression of enfranchisement, and participants' lists.</p> <p>1.3 Zonation map that reflects inclusive IP socio-cultural inputs as recorded in workshop minutes.</p> <p>1.4 Management plan.</p>	<p>Government remains committed to the development of a zonation and management plan for Virachey National Park.</p> <p>Government processes move at sufficient pace to approve zonation and management plans within the life of the project.</p> <p>Indigenous community members feel they have their platforms recognised, see value in and positive incentives</p>

	<p>1.3 Zonation map finalised by end Y2, taking into account needs and rights of IPs.</p> <p>1.4 Management plan produced and implementation initiated by project end.</p>	All relevant data will be sex-disaggregated.	associated with developing and complying with zonation.
<p>Output 2 Revised CPA management plans established and implemented by indigenous communities.</p>	<p>2.1 Management plans for the four CPAs in Ratanakiri Province revised by end Y2.</p> <p>2.2 70% of CPA Committee members (c. 27) upskilled in CPA management by end Y3.</p> <p>2.3 Number of snares and other threats to biodiversity recorded per unit of effort by CPA members (at least three per CPA) taking part in monthly community patrols is reduced by 50% by end Y3.</p> <p>2.4 By end of project, 75% of 500 community members of all genders within the CPAs demonstrate increased understanding of the ecological values of the forest and the rationale for its protection, and self-report adherence to CPA rules and regulations.</p>	<p>2.1 CPA management plans.</p> <p>2.2 CPA training participant lists before and after skills survey.</p> <p>2.3 Community patrol records.</p> <p>2.4 KAP survey baseline and end-of-project reports; annual participatory project evaluation report.</p> <p>All relevant data will be sex-disaggregated.</p>	<p>CPA legal status is upheld.</p> <p>CPA members are able to meet.</p> <p>CPA Committees continue to equitably and transparently represent their local constituency.</p>
<p>Output 3 Resilient and sustainable livelihoods strategies adopted by women and men in target households in indigenous communities.</p>	<p>3.1 At least two climate-smart agriculture techniques are applied by 200 trained producers (at least 50% women) by end Y2 and 400 trained producers (at least 50% women) by end Y3.</p>	<p>3.1 Training evaluation reports, baseline; mid-term and end-of-project study of farming practices, annual participatory project evaluation report.</p> <p>3.2 Natural resource use and income assessment baseline; mid-term and end-of-project</p>	Innovative practices introduced through the project are appropriate to the cultural, socio-economic and agro-ecological context and hence readily adopted by indigenous women and men.

	<p>3.2 400 households, 1,600 people (50% female members) have increased annual income from existing land holdings and sustainable NTFP use and sale, by 10% by end Y2 and 20% by end Y3.</p> <p>3.3 400 households improve their food security by decreasing the number of hungry months by at least 10% by end Y3.</p>	<p>reports; annual participatory project evaluation report.</p> <p>3.3 Socio-economic baseline and end-of-project reports; annual participatory project evaluation report.</p> <p>All relevant data will be sex-disaggregated.</p>	
<p>Activities (each activity is numbered according to the output that it will contribute towards, for example 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3 are contributing to Output 1)</p> <p>1.1 Conduct targeted biodiversity surveys, with participation from IPs, of wildlife and key habitats to provide the knowledge for an evidence-based zonation and management plan (Y1).</p> <p>1.2 Disseminate results of biodiversity surveys to raise awareness and galvanise a sense of pride nationally, and to augment political will (Y1-Y2).</p> <p>1.3 Conduct participatory zonation consultations with MoE, IPs and other stakeholders, to inform a zoning of VNP that fulfils conservation needs and IPs' sustainable resource use rights (Y1-Y2).</p> <p>1.4 Develop an evidence-based management plan in partnership with MoE, following best practice guidance and with input from indigenous communities (Y2-Y3).</p> <p>2.1 Assess current CPA management practices, customary institutions, land tenure and resource use needs within four CPAs in Ratanakiri Province (Y1).</p> <p>2.2 Strengthen technical and organisational capacities of existing CPA Committees to update, implement and monitor existing management plans, and to engage in relevant decision-making (Y1-Y2).</p> <p>2.3 Support the revision and monitoring of CPA management plans to ensure effectiveness and equitable distribution of risks/costs/benefits (Y2).</p> <p>2.4 Train and support CPA members to conduct monthly forest community patrols to record, remove and discourage threats to wildlife, in line with CPA management plans (Y2-Y3).</p> <p>2.5 Deliver two gender-inclusive workshops per year per target community within CPAs on regulations in protected areas including cultural and scientific contextual components (Y1-Y3).</p> <p>2.6 Support 4 youth eco-clubs to take an active role in conservation stewardship within their communities through capacity building and local awareness events (Y1-Y3).</p> <p>3.1 Analyse and monitor gendered aspects of natural resource use, disaggregating roles in livelihoods and community decision-making processes to ensure gender-responsive project delivery (Y1).</p> <p>3.2 Analyse community socio-economic status and assess traditional and current agricultural and NTFP/wildmeat harvesting practices, and cultural values (Y1).</p>			

- 3.3** With IPs, identify and evaluate strategies based on conservation goals, agro-ecological conditions, traditional practices, existing skills/interests, and market demand based on market system analysis (Y1).
- 3.4** Deliver technical training and develop capacity for indigenous producers for climate-smart agriculture, poultry, and revitalisation of sustainable traditional NTFP harvesting (Y1-Y3).
- 3.5** Improve market access for selected agricultural and NTFP goods through better linkage between target communities and private sector and development of processing unit if feasible (Y1-Y3).

Annex 3: Standard Indicators

Table 1: Project Standard Indicators

DI Indicator number	Name of indicator	Units	Disaggregation	Year 1 Total	Year 2 Total	Year 3 Total	Total achieved	Total planned
DI-A01	3.1 Structured and relevant training of at least two climate-smart agriculture techniques provided to 200 producers (of which at least 50% are women) by end Y2 and 400 trained producers (at least 50% women) by end Y3.	Number of people	Gender - Men	-	88	175	263	200
DI-A01	3.1 Structured and relevant training of at least two climate-smart agriculture techniques provided to 200 producers (of which at least 50% are women) by end Y2 and 400 trained producers (at least 50% women) by end Y3.	Number of people	Gender - Women	-	74	169	243	200
DI-B01	1.4 Management plan produced, and implementation initiated by project end.	Number of plans	-	-	-	-	Ongoing	1
DI-B03	2.1 Community management plans for the four CPAs in Ratanakiri Province revised by end Y2.	Number of plans	-	-	-	-	2 revised, approval Q3 2024	4
DI-B05	2.2 27 CPA Committee members upskilled in CPA management by end Y3.	Number of people	Gender - Men	-	-	32	32	27 total – gender not specified.
DI-B05	2.2 27 CPA Committee members upskilled in CPA management by end Y3.	Number of people	Gender - Women	-	-	19	19	27 total – gender not specified.
DI-C02	1.1 By end of Y1, generation and dissemination of data and knowledge (through a biodiversity assessment survey) to inform evidence- based zonation of the national park.	Number	-	-	-	3	3	3
DI-D02	0.1 Amount of ecosystem loss avoided measured as a reduction in annual forest cover loss (ha) in Virachey NP by at least 20% by 2024 compared to 2020 baseline.	Number of hectares	-	769.72 ha	1,093.42 ha	1,170.1 ha	3,033.24 ha	1,750.21 ha (583.40 ha per year, 20% reduction from baseline of

DI Indicator number	Name of indicator	Units	Disaggregation	Year 1 Total	Year 2 Total	Year 3 Total	Total achieved	Total planned
								2,918.02 ha annual loss)
DI-D03a	0.2 At least 75% of both female and male members of 400 participating households report positive multi-dimensional well- being outcomes (e.g., income, food security, social status, gender equality, agency, and/or cultural values) demonstrating the creation and protection of sustainable livelihoods by project end.	Number of people	Gender - Men	-	-	84.10% of sampled 70 male interviewees	84.10% of sampled 70 male interviewees	75% of households
DI-D03a	0.2 At least 75% of both female and male members of 400 participating households report positive multi-dimensional well- being outcomes (e.g., income, food security, social status, gender equality, agency, and/or cultural values) demonstrating the creation and protection of sustainable livelihoods by project end.	Number of people	Gender - Women	-	-	72.88% of sampled 82 female interviewees	72.88% of sampled 152 households)	75% of households
DI-D03b	3.2 400 households, 1,600 people (50% female members) have increased annual income from existing land holdings and sustainable NTFP use and sale, by 10% by end Y2 and 20% by end Y3.	Number of people	-	-	-	Annual increases in income the project from cashew nut (93%), malva collection (48%), and cobra mushroom (70%) based on 152 sampled households.	Annual increases in income the project from cashew nut (93%), malva collection (48%), and cobra mushroom (70%) based on 152 sampled households.	20% increase in annual income
DI-D04a	3.3 400 households, 1,600 people, improve their food security by decreasing the number of hungry months by at least 10% by end Y3.	Number of people	-	58% of people never skip meals based on 273 sampled households.	-	87.5% of people never skip meals based on 152 sampled households.	29.5% improvement	10% reduction

DI Indicator number	Name of indicator	Units	Disaggregation	Year 1 Total	Year 2 Total	Year 3 Total	Total achieved	Total planned
DI-D05a	3.1 Individuals are better adapted to the effects of climate change by learning the skills to apply at least two climate-smart agriculture techniques by 200 trained producers (at least 50% women) by end Y2 and 400 trained producers (at least 50% women) by end Y3.	Number of people	Gender - Men	-	88	175	263	200
DI-D05a	3.1 Individuals are better adapted to the effects of climate change by learning the skills to apply at least two climate-smart agriculture techniques by 200 trained producers (at least 50% women) by end Y2 and 400 trained producers (at least 50% women) by end Y3.	Number of people	Gender - Women	-	74	169	243	200

Table 2: Publications

Title	Type (e.g. journals, manual, CDs)	Detail (authors, year)	Gender of Lead Author	Nationality of Lead Author	Publishers (name, city)	Available from (e.g. weblink or publisher if not available online)
Status and conservation implications of a newly discovered large-antlered muntjac population in Cambodia	Journal Note	Pablo Sinovas, Ioannis Alexiou, Oliver Roberts, Jeremy Holden, Nasak Chantha & Andrew Tilker (2024)	Male	Spanish	Endangered Species Research - Vol. 53	DOI: https://doi.org/10.3354/esr01316

Checklist for submission

	Check
Different reporting templates have different questions, and it is important you use the correct one. Have you checked you have used the correct template (checking fund, type of report (i.e. Annual or Final), and year) and deleted the blue guidance text before submission?	✓
Is the report less than 10MB? If so, please email to BCF-Reports@niras.com putting the project number in the Subject line.	✓
Is your report more than 10MB? If so, please discuss with BCF-Reports@niras.com about the best way to deliver the report, putting the project number in the Subject line. All supporting material should be submitted in a way that can be accessed and downloaded as one complete package.	-
If you are submitting photos for publicity purposes, do these meet the outlined requirements (see section 14)?	✓
Have you included means of verification? You should not submit every project document, but the main outputs and a selection of the others would strengthen the report.	✓
Have you involved your partners in preparation of the report and named the main contributors	✓
Have you completed the Project Expenditure table fully?	No ¹
Do not include claim forms or other communications with this report.	

¹ As agreed with Eilidh Young, BCF Senior Administrator, the financial report will be compiled and amended into this narrative report by 30 September 2024.