

## FAO trains Cambodia to prepare for first ever national forestry inventory

*By Botumroath Keo Lebun*



*FAO forestry officer Mathieu Van Rijn (right) explains to Officer Seng Rattanak (left) how to use Vertex laser*



*Cambodian officers in the field plots as part of the nation's forest inventory training*

**25 July 2014 – Koh Kong:** Braving a punishing sun, mushy ground and grimy labor, 22 Cambodian government officials participated in week-long vital work, which will culminate in the first significant assessment of the country's forests since 1962.

The Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) will use the inventory to obtain an accurate and reliable snapshot of its forests, its health, size, the species it contains, and the carbon content.

The inventory is part of a larger government effort to tackle climate change by reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation. Sustainable management of natural resources/forests in Cambodia will lead the way in the fight against global warming.

The national forestry inventory (NFI) is designed through field trainings and workshops for government teams and other stakeholders. Forestry officer Mathieu Van Rijn from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) provides

technical guidance to the government's core team, preparing them to train more staff at the appropriate time as part of a capacity-building effort.

The training ensures that government staff is well acquainted with the NFI design, the field manual and the various field forms, and will be able to calculate basic parameter including stand volume and biomass.

### **Field Test Manual: On-the-Job-Training for the Core Team**

The core team of officers, who visited Koh Kong province in southwestern Cambodia, was co-supervised by forestry officer So Than from the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries.

The province is known for its vast mountain range, the Cardamoms, which offers a variety of landscapes, from dense evergreen rainforests to lowland swamps and coastal mangroves.

With a training manual and inventory sheet in one hand and a Khrama (Cambodian traditional scarf) in the other to protect from the sun's ray, the core team was tasked to field-test the FAO's manual for its suitability for field application /user friendliness.

Government officials also familiarized themselves with high-tech tools: a Vertex laser for distance measurement, measurement tape, a handheld GPS for location identification and an inventory form to be completed by each team.

Government officer Ngoun Sep, 45, who graduated from the government's Prek Leap National School of Agriculture, and studied for seven years in Russia in the early 1990s, says that after his third training in Koh Kong and hands-on practice with the laser range finder, he is more confident to go out in the field with his team to do the job.

"After three field practices, I can now finally confirm that I have the required skills do the inventories," Sep said, sitting on a log of wood, ready to receive information from his teammates.

Many officers including Sep complained that a major challenge in performing the forest inventory is their lack of the necessary knowledge to identify the tree species in the sampling plots. "Some sampling plots consisted of over 38 tree species. We spent too much time trying



*Core team in mangrove sampling plot for NFI training*

to identify the names of trees," said Sep, adding that a local publication on identification of tree species would be useful in his line of work.

Overall, the success of the inventory will depend on the officers' understanding of "what the data will be used for," Than said.

At the end of the field mission, Than pointed out that the manual was well-designed for Cambodian officials to complete inventories, estimating that nearly all of the 22 officers are now well-equipped for this work.



*Cambodian officers in the field to measure three types of forests- rear, mangroves and evergreen*

For further information contact:

Cambodia REDD+ Programme  
Office: REDD+ Taskforce Secretariat  
#40, Prah Norodom Blvd., Forestry  
Administrative, Phnom Penh, Cambodia  
Mobile Phone: (855) 23-224-251  
Website: [www.cambodia-redd.org](http://www.cambodia-redd.org)

FAO Representation in Cambodia  
#5, Street 370, Boeung Keng Kang I  
Khan Chamcamorn-Phnom Penh Cambodia  
Tel: (855) 23-216-566 or 023-211-702  
Fax: (855) 23-216-547  
<http://coin.fao.org/cms/world/cambodia/Home.html>