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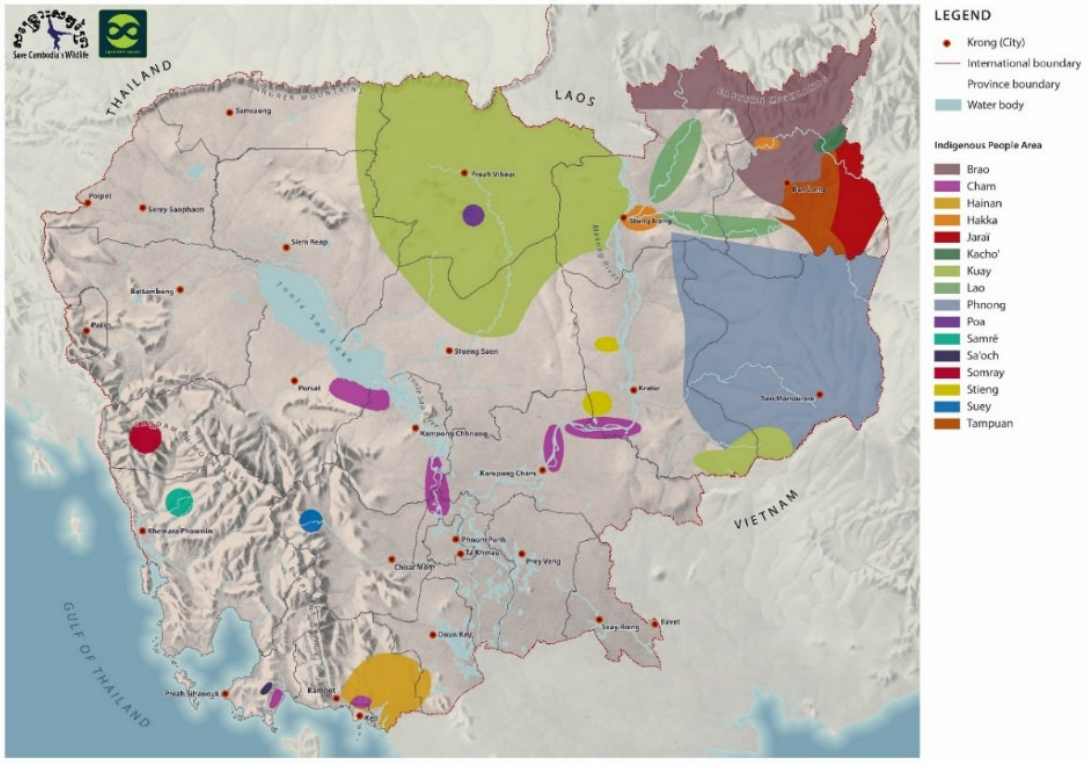
SGP The GEF Small Grants Programme

UNDP

CAMBODIA SGP OP8 COUNTRY PROGRAMME STRATEGY FOR GLOBAL ICCA SUPPORT INITIATIVE PHASE 2 (2023-2028)



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1. BACKGROUND

As a corporate programme of the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the GEF Small Grants Programme (SGP), implemented by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) aligns its Operational Phase strategies with those of the GEF and co-financing partners, and provides a global portfolio of *innovative*, inclusive*, and impactful* projects that address global environmental and sustainable development issues. Action at the local level by civil society and community-based organizations, including women groups, Indigenous Peoples, youth, and persons with disabilities is recognized essential to form multi-stakeholder alliances to deliver global environmental benefits and contribute to the GEF-8 Programming Directions, UNDP's Strategic Plan 2022-2025 and UNDP Nature Pledge, targets agreed by the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and national priorities to achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals and other international commitments.

Indigenous Peoples and local communities (IPs and LCs) play a crucial role in the conservation of biological diversity at local, national and global levels. The ICCA GSI ('Phase 2' of the partnership between the German BMUV IKI with the UNDP) will support inter alia the implementation of Targets 3, 21, 22 and 23 of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) in 50 countries.

Target 3 refers to the need to protect or conserve a minimum of 30% of the planet's land and sea surface by the year 2030. Target 21 refers to the need to ensure that the best available biodiversity data, information and knowledge are readily available to decision-makers and other relevant actors to support informed biodiversity policy, planning and decision-making processes, as well as for monitoring, reviewing and reporting progress in implementation. Target 22 refers to the need for equitable, inclusive and effective involvement of IPs and LCs in decision-making about nature conservation and biodiversity. Target 23 to the need to ensure gender equality in the implementation of the Framework through a gender-responsive approach. Gender responsive is the process of ensuring that programmes, policies and institutions take into account the different needs and experiences of people based on their gender identity.

The primary focus of the ICCA GS Phase 2 is the provision of small grants directly to civil society organizations, Indigenous Peoples and community-based organizations. The initiative also works closely with a range of global partners including the Global ICCA Consortium, the UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre (WCMC) with respect to reporting on CBD targets by governments and non-state actors, as well as international NGOs such as IUCN.

Cambodia is home to 22 Indigenous Peoples (IPs) groups across 25 provinces, with the majority residing in Ratanak Kiri (54.46%), Mondul Kiri (18%), Kratie (4.82%), Preah Vihear (3.64%), and Stung Treng (3.63%). These communities rely heavily on natural resources and subsistence agriculture, and their traditional knowledge systems play a vital role in biodiversity conservation and climate resilience.
Indigenous Peoples (IPs) communities in Cambodia face a complex set of challenges that intersect with land rights, cultural preservation, and socio-economic development. One of the most pressing issues is the struggle over land and natural resources. IPs frequently encounter land grabs and encroachment, as ancestral territories are lost to illegal sales, economic land concessions, and private development. The process for securing Communal Land Titles remains slow and bureaucratic, leaving communities vulnerable to displacement. Moreover, traditional practices such as rotational farming are often misunderstood or criminalized under national laws, further undermining Indigenous livelihoods.
Legal and political marginalization compounds these difficulties. Although Cambodia has adopted policies like the 2001 Land Law and Sub-Decree No. 83 (2009) to recognize Indigenous rights, enforcement is weak and inconsistent. Indigenous communities are routinely excluded from development planning and denied

the right to Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC), limiting their ability to influence decisions that affect their lands and futures.

Socio-economic disparities also persist. While Khmer literacy and school attendance have improved, most Indigenous adults still have only primary-level education, and access to quality healthcare remains limited, especially in remote areas. The loss of land and environmental degradation contribute to deepening poverty and rising debt, further destabilizing community resilience.
Cultural erosion is another critical concern. Integration pressures and the lack of institutional support for Indigenous languages threaten the survival of traditional knowledge and cultural identity. Discrimination against Indigenous identity continues to foster social exclusion and reduce opportunities for meaningful participation in broader society.

Finally, data and policy gaps hinder effective intervention. There are inconsistencies in the number of officially recognized Indigenous groups—ranging from 22 to 27—which complicates policy targeting and resource allocation. National strategies often fail to include adequate budgetary provisions for Indigenous development, leaving communities under-supported.

These challenges are deeply interconnected, and addressing them requires inclusive governance, stronger legal enforcement, and culturally sensitive development planning. While ICCAs are not formally recognized under this label in Cambodia, their principles are embedded in community-led conservation models such as Community Forests (CFs), IP Community (sacred forests, heritage sites), and Community Protected Area. These practices empower local communities, particularly vulnerable communities, to sustainably manage natural resources such as forests and biodiversity using traditional knowledge, cultural values, and community-based governance.

The proposed interventions will focus on land rights and natural resources management, cultural preservation, and socio-economic development. The sustainable management of natural resource-based livelihoods and land rights, ensuring that conservation efforts also enhance community resilience and livelihood security. It aims to target some of the most remote and vulnerable IPs communities in the IPs home provinces in Cambodia by addressing challenges that intersect with land rights, cultural preservation, and socio-economic development. These vulnerable communities hold invaluable traditional knowledge and play a crucial role in the conservation and sustainable utilization of natural resources.

2. SUMMARY: Key Results/Accomplishments

The GEF SGP is implemented by UNDP in partnership with the Royal Government of Cambodia. Over the past 20 years, 281 projects, including the ongoing ones, were implemented with a total grant investment of USD10.15 million including non-GEF resources (this excludes $9.3 million cash and in-kind contribution by the grantees and other development partners), engaging 188 grantees across the country, including 139 local NGOs, 48 CBOs, and one academic institution. The projects are in the GEF thematic areas of biodiversity (128 projects), climate change adaptation (102 projects), climate change mitigation (39 projects), preventing land degradation (19 projects), International Waters (19 projects), capacity development to empower local communities and NGOs (9 projects) and chemicals and waste management (2 projects). The details of these projects are shown in Figure 1.

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Figure 1. GEF Small Grants Projects in Cambodia 2004-2025

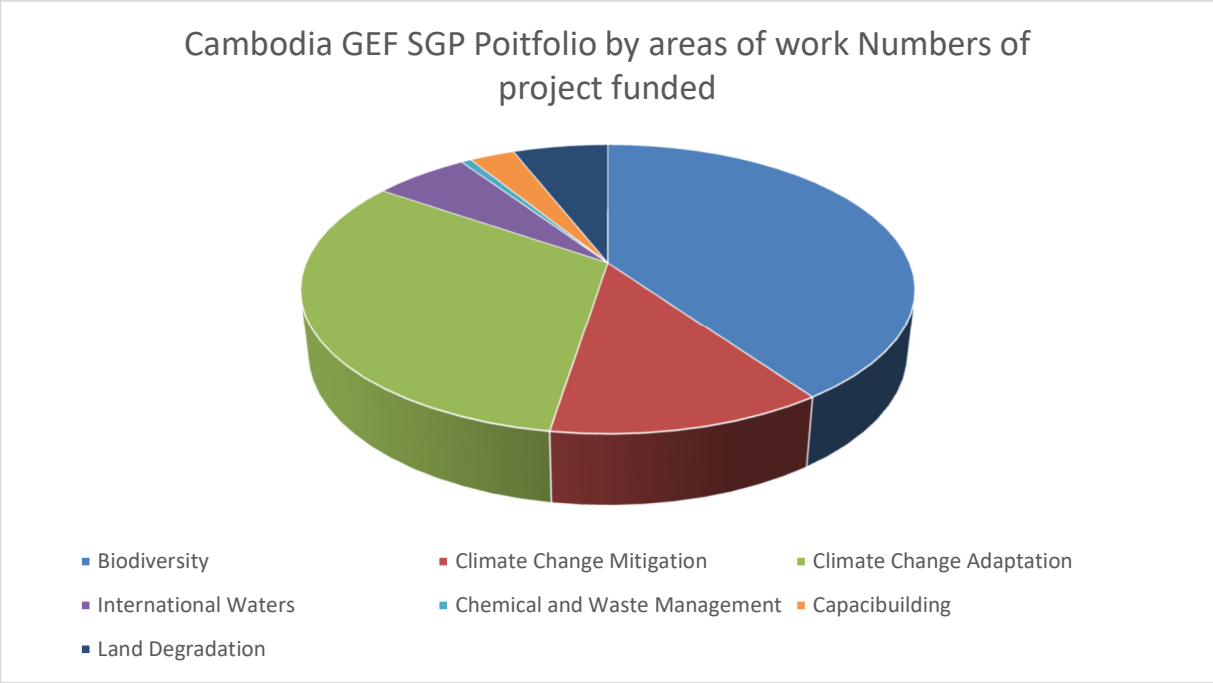

Table 1: Cambodia GEF SGP Global budget 2005-2028

GEF Operational Phase	Duration	No. of projects	Grant amount (USD)					Remark
			GEF CORE Fund (1)	RAF/ STAR Fund (2)	Partnership fund (3)	Project level Co-funding	Total Core and Partnership Fund (1+2+3)	
OP3	2005-2007	19	666,446.00	-	-	757,060.00	666,446.00	GEF CORE
OP4	2007-2010	40	516,336.00	320,000.00	120,000.00	2,568,977.00	636,336.00	GEF CORE, RAF and SCS/UNEP
OP4 UNDP CBA	2007-2008	21	-	-	483,500.00	89,769.00	483,500.00	UNDP TRAC
OP5 CCBAP	2010-2015	63	-	-	4,269,208.00	-	4,269,208.00	Sida/Swedish and UNDP CO TRACT
OP5	2010-2020	56	1,226,950.00	-	1,283,428.78	1,283,428.78	2,510,378.78	GEF CORE, COMDEKs Phase I,

								UNREDD and MAP CBA, CBR+.
OP6	2015-2019	29	1,065,601.00	-	30,000.00	1,311,423.93	1,095,601.00	GEF CORE (IWBE, IPs Access to energy and CBA-2).
ICCAs-COVID-19 respond	2020-2024	6	-	-	250,000.00	361,284.17	250,000.00	Germany Govt funding
UNDP Climate Promise fundin g	2024-2025	5	-	-	300,000.00			UNDP Climate Promise funding IP grants
OP7	2020-2026	34	941,143.32	-	333,000.00	1,358,701.32	1,274,143.32	GEF SGP CORE and COMDEKs Phase III and IV
Grand Total:	2005-2026	267	$4,416,476.32	$320,000.00	$7,069,136.78	$7,730,644.20	$11,485,613.10	
OP8	2024-2028	10	510,000.00					In the process of call for proposal
ICCA phase II	2025-2028	5	250,000.00					In the process of CPS development
OP8 STAR (BD)	2025-2028	2	90,000.00					In the process of calling for proposal
OP8 STAR LD	2025-2028	10	644,000.00					In the process of getting endorsement from GEF OFP
Total grant available for OP8:	2025-2028	27	1,494,000.00					GEF CORE and STAR, ICCA GSI-2

The table 1 outlines the financial and project implementation history of Cambodia's Global Environment Facility Small Grants Programme (GEF SGP) from 2005 to 2028. It presents data by operational phase (OP), including the number of projects, grant amounts from various funding sources, and notable remarks on partnerships and thematic focus. From OP3 (2005–2007) to OP7 (2020–2026), Cambodia implemented a total of 281 projects, supported by a combination of GEF Core Funds, RAF allocations, partnership contributions, and project-level co-financing. The total grant disbursed during this period amounts to approximately USD 11.19 million, with the largest contributions coming from partnership funds (USD 6.77 million) and GEF Core (USD 4.42 million).

Each phase reflects evolving priorities and funding modalities. For example, OP4 introduced RAF and UNEP co-financing, while OP5 saw significant partnership funding through Sida/Swedish and UNDP channels, including initiatives like COMDEKS Phase I, UNREDD CBR+. OP6 focused on Indigenous Peoples' Access to Energy innovative programme and Community-Based Climate Change Adaptation (CBA-2), while OP7 integrated COMDEKS Phase III and IV, CBA-3 and continuing support for community-based biodiversity and landscape resilience.

Special initiatives such as UNDP CBA (2007–2008) and CCBAP (2010–2015) were funded entirely through partnership mechanisms, demonstrating UNDP's role in supporting NC to mobilize non-GEF resources. The ICCAs COVID-19 Response (2020–2024) was supported by the German government, targeting Indigenous and community-conserved areas during the pandemic.
Looking ahead, OP8 (2025–2028) is in the early stages of implementation of USD510,000.00, with a projected and several funding streams under development. These include ICCA Phase II (USD 250,000), OP8 STAR Biodiversity (USD 90,020), and OP8 STAR Land Degradation (USD 644,000). These allocations are currently undergoing proposal calls, CPS development, and GEF endorsement processes.
Overall, the table reflects SGP Cambodia's growing portfolio of community-based environmental initiatives, with increasing diversification of funding sources and strategic alignment with global environmental priorities.

Building on the success of past GEF-Small Grants Programme (SGP) projects, including those supported through IP Access to Energy Innovative programme, the Community Development and Knowledge Management (COMDEKS) and UNDP Cambodia, through its Climate Promise IPs grant, has supported five Indigenous-led projects that demonstrate the power of community-driven climate action and cultural resilience. In Mondulkiri Province, the project "Promote the use of solar energy, practices integrated farming and building some CBET infrastructure for IPs community" in Phnom Namlear CPA revealed several key results. The project was found to be highly relevant to the needs of the Bunong Indigenous community, particularly in improving access to clean water and solar electricity through CBET initiatives. Importantly, the initiative laid a strong foundation for future CBET operations, contributing to income generation, cultural preservation, and sustainable natural resource use. The physical infrastructure and growing capacity of CPA management and sub-committee members indicate promising signs for long-term sustainability. In Stung Treng province, the project demonstrated strong relevance and fairly high effectiveness in addressing the urgent needs of 52 Bunong Indigenous families in Kbal Romeas village, who had relocated near their ancestral land following displacement from the Lower Sesan 2 hydropower dam. It directly responded to critical gaps in access to clean water and electricity, two of the community's most pressing concerns through the installation of solar panels and a clean water supply system. All

interviewed respondents confirmed the interventions were well-aligned with community priorities, though communal land registration remains the top unmet need. The project aligns and contributes meaningfully to Cambodia's Sustainable Development Goals, particularly CSDG 6 and 7. Another project in Battambang province, an Indigenous Farmers' Cooperative revitalized rotational farming practices across 20 hectares, introduced organic composting and pest control methods rooted in traditional knowledge, and enhanced food security for more than 100 households while reducing chemical inputs by 70%. Collectively, these initiatives contribute to Cambodia's Forest and Other Land Use (FOLU) sector goals under its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), while strengthening Indigenous identity, gender equity, and local resilience.

By integrating project outcomes with local development programs, the ICCA GSI Phase 2 aims to ensure long-term sustainability, promotes traditional best practices for biodiversity conservation, and empower IPs and local communities impacted by climate change and natural resources degradation.
The proposed USD 250,000 grant from ICCA GSI Phase 2 will be implemented in partnership with the Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and Community-Based Organizations, especially IPs organizations with capacity and experience to implement community development projects. The biodiversity conservation, climate change adaptation and mitigation contributing to sustainable livelihoods, and gender inclusivity, with a particular focus on empowering IPs youth and women will be the focus area of the projects.

3. COUNTRY PRIORITIES AND STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

3.1. Alignment with national priorities

The ICCA Country Programme Strategy (CPS) for Cambodia is designed to align closely with national development priorities, Indigenous Peoples' rights, and global environmental commitments. It supports the recognition, protection, and sustainable management of Indigenous and Community Conserved Areas (ICCAs), contributing directly to Cambodia's biodiversity conservation goals and climate resilience strategies.

At the national level, the CPS is strategically aligned with Cambodia's National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP 2016), the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs 3.0) under the Paris Agreement, and the Environmental and Natural Resources Code. It also complements the National Strategic Development Plan (NSDP) and the National Protected Area System, reinforcing community-based conservation as a pillar of inclusive environmental governance.

Cambodia's 2016 National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) provides a foundational framework for biodiversity conservation and sustainable development, structured around four strategic pillars: **biodiversity conservation, sustainable use, enabling environment, and biosafety. The plan emphasizes the role of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPs and LCs) in area-based conservation, including the recognition and support of ICCAs**. Interventions under ICCA-GSI Phase 2 and the Small Grants Programme (SGP) directly contribute to NBSAP priorities by strengthening community governance, promoting equitable benefit-sharing, and integrating biodiversity into local land use planning. These efforts also align with Cambodia's commitment to the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, particularly Targets 3, 21, 22, and 23.

Internationally, the strategy aligns with the Global ICCA Consortium, the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, particularly Target 3 (30x30) and Target 22 (Indigenous participation and rights).
By integrating these priorities, the ICCA CPS ensures that Indigenous communities in Cambodia are not only stewards of biodiversity but also active partners in shaping national and global conservation agendas.

The ICCA GSI phase II Country Programme Strategy priorities are listed below:

- Strengthening Indigenous governance systems and customary practices.
- Enhancing climate resilience via ecosystem restoration and sustainable livelihoods.
- Promoting gender equity and youth engagement in conservation leadership.
- Building capacity for community monitoring, advocacy, and knowledge exchange.

3.2. Gaps and opportunities

Despite the progress made under ICCA COVID-19 response Phase, several critical gaps remain that hinder the full recognition and sustainability of Indigenous and Community Conserved Areas (ICCAs) in Cambodia. These gaps present strategic opportunities for ICCA Phase II to deepen impact and scale community-led conservation.

Key Gaps Identified:

- **Legal recognition and policy integration**: ICCAs are not yet formally recognized within Cambodia's national legal framework, limiting their protection and integration into biodiversity strategies.
- **Limited technical capacity**: Many Indigenous communities lack the tools, training, and institutional support needed to manage ICCAs effectively, especially in areas like GIS mapping, climate adaptation, and biodiversity monitoring.
- **Fragmented data and documentation**: There is no centralized or standardized system for documenting ICCAs, which hampers visibility, policy advocacy, and resource mobilization.
- **Gender and youth inclusion**: While community engagement is strong, women and youth remain underrepresented in leadership and decision-making roles within ICCA governance.
- **Financial sustainability:** Most ICCAs rely on short-term project funding, with limited access to long-term financing mechanisms or income-generating activities linked to conservation.

Strategic Opportunities:

- **Policy dialogue and legal reform**: ICCAs Phase II can support multi-stakeholder platforms to advocate for formal recognition of ICCAs within Cambodia's Environmental Code and Protected Area Law.
- **Capacity building and knowledge exchange**: Strengthening Indigenous governance systems, technical skills, and inter-community learning networks will enhance resilience and autonomy.
- **Participatory mapping and monitoring**: Expanding the use of community-led GIS and biodiversity tracking tools can improve ICCA visibility and inform national planning.
- **Gender-responsive programming**: Targeted interventions to empower Indigenous women and youth in conservation leadership will foster more inclusive and equitable governance.
- **Sustainable financing models**: ICCA Phase II can pilot eco-cultural tourism, Community Forestry/Community Protected Area enterprises, and access to climate finance to ensure long-term viability.

To address these gaps and seize emerging opportunities, ICCAs Phase II proposes the following interventions:

1. Support legal recognition of ICCAs through policy advocacy, legal analysis, and engagement with government bodies.
2. Strengthen community capacity in conservation planning, climate resilience, and financial management via tailored training and mentorship.
3. Develop a national ICCAs registry and knowledge platform to consolidate data, showcase best practices, and support replication.
4. Promote inclusive governance by integrating gender and youth leadership modules into all ICCAs-supported activities.
5. Facilitate access to sustainable finance through partnerships with donors, green funds, and market-based conservation models.

These interventions will help ensure that ICCAs are not only protected but also empowered to thrive as models of Indigenous-led biodiversity stewardship and climate resilience.

The UNDP GEF-SGP, implemented in Cambodia since the 2005, has addressed key national priorities including biodiversity conservation, climate change adaptation and mitigation, waste management, International Water, Land Degradation, and social and gender inclusion. These thematic areas not only respond to Cambodia's development needs but also align with global commitments such as the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF), Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), and the National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs).

The proposed project will primarily focus on enhancement of sustainable livelihoods through biodiversity conservation and community-led initiatives in support of the Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) 2030 Targets. By working directly with IPs and local communities in Cambodia, the project aligns with both the KMGBF targets and Cambodia's NBSAP.
Key interventions will focus on enhancing community livelihoods through nature-based solutions while contributing to the following GBF 2030 and Cambodia's NBSAP targets as outlined in Table 2 and Table 3 respectively.

Table 2: Alignment with KMGBF Targets

KMGBF Target	Description	Proposed Intervention
Target 3	Conserve 30% of land and sea areas through effective system	Map and strengthen ICCA-like areas within CFs, CPAs and sacred sites; integrate into national Protected Areas network
Target 21	Strengthen participation of IPLCs in decision-making	Facilitate community governance, legal recognition, and participatory planning
Target 22	The need for equitable, inclusive and effective involvement of IPs and LCs in decision-making about nature conservation and biodiversity.	▪ Promoting inclusive land use planning that integrates traditional knowledge and community priorities.

		▪ Strengthening traditional governance structures and decision-making processes. ▪ Funding initiatives that revitalize Indigenous knowledge systems and cultural practices tied to conservation. ▪ Enabling community representatives to participate in national and international biodiversity platforms.
Target 23	To ensure gender equality in the implementation of the Framework through a gender-responsive approach.	Promote women's leadership in CFs, CPAs and ICCA governance; integrate gender-sensitive indicators by: ▪ Ensuring women's active participation in ICCA governance, planning, and benefit-sharing ▪ Funding projects led by women's groups focused on sustainable livelihoods, restoration, and biodiversity protection. ▪ Supporting leadership development and capacity building for women in conservation roles. ▪ Integrating gender indicators into project M&E frameworks. ▪ Documenting and sharing lessons on gender-responsive approaches in ICCA contexts.

Table 3: Alignment with Cambodia's NBSAP 2016 Targets

NBSAP Target	Description	Proposed Intervention
Target 1 (Aichi Target 1)	By 2020, every Cambodian is conscious about the environmental, economic, health, social and cultural value of the services derived from ecosystems, and integrates this knowledge in the way they deal with these ecosystems and resources;	Awareness of biodiversity values and actions: ▪ Intergenerational learning and cultural revitalization ▪ Community forums and policy dialogues ▪ Youth-elder mentorship and biodiversity camps

		▪ Community awareness campaigns using local media, storytelling, and visual tools ▪ Training modules on biodiversity and ICCA governance for youth and women
Target 5 (Aichi Target 7)	By 2020 the majority of areas under agriculture, animal production, aquaculture and forestry are managed sustainably;	Sustainable management of agriculture, aquaculture, forestry resources: ▪ Traditional land use practices and agroecological knowledge ▪ Customary governance of forest and wetland areas ▪ Demonstration plots for sustainable agriculture or agroforestry ▪ Community protocols for sustainable harvesting of NTFPs and aquatic resources
Target 9 (Aichi Target 3):	Strengthening PA management By 2020, Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) is used throughout the country as an incentive for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity;	Control of invasive alien species and PES promotion Covered through: ▪ Mapping and Valuation of Ecosystem Services ▪ Community-Led PES Pilot Programs/projects ▪ Legal and Institutional Strengthening ▪ Stakeholder Engagement and Co-Financing ▪ Capacity Building and Knowledge Sharing ▪ Policy Advocacy and Mainstreaming
Target 8 (Aichi Target 11):	Promote sustainable use In 2020, at the latest, existing protected areas and conservation areas, including community-based natural resource management areas, have management plans and have started effective implementation.	▪ Participatory Development of ICCA Management Plans ▪ Legal Recognition and Integration into Sub-National Planning ▪ Capacity Building for ICCA Governance and Implementation ▪ Resource Mobilization and Sustainable Financing ▪ Monitoring and Evaluation Systems ▪ Multi-Stakeholder Coordination and Knowledge Exchange
Target 6 (Aichi Target 14)	By 2020, 10% of the protected areas, conservation areas, agroecosystems and forest ecosystems including mangroves, that have been under a lot of pressures in recent years are in an	Interventions for Ecosystem Restoration and Inclusive Service Delivery: ▪ Participatory Ecosystem Restoration Planning ▪ Community-Led Restoration Activities

	advanced state of restoration and are providing enhanced services, particularly to women, elders and children in local communities and indigenous ethnic minority groups;	▪ Inclusive Benefit-Sharing Mechanisms ▪ Capacity Building and Knowledge Transfer ▪ Monitoring and Evaluation Systems ▪ Policy Integration and Legal Recognition ▪ Resource Mobilization and Strategic Partnerships
Target 17 (Aichi Target 18)	By 2020, the traditional knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous ethnic minorities and local communities relevant for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, and their customary use of biological resources, are: (a) respected, subject to national legislation and relevant international obligations, and (b) fully integrated and reflected in the implementation of the Convention and the NBSAP, with the full and effective participation of these communities at all relevant levels;	Respect and integration of traditional knowledge ▪ Documentation, FPIC, ABS protocols ▪ Integration into NBSAP and CBD processes ▪ Representation and policy advocacy

Through these actions, the project will contribute towards Cambodia's ongoing efforts to integrate biodiversity conservation into sustainable development. Additionally, it will focus on the role of IP communities in project targeted provinces in terms of strengthening biodiversity conservation initiatives and nature-based solutions towards Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, Paris Agreement.

4. ICCA GSI PHASE 2 PRIORITY GEOGRAPHIES

Based on ICCA-GSI Phase 2 documentation and regional profiles, a synthesized overview of the priority geographies in Cambodia—specifically Ratanak Kiri, Mondul Kiri, Kratie, Preah Vihear and Stung Treng provinces—where Indigenous Peoples (IPs) communities reside and ICCA interventions are most relevant. These northeastern provinces are home to the majority of Cambodia's Indigenous Peoples, including Bunong, Kreung, Tampuan, Brao, and other ethnic groups. ICCA-GSI Phase 2 recognizes these areas as biodiversity-rich landscapes with strong cultural ties to land and forest, making them critical for community-led conservation and climate resilience.

Geographic and Settlement Characteristics

- Mountainous and forested terrain: All five provinces feature rugged landscapes, dense forests, and highland ecosystems that are ecologically significant but difficult to access.
- Scattered settlements: Indigenous communities live in remote, dispersed villages, often far from district centers and public infrastructure.

- Isolation: Poor Road connectivity and limited transport options exacerbate geographic isolation, especially during the rainy season.

Socio-Economic Challenges

- High poverty rates: These provinces rank among the poorest in Cambodia, with limited livelihood options beyond subsistence agriculture and forest-based activities.
- Low education and health access: Schools and health centers are sparse, and many Indigenous adults have only primary-level education. Language barriers further limit access to Khmer-language services.
- Land insecurity: Despite customary land use, many communities lack formal land titles, leaving them vulnerable to land grabs and economic land concessions.

Climate-Related Risks

- Deforestation and ecosystem degradation: Logging, mining, and agribusiness expansion threaten forest cover and water sources, increasing vulnerability to droughts and floods.
- Changing rainfall patterns: Climate variability disrupts traditional farming cycles, leading to crop failures and food insecurity.
- Limited adaptive capacity: Communities often lack access to climate information, resilient infrastructure, and financial resources to cope with environmental shocks.

Table 4: Provincial Distribution of Indigenous People in Cambodia (source: The Report on Demographic and Socio-Economic of Indigenous Peoples in Cambodia: 2024 Update)

Name of Province (1)		Cambodia Total Population (2)	Indigenous Population		
			Number (3)	% Proportion in province (4)	% Distribution by province (5)
1	Banteay Meanchey	861,883	1,107	0.13	0.64
2	Battambang	997,169	609	0,06	0.35
3	Kampong Cham	899,791	745	0.08	0,43
4	Kampong Chhnang	527,027	220	0.04	0,13
5	Kampong Speu	877,523	1,132	0.13	0.65
6	Kampong Thom	681,549	4,043	0.59	2.34
7	Kampot	593,829	324	0.05	0.19
8	Kondal	1,201,581	761	0.06	0.44
9	Koh kong	125,902	180	0.14	0.10
10	Kratie	374,755	18,067	4.82	10.44
11	Modul Kiri	92,213	31,128	33.76	18.00
12	Phnom Penh	2,281,951	1,722	0.08	1.00
13	Preah Vihear	254,827	9,286	3.64	5.37
14	Prey Veng	1,057,720	356	0.03	0.21
15	Pursat	419,952	375	0.09	0.22
16	Ratanakiri	217,453	94,204	43.32	54.46
17	Siem Reap	1,014,234	646	0.06	0.37
18	Preah Sihanouk	310,072	122	0.04	0.07
19	Stung Treng	165,713	6,010	3.63	3.47
20	Svay Rieng	525,497	282	0.05	0.16

21	Takeo	900,914	736	0.08	0.43
22	Oddar Meanchey	276,038	487	0.18	0.28
23	Kep	42,665	19	0.04	0.01
24	Pailin	75,112	14	0.02	0.01
25	Tboung Khmum	776,841	405	0.05	0.23
Total		15,552,211	172,980	1,11%	100%

The table 4 above show that these five highlighted provinces (Ratanak Kiri, Mondul Kiri, Kratie, Preah Vihear and Stung Treng) together account for 91.74% of the national's total Indigenous population. Ratanak Kiri province is the most significant IP residential province, hosting over half of the national IP population. It has the highest proportional concentration (43.32%) relative to its own population. Mondul Kiri province follows with 18% of the national IP population and a striking 33.76% proportion within the province indicating deep-rooted Indigenous settlement. Kratie, Preah Vihear, and Stung Treng provinces show substantial Indigenous populations and are key areas for communal land registration, biodiversity conservation, and ICCA-GSI interventions.

Figure 2: Indigenous People Areas in Cambodia (Dataset OD Mekong Datahub)

5. KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

Lessons and good practices from the implementation of the projects will be documented through individual project documentary such as case study and video documentary with participation from women and youth groups, elderly and key stakeholders. The UNDP communications specialist services will be deployed to develop high-impact stories that will be disseminated through the UNDP social media and SGP websites, and knowledge management platforms.

As a part of the projects, communities shall also participate in some of the national and sub-national events, such as biodiversity and conservation-related festivals and Indigenous People Day, through which

they can showcase their projects and results. At the end of the project, a formal workshop to finalize the project completion report can be organized during which a separate knowledge management session will be facilitated and the findings documented to enrich the knowledge management sections of the report, while separate high-impact stories can be shared periodically through the established knowledge management platforms. Significant progress and major events in the implementation of the projects will be highlighted through the national media as well. At the national level, through SGP capacity building grant, a number of Govt-CSOs-Private dialogues and knowledge faire have been organized to make more visibility of SGP results and impacts.

6. COMMUNICATION PLAN

The GEF-SGP team will work closely with UNDP communications team to visit the ICCA GSI projects and partners to proactively communicate about the ICCA GSI Phase 2 with a goal to enhance project visibility, right from the inception through the implementation period to the project closure and beyond. This external communication of project results and impact will be planned carefully to ensure it effectively showcases GEF and UNDP's contributions towards the national development priorities through the project and SGP programme level.

In addition, based on the ICCA GSI Phase 2 Cambodia strategy document, here are four key components of a UNDP-aligned communication plan designed to strengthen stakeholder engagement, enhance the impact and sustainability of interventions, and alignment with national priorities:

- Strategic Stakeholder Engagement and Orientation Sessions: Develop and disseminate clear, context-specific objectives and contributions of ICCA GSI Phase 2. Facilitate orientation sessions with local governments, CSOs, community leaders, and technical partners in the selected provinces to promote participation, enhance ownership, and articulate the initiative's link to Cambodia updated NBSAP, NDC 3.0, the KMGBF Targets and UNDP's strategic priorities on biodiversity and inclusion.
- Knowledge Products and Inclusive Storytelling: Document good practices and results, such as grassroots innovations, and impact narratives highlighting gender equality, youth inclusion, and biodiversity conservation, through accessible knowledge products. These will be disseminated via UNDP social media and GEF-SGP knowledge platforms, website and social media, and local media to increase community visibility and showcase the contributions of IPs communities.
- Knowledge Exchange and Cross-Community Platforms: Promote peer learning among IP and local communities through local events, exchange visits, and policy dialogues. Highlight community achievements at national forums to elevate their visibility and enable CSOs and local actors to shape policy discourse and strengthen partnerships.

Integrated Feedback, Telegram groups and Accountability Mechanisms: Establish culturally responsive and gender-inclusive feedback channels to capture community input throughout the project lifecycle. This ensures two-way communication, transparency, and iterative learning, strengthening trust among stakeholders and aligning interventions with local priorities.

7. RESOURCE MOBILIZATION

7.1. Secured and planned cash and in-kind co-financing

The proposed ICCA GSI Phase 2 support of US$250,000 will be supplemented with the UNDP GEF–SGP OP8 financing of a total of US$ 1,161,342.82 (GEF core= 517,179.82$ + 644,163$-LD STAR allocation) in cash approved for implementation to begin from July 2025 and complete by 2028.

7.2. Cofinancing Opportunities

The implementation of the proposed ICCA GSI Phase 2 initiatives will be undertaken through a call for proposals, inviting civil society organizations (CSOs) especially IPs organizations and communities to lead and execute project activities in targeted provinces. The selected Local NGOs/CBOs will be required to provide 1:1 co-financing and contributions both in cash and in-kind to complement the GEF-SGP ICCA GSI grant resources.

8. PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

The ICCA GSI is part of the OP8 CPS is developed in support of national programs and UNDP's CPD, there are a lot of existing opportunities to leverage the OP8 as well as ICCA GSI phase II strategic initiatives with other UN agencies, development partners, government agencies, and interested private sector. These can be achieved with the technical support of NC, NSC, and interested academic research institutions in Cambodia. Key benefits of partnerships that GEF SGP should focus on include:

- Increased Impact: Partnerships can help to scale up projects and achieve greater environmental benefits and achieve the program goal and project objectives.
- Shared Expertise: Collaborating with diverse partners can bring together a wealth of knowledge and experiences upscale and replicate the best practices to other landscapes and seascapes.
- Resource Mobilization: Partnerships can help to secure additional funding and resources for ICCA GSI funded projects for long term sustainability.
- Enhanced Sustainability: Strong partnerships can contribute to the long-term sustainability of project outcomes to a wider community, including national level.
- Improved Communication and Coordination: Effective partnerships can facilitate information sharing and coordination among stakeholders by sharing gaps, challenges, best practices and lessons learnt so that other recipients or stakeholders are able to avoid the unsuccessfulness or failure of project implementation.

9. MONITORING AND EVALUATION PLAN

9.1. Monitoring Approaches at Project and Country Levels

The overall monitoring and evaluation will be with the UNDP Country Office with guidance from the National Steering Committee (NSC), the project will be monitored using the following tools:

1) **Project Management Tool:** this will incorporate indicators for the targeted goals stated in the ICCA-GSI Project Document that were agreed upon by the donor and UNDP. These indicators are aligned to GBF Targets 3, 21, 22 and 23.
2) **Resilience and Security Index** - tool to assess the socio-ecological health of ICCAs.

In addition, a National Catalytic Organization (NCO) will be identified to support the NC in using the aforementioned tools for monitoring and evaluating the project. Following training from ICCA-GSI Project Management Unit (PMU) in headquarters, the National Coordinator/and Programme Associates/Assistants will train national catalytic organizations (NCOs) on the Project Management Tool and Resilience and Security Index. The NC will be responsible for validating the data on these tools before sending it to PMU/CPMT in the headquarter office.

A monitoring matrix (Table 3) has been developed to track M&E activities under Project Management Tool.

Table 5: Monitoring Matrix

M&E Activity	Purpose	Implementor	Timeline
Stakeholder mapping and identification of key implementing partner (CSOs)	Identification of key stakeholders and strategic partners (at focal person level) to support operationalization and implementation of ICCA GSI Phase 2	NC, UNDP	December 2025
Establish project baseline	Establish baseline data for the project landscape	Local NGOs/CBOs	January 2026
Identification of strategic partners at national and district levels	To ensure support to IP Organizations and communities in project/proposal formulation, implementation, and reporting.	Selected implementing Partners (Capacity Building grant) and NC	Annually
Field monitoring visits and reporting of highlights to NC	Ensure consistent and accurate reporting of Project implementation progress	Respective project focal officer and grantee ED	Quarterly
Annual monitoring	Enable efficient documentation of project implementation progress	NC supported by National capacity build grantee/partner	Dec-Jan of every year
Project technical and financial review submission	Documentation of project progress, issues, and gaps	Grantees/CSO/project focal officer and NC	Semi-annually
Reporting to the NSC and GEF	Progress update and seek approval for adaptive management if needed	NC	Annually
Audit	Ensure compliance with implementation/management standards and norms	As per UNDP auditing schedule	Annually

9.2. ICCA GSI Phase 2 Results Framework

ICCA GSI Phase 2 Results Framework and Alignment with SGP OP8 Indicators:

This strategic document is grounded in the ICCA GSI Phase 2 vision, with a strong focus on community-led conservation, governance strengthening, cultural preservation, and nature-based livelihoods. To ensure consistency with the GEF SGP Operational Phase 8 (OP8), the results framework has been structured around globally adopted indicators and targets, enabling both localized impact and global comparability.

The results framework below clearly demonstrates how Cambodia's ICCA priorities, such as biodiversity protection in Community Forestry and Community Protected Areas, ICLT communities the revival of

traditional skills, and empowerment of governance systems for vulnerable communities, contribute to OP8's overarching goals related to environmental protection, poverty reduction, and social inclusion.

No.	Indicator	BMUV prodoc IKI	Global Biodiversity	GEF SGP	UNDP Strategic Plan	Responsible Party
1	a. Number of people benefitting from projects, disaggregated Direct: 300 No. women= 160 No. mem= 140 Indirect: 750 No. women=450 No. men= 300 (Aligned with ICCA GSI indicator 1)	SI 4- Capacity People Number of people directly supported by IKI projects through networking and training to address climate change or to conserve biodiversity	GBF Target 22	Indicator 8: Number of representatives from social inclusion group (Indigenous people, women, youth, Persons With Disability, farmers, other marginalized groups) meaningfully engaged in multistakeholder dialogue platforms. Indicator 10: Number of CSO government-private sector dialogues formed or strengthened	Output 3.4.: The adaptive capacity of systems and communities to climate change and disasters is strengthened. 3.4.2.: Number of people benefitted and increased resilience from sustainable natural resources management. (IRRF 4.2.1, IRRF 4.2.2)	SGP Country Teams
2	b. Increased area brought under improved conservation practices (Community Plantations, sustainable land management practices): 30% from baseline (Aligned with ICCA GSI indicator 2)	SI 2- Ecosystems Area of ecosystems with improved conservation on and sustainable use due to IKI project measures	GBF Target 3	Mandatory GEF Core Indicator 3: Area of land and ecosystems under restoration. Mandatory GEF Core Indicator 4: Area of landscapes under improved practices.	**Output 3.1**: Natural resources are sustainably managed, protected and restored. 3.1.1.: Number of hectares (ha) of terrestrial and water ecosystems under improved management practices.	SGP Country Teams

					(IRRF indicator 4.1.2:)	
3	c. Number of nature-based enterprises established/enhanced to Increased income: 5		GBF Target 3			SGP Country Teams
4	d. Number of women-led projects: 2 (Aligned with ICCA indicator 15)		GBF Target 23	Mandatory GEF Core Indicator 1: People benefitting from GEF-financed investments disaggregated by sex. Indicator 16: Number of projects with focused interventions Promoting gender equality and women's empowerment	3.1.2.: Number of gender-informed and inclusive regulatory, planning and policy instruments for sustainable natural resource management.	SGP Country Teams
5	e. Number of documentation and knowledge management materials produced. 9 (5 case study and 4 video stories) (Aligned with ICCA indicator		GBF Target 21	Indicator 23: Number of knowledge exchange/sharing events with participation of local communities		SGP Country Teams

Country specific indicator

- % of ICCA projects contributing to national biodiversity targets (NBSAP) and NDC 3.0.

10. National Steering Committee Endorsement

a. Endorsement by National Steering Committee

NSC members involved in ICCA GSI Phase 2	Signatures

development, review and endorsement	
H.E. Sum Thy	
H.E. Pho Pharith	
H.E. Khim Finan	
Ms. Cheng Chinneth	
Mr. Kean Narin	
Mr. Ahmed Shifaz	
Mr. Hou Sereyvathana	
Ms. Khorn Dinravy	
Mr. Vann Piseth	
Mr. Kong Chanthan	
Ms. Kheang Sokleng	
Mr. Khun Bunnath	
Mr. Sano AKHTERUZZAMAN	