



RECOFTC

Community forestry models in Asia-Pacific

# Community fisheries in Cambodia

Infosheet

In Cambodia, there are three types of community forestry models: community forests, community-protected areas and community fisheries (in flooded forests). Cambodia's community fisheries model enables communities to take part in the sustainable management, conservation, development and use of fisheries resources. The model's legal basis is laid out in the 2006 Law on Fisheries, the 2005 Royal Decree on the Establishment of Community Fisheries, the 2007 Sub-Decree on Community Fisheries Management and the 2007 Prakas No. 316 on Guidelines for Community Fisheries. The responsible authority is the Fisheries Administration within the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries.

# Key requirements

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## Who is eligible?

The legal framework does not define the term “community”, but “community fisheries” refers to a group of Cambodian citizens living in one or more villages who voluntarily agree to cooperate and participate with each other to ensure the sustainable management, conservation, development and use of their fishery resources in their local area and to protect their rights and interests.

## Allocation process

1. A community establishes a founders’ group. To request a community fisheries area, the group writes to the Fisheries Administration Cantonment via the commune chief, within the Fisheries Administration Triage and the Fisheries Administration Division, attaching a draft, hand-drawn map of the proposed area.
2. Fisheries Administration officers inspect the proposed area, meet with and collect information from residents, local authorities and relevant institutions and evaluate the physical and socio-economic situation and use of fisheries resources. Within 30 days of receiving the request to establish a community fisheries area, the Fisheries Administration informs the local community of its approval or rejection.
3. The Fisheries Administration monitors the requested site to organize the community fisheries area. The founders’ group helps to register community fisheries members and obtain official recognition from the commune council.
4. The founders’ group organizes a congress with local residents to prepare the community fisheries members draft by-laws and regulations and to elect the community fisheries committee members.
5. A committee made up of representatives of the central and local administrations and villagers delineates and maps the boundaries of the community fishing areas, following consultations in the local area.
6. The community fisheries committee prepares a community fisheries area agreement and makes a request to the Fisheries Administration Cantonment chief. They both sign the agreement.
7. Once the agreement is signed, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries registers the community fisheries area and announces its recognition.
8. The community fisheries committee develops a community fisheries area management plan. This entails collecting information on the socio-economic situation of local people, on fishing areas and so on. The committee submits the plan to the congress of local residents for internal approval before sending it to the Fisheries Administration for review and approval. The Fisheries Administration replies within 30 days.
9. The Fisheries Administration Division monitors and enforces implementation of the agreement and management plan. The community fisheries committee submits a report every three months.

# Main elements



## Duration of tenure

- Tenure is up to three years and renewable.



## Type and condition of forest

- Freshwater fishing grounds and marine fishing grounds, including mangrove forest areas.
- The law does not specify the condition of the forest.



## Type and duration of management plan

- Up to three-year community fisheries area management plan



## Internal governance

- An elected committee leads and manages the community fisheries. The legal framework encourages women to stand for election. Each year, the group of founders organizes a congress of community fisheries to elect the committee.
- Community fisheries must have by-laws, internal regulations, management plans, an agreement with the authorities and maps of the fishing areas.
- The community fisheries committee drafts the by-laws and internal regulations and makes decisions on its management with the agreement of a majority of the members.



## Gender and social inclusion

- The legal framework encourages citizens of either sex to request a community fisheries area. The establishment of the committee and the process to request the area require the inclusion of all members of the community.
- The management plan includes information on the numbers of men and women, widows, orphans, people who are illiterate or who live with a disability and so on.



## Community-based enterprises

- Members can form businesses to sell fish according to the community fisheries rules, regulations and management plan.



## Benefit-sharing mechanism

- There is no prescribed model for benefit-sharing. However, the legal framework states that the community fisheries management plan must aim at ensuring that benefits from the fisheries resources are shared equitably among the members.



## External support

- The Fisheries Administration seeks external support for community fisheries.
- The community fisheries committee can ask for financial and technical support from the Fisheries Administration and other sources.
- Community fisheries whose fishing areas are next to each other can collaborate by establishing federations.



## Conflict-resolution mechanism

- The community fisheries committee mediates and resolves disputes within their community fisheries area. If the committee cannot resolve the dispute, it sends the case to the Fisheries Administration. If still no resolution can be found, the case is sent to the relevant court.





## Rights and responsibilities of community members

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### Members have rights to:

- organize fishing activities in the community fisheries area.
- fish, practise aquaculture, harvest, sell, use and manage all fisheries resources in accordance with the community fisheries area's agreement and management plan.

### Members must:

- manage and conserve their fisheries resources in compliance with the community fisheries area's by-laws and management plan.
- cooperate with the Fisheries Administration to suppress all fishery violations in the community fishery area.
- respect instructions of the Fisheries Administration and the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries.
- participate in the establishment of conservation areas within the community fisheries area, the protection and reforestation of inundated forest and mangrove forest and the restoration of shallow streams and lakes to improve ecosystems and fishery environments.
- guarantee that all members have equal rights in relation to the sustainable use of fisheries' resources, as stipulated in the by-laws.

- implement the by-laws of the community fisheries and formulate the community fisheries area management plan.
- enter into a community fisheries area agreement with the Fisheries Administration Cantonment to manage the resources sustainably.
- keep all documents related to the community fisheries.

### Members cannot:

- sell, exchange, rent, donate, share, divide, borrow, pawn or transfer the community fisheries area.
- erect dams or fish in a way that obstructs fish migrations or the passage of streams, creeks or canals.
- establish private ownership in the community fisheries area.
- enter into commercial agreements in the community fisheries area.

## Links with climate change policies and targets

- There is no legal requirement for communities to integrate climate vulnerability, adaptation or mitigation activities into their community fisheries area management plans.
- The Climate Change Strategic Plan 2014–2023 promotes the involvement of community-based organizations for adaptive social protection and participatory approaches in reducing loss and damage from climate change. However, the strategic plan does not mention community fisheries.

## Read more

- RECOFTC, *Special Report: How community forests boosted pandemic resilience across Asia-Pacific*, [www.recoftc.org/special-report/community-forestry-boosted-pandemic-resilience](http://www.recoftc.org/special-report/community-forestry-boosted-pandemic-resilience)
- RECOFTC, *Special Report: Communities are improving lives and landscapes in Southeast Asia through social forestry*, [www.recoftc.org/stories/special-report-communities-are-improving-lives-and-landscapes-southeast-asia-through-social](http://www.recoftc.org/stories/special-report-communities-are-improving-lives-and-landscapes-southeast-asia-through-social)
- RECOFTC, *Special Report: Bridging policy and practice: RECOFTC and the story of community forestry in Cambodia*, [www.recoftc.org/special-report/community-forestry-cambodia-history](http://www.recoftc.org/special-report/community-forestry-cambodia-history)
- Find out more about RECOFTC's work in Cambodia at [www.recoftc.org/cambodia](http://www.recoftc.org/cambodia)



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