



COUNTRY	POPULATION	NATIONAL EMISSIONS IN 2020	MITIGATION GOALS
CAMBODIA	17,000,000 (2022)	125,2 MTCO ₂ e	-42% BY 2030 (COMPARED TO BAU)

Cambodia • A sustainable wood fuel value chain to combat deforestation

Cambodia remains highly dependent on wood and charcoal for its thermal needs (domestic cooking, catering, industrial heating, etc.). Half of the carbon consumed in Phnom Penh comes from the Cardamom Mountain region, one of the last flora and fauna sanctuaries in the Mekong countries. Traditional wood char production is often done by migrants living along the illegal deforestation line. However, the degradation of the Cardamom Mountain region aggravates climate risks and land-related or land use conflicts. Geres, which has been working in Cambodia since 1994, with the support of the UNDP, has developed a new commercial model for wood fuel in the provinces of Pursat and Kampong Chhang: the KjuonGo, a sustainable, legal and traceable value chain.

A sustainable, legal and profitable value chain

From 2019 to 2022, the KjuonGo project was part of the CEMAATERR climate programme with support from *l'Agence Française de Développement* (the French Development Agency), the Nordic Development Fund, and the Maisons du Monde foundation.⁹ The charcoal makers buy sustainably harvested wood from community forests (CF), within the limits of the quotas issued by the forest administration (FA). KjuonGo is built around two elements: a sustainable community charcoal value chain and community plantations. Regarding the first element, Geres is assisting forestry and charcoal communities in technical and organisational matters, and helping the local FA through legal charcoal production procedures. The commercial activities are carried out by the social enterprise KGC: placing orders for wood from CFs, sales of sustainable charcoal, quality monitoring up to the final consumers and communication with the national FA regarding administrative legalisation procedures.

The second element of the project focuses on community plantations by supporting reforestation initiatives in communities using native species and by testing three alternative models: acacia trees planted

on communal land, fruit trees planted on private land, and commercial acacia plantations for firewood and products with a higher added value.

Socio-economic and environmental impacts

Twelve CFs and several charcoal makers were involved over the three years of the project. The legal charcoal quotas were fully respected (100%), 12 more efficient charcoal kilns were built or renovated. Seventeen hectares have been reforested, 13,000 seedlings produced in nurseries, nearly 9,000 trees planted, and 7,400 ha of forests managed sustainably or protected by communities. 7.5% of the revenues generated by the CFs were reinvested, mainly to fund patrols. Participatory maps (plantations, degraded areas, etc.) and action plans were drawn up by the communities for the protection and restoration of their forests.

The new charcoal production process has prevented the direct emission of 588 tCO₂e and avoided 4,800 tCO₂ of deforestation emissions. The commercial community plantation project created 163 jobs, most of them part-time, of which 54 are for women, and a viable business for KGC. With

a license and legal status, charcoal makers now have access to a legal, secure, profitable and socially recognised activity. However, the slow action on the part of the forest administration in legalising these activities, and the drop in demand associated with the Covid-19 health restrictions have had a strong impact on the amount of charcoal produced in three years: 74 tonnes of KjuonGo charcoal sold, against an expected 300 tonnes.

The challenges of upscaling

The Geres project, completed in 2022, initiated a collaboration between KGC and the local communities. Sustainable charcoal purchase agreements have already been concluded between KGC and 4 charcoal producers. In addition, 50 textile factories have undertaken an energy diagnosis that includes biomass (the [Switch Garment](#) project with Geres). The increasingly stringent requirements of international brands regarding the fuels used by their suppliers provides opportunities for wood that is produced sustainably and legally.

⁹ This article is based notably on the assessment report produced by ACK International for AFD and Geres: *CEMAATERR Programme - "Climate - Energy: Adaptation and Mitigation Measures in Rural Areas" - Final Assessment of Phase II - Project Component NoteCountry: Cambodia - 2022*