

The Phnom Penh Post

Sweden launches cash for tree-planting programme

20 October 2020



The programme is intended to alleviate financial stress from the Covid-19 pandemic, but residents are required to plant trees in exchange for the cash. Swedish Embassy

The Swedish embassy, the Ministry of Environment and the UN Development Programme (UNDP) announced the launch of a programme to provide financial support to 1,600 rural households in two provinces.

The programme is intended to alleviate financial stress from the Covid-19 pandemic, but residents are required to plant trees in exchange for the cash.

A joint press release issued on Tuesday by the Swedish embassy and UNDP said that in addition to planting trees, the project will establish nurseries and fund other conservation activities across the country.

“The already high pressure on forests and biodiversity is on the rise due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Across Cambodia, tens of thousands of people have lost their jobs and over 100,000 Cambodian migrant workers have returned from neighbouring countries to their hometowns in rural areas.

“For some, searching for money and food is becoming desperate. As a livelihood strategy during the crisis, an increasing number of people have entered the forests to cut trees, hunt animals and fish, causing additional pressure on the already fragile ecosystems,” said the press release.

Swedish ambassador Bjorn Haggmark said it was important to mitigate the impact of Covid-19. Sweden’s relief package of 4.3 million kronor (\$490,000) is intended to help solve this problem, he said.

“This budget will quickly offer the most vulnerable communities income generation opportunities for tree planting to help them cope with the economic crisis. It will also contribute to the restoration of vital ecosystems.”

UNDP representative Nick Beresford said Sweden and UNDP are committed to giving Cambodia full support during the pandemic.

“This tree planting programme provides cash for work at a time when it’s needed most. And by investing in forest cover, we can contribute towards a cleaner greener future for everyone,” he said.

Environment ministry secretary of state Tin Ponlok said the cash for work programme was a timely and needed intervention to address the urgent needs of rural communities and restore important ecosystems that are under pressure in Cambodia.

“This work will enhance forest cover and sequester carbon, helping our ongoing fight against climate change,” Ponlok said.

Environment ministry spokesman Neth Pheaktra said the project has purchased about 51,750 trees and will spend about \$51,750 to replant in the target provinces of Siem Reap and Pursat.

“The Central Economic Development Agency donors through UNDP have also provided funding to a number of organisations to plant trees, including RECOFTC and ADF.

“The cash for work programme will continue until June 2021 to provide immediate employment opportunities to the neediest communities,” he said.

Source:<https://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/sweden-launches-cash-tree-planting-programme>