

# Global Response Campaign Alert Cambodia

*Take Action Now*



The forest is clearcut for a rubber plantation.

Photo by Allan Michaud



Prey Lang forest.

Photo by Allan Michaud

## Kuy People of Cambodia Help Us Save Prey Lang ("Our Forest")

During the last 50 years, almost half of the world's forests have been destroyed. How can we protect our remaining forests, which contain 80 percent of terrestrial species and provide livelihoods for nearly a third of the human population? Studies by the Center for International Forestry Research and the World Bank show that Indigenous forest-dwelling communities do a better job of protecting forests than conservation programs do. Our best bet for saving forests is to support their rights and their management of the forests they know best.

In Cambodia, some 200,000 mostly Indigenous Kuy villagers are desperately trying to prevent the destruction of Prey Lang ("Our Forest"), the last large primary forest of its kind on the Indochina peninsula. Generations of Kuy people have protected the forest, with its sacred areas where spirits dwell and places for gathering fruits, medicinal plants, housing materials, and resin. Some 300 villages and family rice fields are scattered through a large buffer zone of secondary forest that surrounds Prey Lang. The villagers' use of forest resources is sustainable, but now their livelihoods and the life of the forest itself are under attack. The government has issued a dizzying patchwork of concessions to road builders, mining companies, and agro-industries. Bulldozers are slicing huge swaths through the forest, clear-cutting enormous blocks of land for rubber and other plantations, even reaching into the primary forest, Prey Lang. Right now the companies are gearing up for the dry season, their season of forest destruction.

*"Without forest, there is no life. In the Kuy language, Prey Lang means 'Our Forest.' This forest is for everyone. Prey Lang is our forest, but it is your forest, too. You can help save it."*

—Thai Bunleang, Kuy elder, small farmer, and Prey Lang Network activist

**Join with the Kuy people to save Prey Lang!** In this International Year of Forests, let's save *this* forest. Please write a letter to Cambodia's prime minister today.

## Save Prey Lang

For centuries, the Kuy people have guarded Prey Lang, "Our Forest," as the source of life, a spiritual center, and the provider for most of their needs. The core area of primary lowland evergreen forest covers about 200,000 acres, surrounded by 670,000 acres of secondary forest. All together, the forest contains seven distinct ecosystems, provides habitat for more than 50 endangered animal and bird species, and is still largely unexplored by scientists. Elephants still roam through Prey Lang, a rarity in a country whose primary forests shrank from 70 percent of the land mass in 1970 to a mere 3.1 percent today. Prey Lang is a vital source of water for Cambodia's rice-growing region and for the Mekong Delta.



**A Kuy woman bicycles to other villages to sell fish from Prey Lang's rivers.**

Photo courtesy of Prey Lang Network

The Kuy people build their villages and rice fields around Prey Lang's edges and venture into the forest to hunt and fish, to gather fruits and herbs, and for ceremonies. They tap several tree species to extract resin, which they use to make torches and caulk boats. Resin has become the main source of cash for many Kuy families who sell it for industrial use. They protect the resin trees as their livelihood. Now they are fighting for their right to continue protecting Prey Lang.

They won their first battle in 2002 when, along with other forest communities, they persuaded the government to ban logging concessions. But their victory was short-lived because the government continued to grant concessions to agro-industry and mining companies. To carry on the fight, the Kuy, with other Indigenous and non-Indigenous villagers, formed the Prey Lang Network and ramped up their protests. This year they gained national attention when they staged demonstrations in Phnom Penh painted blue, wearing leaf hats, and calling themselves Cambodia's "avatars," after the James Cameron film. Thirty thousand Cambodians thumb-printed their petition to save Prey Lang, and more than a dozen national NGOs endorsed it. But increased visibility has brought increased repression. Police armed with AK-47s have broken up Network meetings, and members are being threatened with physical harm and criminal charges.

The best hope for Prey Lang is management by the people who have always protected it. As Kuy elder Ru Lark says, "We Kuy people have been here for generations, and the forest did not disappear." The Prey Lang Network is calling for international support for its petition to co-manage Prey Lang in partnership with the government and forest management professionals.

As your contribution to the International Year of Forests, will you support the Kuy people by writing a letter to the prime minister of Cambodia? Kuy activist Thai Bunleang insists, "Prey Lang is your forest, too! You can help save it!"



**Kuy elder Ru Lark**

Photo by Benjamin Pederick, Goodmorningbeautiful Films

# Global Response Campaign Alert Cambodia

## You Can Help!

**Write a letter for this campaign!**

The Prey Lang Community Network asks us to address hardcopy letters to Prime Minister Samdech Hun Sen and mail them to the Cambodian Embassy in Washington DC. Also send your letter by email and fax if you can. Send copies to the officials listed and also to Cultural Survival. A model letter is available at [www.cs.org](http://www.cs.org). If you write a personal letter, please:

Express deep concern that in the last 40 years, Cambodia's primary forests have shrunk from 70 percent of the land mass to a mere 3.1 percent today.

Emphasize the urgency of saving the remaining forests, especially Prey Lang with its exceptional biological diversity; its economic value to Kuy villagers as a source of resin, fruits, medicinal plants, and fish; and its ecological services to the region as a critical watershed.

Endorse the petitions of the Prey Lang Community Network to cancel existing land concessions and other "development" projects in the greater Prey Lang area, ban new concessions, and create a sustainable management program with the permanent participation of the Prey Lang Community Network.

### Address:

Prime Minister Samdech Hun Sen  
c/o The Royal Embassy of Cambodia  
4530 16th Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20011 USA

Fax to Embassy in USA: 202-726-8381

Fax to Cambodia: +(855) 23 212 409

Email: [camemb.usa@mfa.gov.kh](mailto:camemb.usa@mfa.gov.kh)

[pressocm@gmail.com](mailto:pressocm@gmail.com); [info@khmergovernmentoffice.org](mailto:info@khmergovernmentoffice.org)

### Please send copies to:

H.E. Chan Sarun, Minister of Agriculture, Forests, and Fisheries

[icomaff@camnet.com.kh](mailto:icomaff@camnet.com.kh)

Fax: +(855) 23 217320 / 215982

Cultural Survival

Email: [PreyLang@cs.org](mailto:PreyLang@cs.org)

Fax: (303) 449-9794

### Tips:

U.S. postage is 44 cents.

A model letter is available at [www.cs.org](http://www.cs.org)

Personal, mailed letters have the most impact!

For more information, please see:

[www.cs.org](http://www.cs.org)

<https://ourpreylang.wordpress.com/>

<http://mouthtosource.org/rivers/preylang>

**Thank you for joining this campaign.**

**The Kuy people say, Uhk hoo-ey ("Thank you!")**

**Cultural Survival**  
[www.cs.org](http://www.cs.org)

# Youth Action Alert

## Cambodia

Write a Letter



Mao Chanthoeun and hundreds of other Kuy villagers call themselves Cambodia's "avatars." Like the Na'vi people in the "Avatar" film, the Kuy are defending their forest against mining and other destructive practices.

Photo by Samrang Pring, Reuters



Kuy "avatar" Mak In drummed and sang in the capital city, calling on the government to protect Prey Lang.

Photo courtesy of LICADHO

### Kuy People of Cambodia Help Us Save Prey Lang ("Our Forest")

In August, hundreds of people gathered to pray at a shrine near the Royal Palace in Phnom Penh, Cambodia's capital city. They wore green shirts and hats made from banana leaves. Their faces were painted blue and green, and they called themselves Cambodia's "avatars." Who were they, and why were they praying, singing, and dancing in the streets of Phnom Penh?

The Cambodian "avatars" are the Kuy (KOO-ee) Indigenous People. Like the Na'vi people of the famous Avatar film, the Kuy people live in a forest and depend on it for their survival. They call their forest Prey Lang ("Our Forest"), and they say, *"without the forest, there is no life."* But Cambodia's government is allowing Prey Lang to be destroyed. Companies are bulldozing into the forest to build roads, make gold mines, and plant huge rubber plantations.

The Kuy people are trying to stop this destruction and save Prey Lang. *"It's our forest, but it's your forest, too. You can help save it,"* says Thai Bunleang, one of the "avatars." Will you help by writing a letter to Cambodia's prime minister? The Kuy people say, *Uhk hoo-ee* ("Thank you!").

**Join with the Kuy people to save Prey Lang!** In this International Year of Forests, let's save *this* forest. Please write a letter to Cambodia's prime minister today.

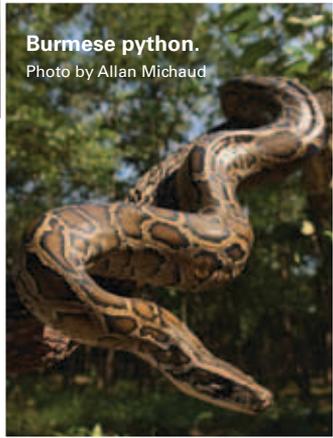
What will happen to the pigtailed macaques if the Prey Lang forest is cut down?

Photo by Allan Michaud



Burmese python.

Photo by Allan Michaud



*"Too many forests have gone already," says Vong Phan, a Kuy grandmother. "We cannot lose another one, especially one as important as Prey Lang."*

She's right. All around the world forests are being destroyed. Just in the last 50 years, nearly half the world's forests were cut down. In Cambodia, primary forests (ones that people have never cut) are left on only 3 percent of the land. In fact, Prey Lang is one

of the last forests in Cambodia where elephants still roam. Monkeys like the pigtailed macaque are becoming scarce as their habitat is invaded.

The Kuy people make their villages on the outskirts of the forest, where they plant rice and other crops. They venture into the forest to hunt and fish, to collect fruits and medicines, to have religious ceremonies, and to tap the resin trees. These trees produce sap that Kuy families collect (without harming the trees) and sell. It's their main source of income.

Forests play an important role around the world. They provide homes and livelihoods for almost one-third of the world's people. They provide food, medicine, and clean water. They provide habitat for 80 percent of the animal and plant species that live on land. They also help keep the climate stable and the air clean. Forests are so important that the United Nations declared 2011 the "International Year of Forests."

The Kuy people know that a forest like Prey Lang matters to the whole world. That's why they say, "It's your forest, too." And that's why they are working so hard to protect it. When they went to pray and demonstrate in Phnom Penh last August, the Kuy were trying desperately to persuade the government to stop letting companies destroy Prey Lang.

They want the government to make a law giving them the right to manage and protect Prey Lang forever.

They are asking us to help them. Will you join with Cambodia's "avatars?" Together, we can protect Prey Lang before it's too late.



**INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF FORESTS - 2011**

### Your Forest

What forest is closest to your home?

How do people use that forest?

How is it protected, and who protects it?

What does this logo tell us about forests?

# Youth Action Alert Cambodia

## Kuy People of Cambodia Save Prey Lang "Our Forest"

Please write a polite letter to the prime minister of Cambodia. Tell him why forests matter to the world and to his country. Ask him what he will do to help the Kuy people protect their forest, Prey Lang. Tell him what you're doing to help save forests.

**ADDRESS:**  
Prime Minister Samdech Hun Sen  
c/o The Royal Embassy of Cambodia  
4530 16th Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20011 USA

**LETTER-WRITING TIPS:**  
Start your letter with this salutation:  
*Dear Prime Minister Hun Sen,*

Make sure your letter is polite and respectful.

At the end of your letter, ask the prime minister for a reply.

Include your name, your age, and your address on your letter. You might get a letter back from the prime minister of Cambodia!

Postage from the U.S. is 44 cents.

**Thank you for joining this campaign. The Kuy people say, Uhk hoo-ey ("Thank you!").**