A SMART approach to protecting Cambodia’s first Marine Protected Area

Successful trialing of SMART with community patrol teams in Koh Rong Archipelago, Cambodia’s first Marine Protected Area.

SMART IMPACT

Marine resources in Cambodia are threatened by rampant overfishing, destructive fishing practices and large-scale coastal development. Weak governance and a lack of financial resources to manage fisheries and protect key habitats have resulted in an open access fishery. Fauna & Flora International (FFI) has been working with communities, government, and private sector stakeholders to establish and manage Cambodia’s first Marine Protected Area (MPA). The MPA is showing early signs of success as SMART patrols by community members are providing active protection for this site and patrols have shown a decrease in the number of infractions per patrol since 2014.

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The Koh Rong Archipelago (KRA), home to significant coral reefs, mangrove forests, and seagrass beds, is Cambodia’s first large-scale MPA, designated in June 2016. The Archipelago supports three community fisheries (CFIs), as well as a growing tourism sector, providing a variety of goods and services, such as coastal protection, to thousands of people. FFI began work in KRA in 2010 to support the establishment of the MPA. Since its designation, FFI has worked with the CFIs to develop and implement management strategies, such as SMART patrols, for the the MPA.

SMART patrol data allowed for identification of illegal activity hotspots, but were restricted to their detection of activities in patrolled areas. Gaps highlighted by SMART patrol data were cross-referenced with perception data from interviews with local communities, allowing for improved patrol planning by targeting areas which are not being patrolled, but where illegal activities are likely occurring.

When compared to interview data, SMART patrol data indicated that patrols were not occurring at night, the peak time for illegal activities. FFI is now working with the CFIs and the government to address capacity issues related to nighttime monitoring and enforcement.