

CO-CAM - Co-Creating Cambodian Artisanal Mining Futures

Professor Harriet Hawkins and Ly Vouch Long



FOR WHAT MATTERS

CONTENTS

01 Background research

02 Project summary

03 Timeline

04 Key activities / events

05 Project outputs

06 Quotes

07 Project impact

08 Next steps

Previous Research: Untold stories of the lives of artisanal miners in Cambodia

1

Cambodia's artisanal miners are invisible

- Officially, the numbers of artisanal and small-scale miners working in Cambodia are very low.
- NGOs report a concerning lack of data on miners' lives and practices.
- Our rich data-set suggests that artisanal mining is a valued solution to economic precarity.

2

Artisanal mining is dominated by negative imaginations that delegitimise it as a livelihood

- Miners are often seen as unskilled, victims of poverty & socially deviant environmental pariahs.
- Our data-set contains much needed nuanced accounts of miners' community relations, skilled practices, hopes, dreams and environmental behaviours.

3

Local NGOs identify the 'bleak futures' faced by artisanal miners

- Without sharing high quality data, Cambodian NGOs believe artisanal miners will continue to face increasingly bleak futures, possibly including:
 - Social exclusion; criminalisation; eviction from mining sites & ancestral lands.

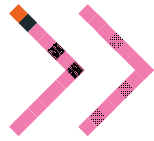
4

A 'New Vision' for artisanal mining rests on filling the global 'data gap'

- The World Bank and scholars have identified a global 'data gap' on artisanal mining
- Filling this 'data gap' is vital to achieving a new vision for socially and environmentally just artisanal mining



Goal: To develop new resources to safely share untold stories of Artisanal Mining

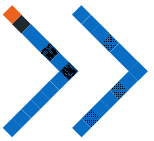


RHUL

Professor Harriet Hawkins

Partner(s)

Mining communities, Ly Vouch Long Researchers, NGOs and local stakeholders



1. To **co-create new resources** to share miners' stories locally, nationally and internationally
2. To ensure the **value and safety** of these resources
3. To **develop partnerships** to support resource dissemination and scaling



Key Outputs & Impact

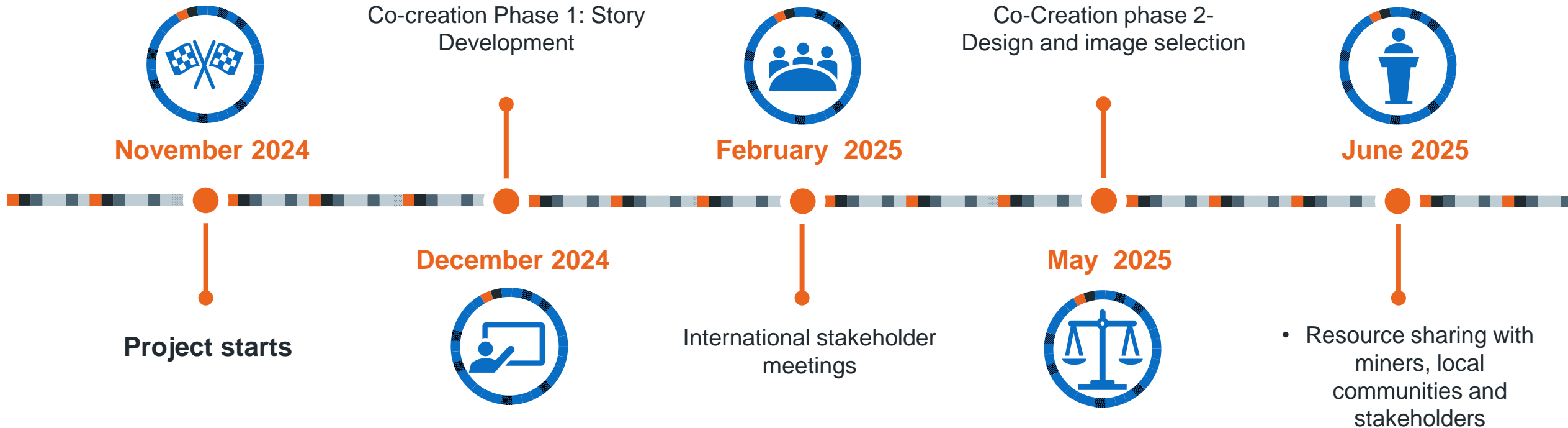
- Produced photobooks and a website, to share miners' stories with:
 - Their families and local communities, to share knowledge and **combat social exclusion and stigma**
 - Cambodian and wider publics across the region **to help shape wider discussions** to tackle mining's 'bleak futures'
- Deepened existing and **fostered new partnerships** with local and international stakeholders to facilitate the safe and appropriate sharing of these resources now and in the future



What's next?

- Continue to **share existing resources** in safe ways with local communities and wider Cambodian publics
- Ongoing impact assessment of the resources
- Development of new resources aimed at educating Cambodian children about mining and geology
- Create miners' lives exhibit (national & international partners)

The project spanned 8 months, between November 2024 and June 2025



Key activities: co-creation workshops and sharing events

Phase 1: Co-Design

Co-Design workshops with miners

- Over 50 miners, alongside ten Cambodian researchers participated in our two phases of co-creation workshops. This involved selecting and refining key stories and reviewing design and image selection. This co-creation enables visual sovereignty for the miners and ensure we address their needs.

Co-Design meetings with key stakeholders

- Meetings with key local, national and international stakeholders including NGOs, jewellers and designers, as well as local educators, and creators. These meetings refined need, tested ideas and discussed safe resource dissemination planning. This was vital given the changing political context around resource extraction and increasing attempts to delegitimise and criminalise artisanal miners despite their practices being legal.



Phase 2: Resource sharing

Event with Pailin mining community

- Attended by over 30 miners and 20 local people with the goal to take the book 'back' to the miners and get their final thoughts before wider circulation

Stakeholder meetings

- Given political context the planned public launch for stakeholders was not possible. Instead, individual stakeholder meetings were held to share the photobook, discuss a future launch, and plan further valuable resources adapted to the context.

Outputs: A suite of new resources to share miners' lives and practices



Taking the photobook to communities in Pailin



Produced **two dual language photography books** on artisanal mining in Cambodia, aimed at:

1. Miners, their families and local communities
2. NGOs and wider publics across Cambodia and beyond



Sharing activities in communities and with stakeholders.



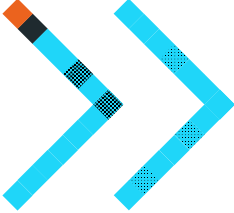
Website and NGO reporting will be launched more widely when local stakeholders advise it is safe.



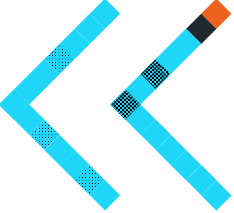
Networking: with new and existing local and international partners, including NGOs and private companies to share resources and build next steps



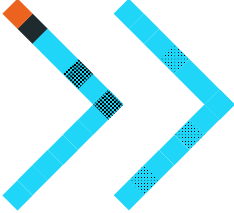
Project reporting [future]: to the World Bank website, DELVE opensource artisanal mining website (ongoing); and presentations to the Singapore Asia institute (09/25) and as the Royal Geographical Society Annual Conference, UK (08/25)



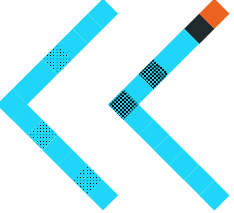
**Foreign people only come here to tell
stories of death and war, we are happy
you are telling stories about mining.
We want our children to know that
mining is skilled, that it is important.**




Artisanal Miner, near Pailin, Cambodia.




**People think we are stupid,
that there are no more
stones, they laugh at us.
Telling our stories will help
people respect us.**



Artisanal Miner, near Pailin, Cambodia.



**We badly need more careful
accounts of miners. You are
telling these complex stories,
it is so valuable**



Director of the Gem Museum, Singapore.

Preliminary impacts include impacts on miners' lives and forming new partnerships

- Creating resources for miners to share with their families and local communities to support:
 - Counteracting miners' feelings of **shame**
 - **Valuing cultural heritage and building family legacy**
 - **Supporting** intergenerational relationships within miner's families
 - Rebuilding **local community relations**
- Renewed existing and secured **new partnerships** to enable the safe and appropriate circulation of the miners' stories; within Cambodia, across South-East Asia and beyond.
- Working with miners and their local communities, as well as national and international NGOs and organisations
 - Develops **local benefit-sharing** whilst ensuring the safe negotiation of changing political contexts to enable wider national and international sharing of resources in due course.
 - Has the potential to **challenge the bleak futures** predicated for artisanal mining within Cambodia as well as enabling scaling up to offer much-needed support for socially just artisanal mining futures globally.




Next steps...

- To continue to share resources with the miners' local communities. This will include data collection on immediate and long-term impact.
- When stakeholders consider politically appropriate, we will continue with plans to share the resources more widely within Cambodia [publics, NGOs] and launch the website

To apply for further funding to:

- Develop resources aimed at Cambodian children including a workbook that combines local histories of mining with Geological Science.
- Develop knowledge and collaborations through engagements and training with **SSEF- Swiss Gemmological Institute**.
- To co-produce a display on 'Dignity in Mining' for The **Singaporean Gem Museum**. This will be part of their permanent display and will tour to major gem shows globally.
- Explore collaboration with SOSORO- **Cambodia's Economy and Money museum**
- To develop a major collaboration with **Bophana Audio Visual Centre** to train young Cambodians to produce films documenting gem miners' lives and practices. Situated as part of tangible and intangible cultural heritage.



**What
next?**