



**East Asian Seas  
Regional Coordinating Unit**

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**United Nations Environment Programme**

**Training Programme in SCUBA Diving and  
ReefCheck Technique in Cambodia**

29 October to 11 November 2002

and

**Training Programme in Coral Reef Survey Using  
Line Intercept Transect (LIT) Method**

15 to 25 June 2003

Sihanoukville, Cambodia



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## 1 BACKGROUND

Information on the distribution and condition of Cambodia's coral reefs is still very limited. Most corals are found on rocky bases and a few are organised into fringing reef formations. Surveys on Koh Tang, one of the 53 islands offshore of Cambodia, indicate 70 species of coral from 33 genera. Islands farther inshore generally support lower diversity because of turbid waters unfavourable for coral growth. Cambodia has relatively limited coral reef areas, estimated by the Reefs at Risk in Southeast Asia (RRSEA) study to be under 50 km<sup>2</sup>. Cambodia's coral reefs have been subject to a variety of human pressures, particularly those related to unsustainable fishing practices and poor land management. Blast fishing has been reported, and fishers have depleted lucrative commercial fish.

Over fishing and illegal fishing from foreign vessels are thought to be a problem, but statistics are incomplete. Bleaching from the 1997-1998 ENSO event affected Cambodian reefs, with one survey indicating that 80 percent of corals in Sihanoukville bleached during 1998. However, national bleaching and coral mortality statistics are not available. Surveys of coral condition are limited to a few sites within Cambodia. Studies in four locations in Koh Kong province in 2001 found live coral cover ranging from 23 to 42 percent, (survey carried out by the Singapore International Foundation). The RRSEA model suggests that all of Cambodia's coral reefs are at high risk from human activities. Over fishing is believed to affect all reefs in Cambodia's waters. Limited data suggests that many reefs are threatened by destructive fishing. Coastal development, sedimentation, and marine-based pollution are also significant threats. Management for conservation of coral reefs in Cambodia is still undeveloped. Most laws relate to the protection of fisheries rather than coral reefs. However, the government is making progress in some areas. Coral collection, an important threat from 1995 to 1997, is declining because the Department of Fisheries (DoF) has tightened controls and confiscated coral from vendors.

The UNEP Coral Reef Monitoring and Data Acquisition Workshop in the EAS (East Asian Seas) region was held in Phuket, Thailand, 9-11 May 2000. The Workshop assessed the existing projects and knowledge on coral reef monitoring and data and information exchange. The Workshop participants recognised the need for training for some countries to upgrade their national capability on coral reef monitoring and data management.

This training programme held in Sihanoukville, Cambodia from October 29 to November 11, 2002 was intended to build on the activities supported by UNEP EAS/RCU. The programme is intended to support the capacity building component of the International Coral Reef Action Network Project (ICRAN) implemented by the EAS/RCU. In later years, this training programme may reinforce the coral reef sub-component of the UNEP/GEF Project, "Reversing Environmental Degradation Trends in the South China Sea and Gulf of Thailand."

## 2 RATIONALE

Coral reef monitoring has expanded throughout the region during the 1990s with reef surveys increasingly being used for management assessment. However, it is clear that monitoring capacity varies widely between the countries. In an ASEAN-Australian cooperation project between Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand, even though most of these countries have institutions with trained staff capable of monitoring reefs and are jointly using accepted methodology, there were some variations in skills and data collected.

Monitoring is an essential part of coral reef management. It is important to enable early detection of change in coral reefs over time due to natural and human impacts and global scale processes such as climate change. Monitoring programmes are also necessary to determine the response of coral reefs to management action undertaken to reduce threats, such as the installation of mooring buoys, or reduction of fishing pressure on particular reefs. Recognising the importance of monitoring, many initiatives have been developed worldwide such as the Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network (GCRMN), the United Nations Environment Programme and the World Conservation Monitoring Centre, ReefCheck and ReefBase. However, current monitoring programmes are limited by the lack of: (1) trained personnel, (2) widespread involvement of local

communities in Cambodia (local people and private industry), and (3) financial and other resources (boats and dive gear).

In order to conserve and manage coral reefs in Cambodia, it was necessary to implement a series of coral reef survey and monitoring programmes. The first training course had two objectives: (1) to train ten trainees from Ream Marine National Park and officers from provincial offices of the DoF in coral reef monitoring using ReefCheck, and (2) to conduct a coral reef monitoring programme at Koh Rong Island using ReefCheck methodology. Thus, preliminary capacity building was achieved.

The intended contribution of this project is to establish and build local capacity for survey and monitoring work. It is hoped that the data resulting from the project and post-project activities will contribute to improving the management of marine and coastal resources in Cambodia. Other potential benefits include increased local skilled personnel for the development of sustainable coastal and marine tourism. This should help to provide alternative/additional sources of income for local people and the overall local economy at various levels.

### **3 OBJECTIVES**

#### **3.1 SCUBA Training**

To select six trainees from both the DoF and Riem Marine National Park for training in SCUBA diving techniques, taught by an instructor from a registered and authorized dive organisation.

#### **3.2 ReefCheck Training**

To train ten trainees from Riem Marine National Park and officers from provincial offices of the DoF in coral reef monitoring using ReefCheck.

#### **3.3 Survey at Selected Site**

To conduct a coral reef monitoring programme at Koh Rong Island using ReefCheck methodology.

### **4 OUTPUTS**

#### **4.1 SCUBA Training**

- ✓ Six Cambodian marine park rangers and DoF officers trained in SCUBA diving.
- ✓ Full commitment of the participants to join further coral reef monitoring programmes in Cambodia.

#### **4.2 ReefCheck Training**

- ✓ Ten trained Cambodian marine park rangers and DoF officers awarded with ReefCheck certification.
- ✓ Full commitment of the participants to join further coral reef monitoring programmes.

#### **4.3 Survey at Selected Site**

- ✓ Obtained data to establish preliminary status of coral reefs in Koh Rong Island as an input for ICRAN activities at this target site.

### **5 METHODOLOGY**

#### **5.1 Selection of Trainees**

The training programme was advertised in province-wide governmental media in order to attract applicants from marine parks.

Candidates completed a short CV-type form. This ensured a basic level of literacy that was required to complete the training within the prescribed timescale and budget.

Candidates passed the first selection stage and were interviewed to gauge their level of commitment and intellectual capacity, not so much level of knowledge, but willingness and ability to learn. The potential of candidates for long-term involvement with survey and monitoring and long-term commitment to the area was a very important factor, taking into account outside commitments (family, work, etc.) and motivation. The candidate trainees were selected from both marine national parks and DoF, especially the one located in Riem. Prospective candidates met requirements on ability to understand technical lectures and practical methodologies on coral reef monitoring techniques.

Figure 1 below shows the selection process and activities involved.

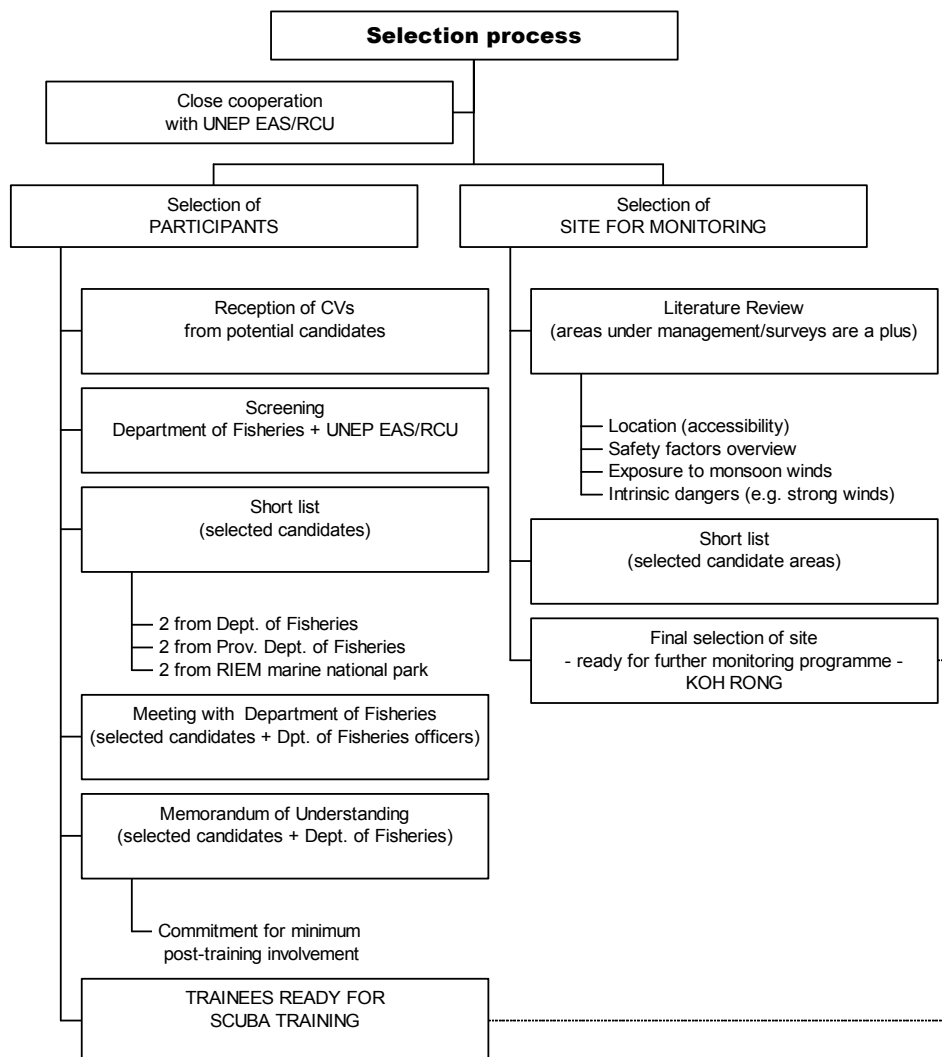


Figure 1. Flowchart illustrating schedule of activities for the SCUBA training programme.

## 5.2 SCUBA Training Programme

The SCUBA training course complied with PADI Open Water (PADI OW) standards, and was conducted by a qualified Instructor, using SCUBA diving training materials. UNEP tried to acquire the training materials in Khmer language but these were not available. Thus, English was the language of the reading materials. The course finished when the trainees reached the required standard assessed

by a certified instructor. This stage took 7 days to complete, and was combined with an initial survey methodology training. Once the SCUBA diving had been successfully completed, trainees began actual survey work, putting together the various skills learned to date and completing them as necessary. Details of the SCUBA diving course are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. SCUBA diving course (Day 1-Day 7).

<p><b>Opening Session</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Welcome speech by a local authority</li> <li>▪ Opening remarks by representative of UNEP</li> </ul>
<p><b>What was included</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Full set of SCUBA equipment including mask, snorkel and fins.</li> <li>2. PADI Open Water Crew pack which includes an Open Water Course Manual, Log Book, Dive Tables also known as Recreational Dive Planner or RDP, medical form, and pink envelope to apply for PADI certificate.</li> <li>3. Five knowledge development sessions with quizzes and a final exam. The quizzes and exam were used to ensure the participants attained the knowledge to dive safely. There was a questions review before the exam was given.</li> <li>4. Five skill development sessions in confined water, maybe in one of the local pools.</li> <li>5. Four open water dives, two from the shore and two from a boat.</li> <li>6. PADI Open Water Certification Card for successful trainees.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Knowledge development</b></p> <p>During the Knowledge Development Sessions the PADI instructor reviewed the information needed to dive safely. The Knowledge Review in the Open Water Manual, quizzes and a final exam were used to ensure participants had the information needed to dive safely. The PADI instructor(s) reviewed the quiz questions missed to ensure that all participants mastered the information.</p>
<p><b>Confined Water Training Dives</b></p> <p>During the confined water training dives, participants learned the real life skills required in order to dive safely, under the supervision of the PADI instructor.</p>
<p><b>Open Water Training Dives</b></p> <p>To finish the Open Water Diver training, the participants completed 4 Ocean Dives. Two of these dives were conducted from the beach, and the other two from a boat.</p>
<p><b>Swimming Assessment</b></p> <p>All participants completed a 200 meter swim and 10 minute survival float before the Open Water Dives.</p>
<p><b>Certification</b></p> <p>After successful completion of the theory programme, confined and open water sessions, all participants met the requirements to be certified as a PADI Open Water SCUBA Diver.</p>

### 5.3 ReefCheck Training Programme

Ms. Karenne Tun and Mr. Jeffrey Low from Singapore, with wide experience in ReefCheck surveys in the region, conducted the ReefCheck training.

Details of the ReefCheck training and coral reef monitoring at selected sites are included in Annex 2.

It was anticipated that prior to training, participants would have some knowledge and skills relevant to marine survey and monitoring work, e.g. species recognition, how various diving limitations apply to survey techniques. In addition, specific survey lectures were given, including both land-based theory and practical and water-based sessions.

Practical skills were practiced on land as well as explained before the water trials, e.g. tape laying and retrieval, sequence of events, data collection. Skills were broken down into components, which were practiced until completion and then combined.

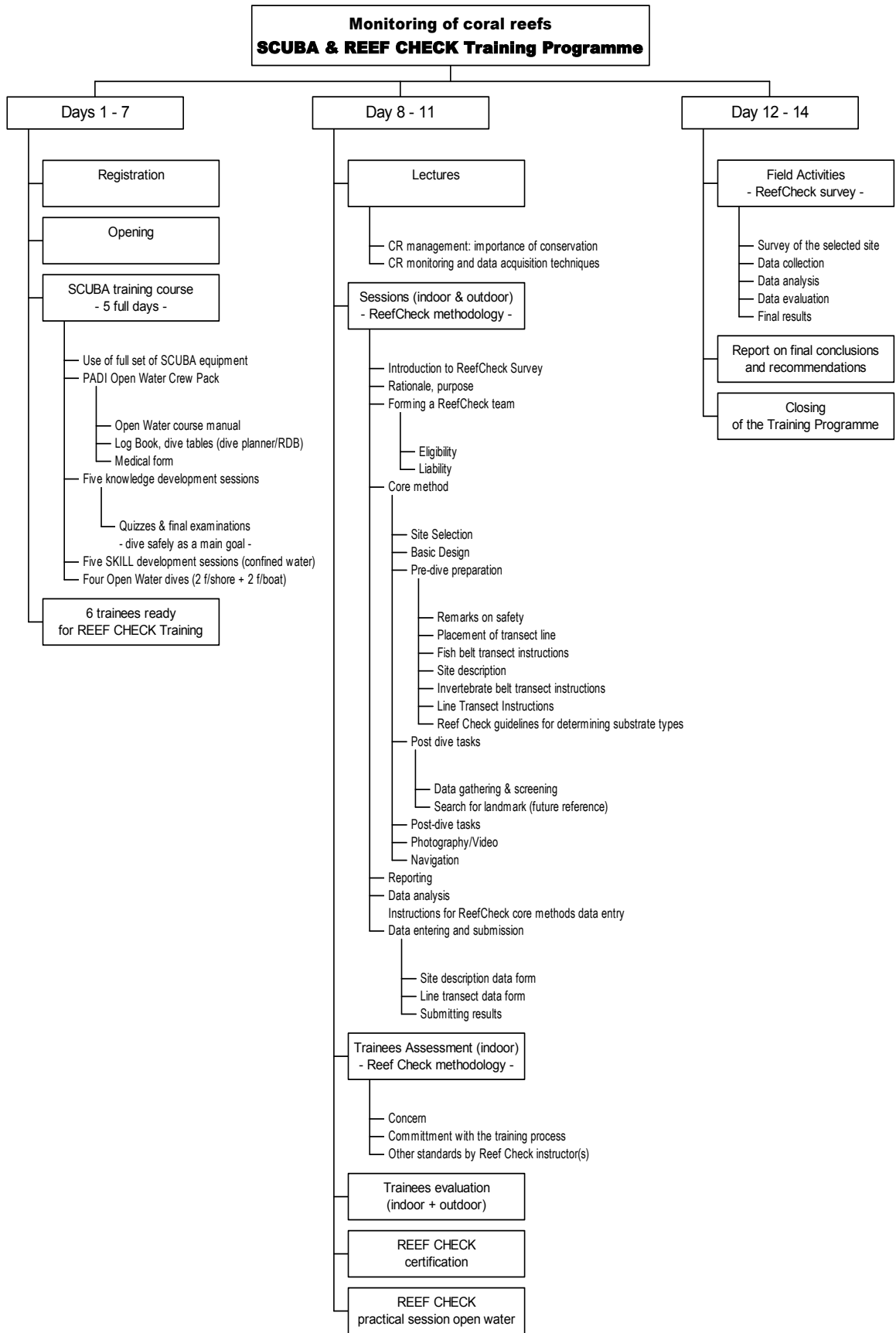
The data collected initially will be available for further planning and management purposes, and enable evaluation of the effect of future activities by providing a baseline for future monitoring. The results of the ReefCheck survey are included as Annex 3.

This practice session was conducted in 4 days from 6-10 November 2002 in Koh Tres Island and Koh Rong Sanlem Island (along the transects surveyed by Wetlands International a year ago).

During the practical session, all participants were divided into buddy pairs and practised laying lines and identification of reefs under water. Before entering the water, the instructors held a class asking trainees about fish species, types of coral or other substrates, and showing footage of certain marine species to ensure participants would be able to correctly identify the reefs and associated organisms. All the activities were beneficial for the trainees to obtain more knowledge and be aware of how to handle themselves during the practices. At the end of a practice-day, all buddy pairs made one cycle of ReefCheck (transect line, 100 m) in Koh Tres Island by following the theory provided by instructors.

#### **5.4 Organisation of Work**

The full programme of activities is shown in the following chart.



## 5.5 Participants

For the SCUBA diving training course held from 29 October to 4 November 2002, there were six trainees - two trainees from Ream National Park under the Ministry of Environment, two from Provincial Fisheries Department of Sihanoukville and two from the Department of Fisheries.

The ReefCheck Training Course held from 5 to 11 November 2002 in Sihanoukville, was attended by 9 participants. Four previously certified trainees from the DoF plus five recently trained in SCUBA diving were the attendants of this course. The following is the list of participants who attended and qualified in both training courses.

<b>SCUBA DIVING Training Course</b> 29 October – 4 November 2002	<b>REEFCHECK Training Course</b> 5– 11 November 2002
Mr. Bun Chantrea, DoF officer	Mr. Kim Sour, DoF officer
Mr. Kao Monirith, DoF officer	Mr. Pich Sereywath, DoF officer
Mr. Sin Sotharath, DoF officer of Sihanoukville	Mr. Va Long Dy, volunteer DoF
Mr. Yi Boros, DoF officer of Sihanoukville	Mr. Hep Sokhannaro, volunteer DoF
Mr. Suy Thea, Staff of MoE	Mr. Bun Chantrea, DoF officer
Mr. K. Sam Oeun, Ream National Park officer	Mr. Kao Monirith, DoF officer
	Mr. Sin Sotharath, DoF officer of Sihanoukville
	Mr. Yi Boros, DoF officer of Sihanoukville
	Mr. K. Sam Oeun, Ream National Park officer

## 6 RESULTS

A written examination was given to the participants in order to assess their knowledge about the SCUBA diving course and to determine if the objectives of the training were met. All the participants met the standards required to be successfully qualified with the PADI Open Water certificate. The examination was conducted by Mr. Max Foster, PADI Instructor No. 83128.

Likewise, Ms. Karenne Tun and Mr. Jeffrey Low conducted daily tests and a final examination at the end of the ReefCheck Training Course. All the participants achieved the standards to be awarded with the ReefCheck certificate.

## 7 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- The training course provided the participants with public awareness on coral reefs and training in SCUBA diving and ReefCheck techniques.
- Lectures coupled with practical work were very useful for understanding safe diving and ReefCheck practices. This course allowed the participants to gain more knowledge in order to manage the environment.
- It is recommended that surveys and monitoring of different coral reef areas should be continued. Further coral reef management schemes will be of great use and at least one survey per year will help to monitor coral reef conditions in the selected areas.

## 8 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The participants acknowledged the support of the Cambodian Government through the Department of Fisheries of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries for giving the opportunity of training through these courses sponsored and co-organised with the United Nations Environment Programme. A special mention was given to the ReefCheck instructors for volunteering

their time to run the training courses. The assistance and support from Mr. Claude, dive operator, Mr. Max Foster and Mr. Ivan Soto were also appreciated.

## **9 CLOSURE OF THE MEETING**

The UNEP EAS/RCU representative thanked the participants for their hard work and contribution to the training programmes, and expressed the hope that the success of this training would lead to collaboration in the future. The UNEP representative also thanked the instructors and support staff for their efforts during the training courses.

The training programmes were formally closed at 12:00 hrs, 11 November 2002.

## ANNEX 1

### List of Cambodian Trainees

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## Annex 2 ReefCheck Training Course

### Programme of Activities

#### Day 8

08:30-09:00	Registration
09:00-09:40	Opening Session <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Welcome speech by a local authority</li> <li>▪ Opening remarks by representative of UNEP</li> </ul>
09:40-10:20	Lecture No. 1 and No. 2: Coral Reef Management: Importance of conservation by ReefCheck instructor 1
10:20-10:40	<b>Coffee Break</b>
	<b>SESSION I (indoor) REEFCHECK METHODOLOGY INTRODUCTION TO CORAL REEF MONITORING TECHNIQUES</b>
10:40-11:40	<b>Introduction to Coral Reef</b>
11:40-12:00	<b>1. Introduction to ReefCheck Survey</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Overview</li> <li>○ Rationale</li> <li>○ Purpose</li> </ul> <b>2. Forming a ReefCheck team: eligibility and liability</b>
12:00-13:30	<b>Lunch</b>
	<b>SESSION II (indoor) REEFCHECK METHODOLOGY CORE METHOD</b>
13:30-15:30	<b>3. Core method</b> <b>3.1. General Summary</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Site selection</li> <li>○ Basic design</li> <li>○ Pre-dive preparation</li> <li>○ Survey Technique – Transect laying techniques</li> <li>○ Post dive tasks</li> <li>○ Photography/Video</li> <li>○ Navigation issues: using GPS, maps, permanent transect marking</li> </ul>
15:30-16:00	<b>Coffee Break</b>
16:00-17:00	<b>3.2. Benthic Transect Survey</b>
17:00-17:30	Open discussion
17:30	CLOSURE

## Day 9

	<b>SESSION II (indoor) REEFCHECK METHODOLOGY CORE METHOD</b>
09:00-10:30	<b>3.3. Core method – Fish and Invertebrate Transect Survey</b>
10:30-11:00	<b>Coffee Break</b>
11:00-11:30	<b>3.4. Core method – General Reef Description and Site Description</b>
11:30-12:30	Open discussion
12:30-14:00	<b>Lunch</b>
	<b>SESSION III (outdoors) ReefCheck Survey Practice</b>
14:00-15:30	ReefCheck Survey Method Practice (on land)
15:30-16:00	<b>Coffee Break</b>
16:00-17:00	ReefCheck Survey Method Practice (on land)
17:00-17:30	Open discussion
17:30	CLOSURE

## Day 10

	<b>SESSION III (outdoors) REEFCHECK SURVEY PRACTICE (ON SITE)</b>
08:30-12:30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Activities on-sea</li> <li>✓ Site Selection</li> <li>✓ Transect Deployment</li> <li>✓ Fish Survey</li> <li>✓ Invertebrate Survey</li> <li>✓ GPS/Map Marking</li> <li>✓ Final results</li> </ul>
12:30-14:00	<b>Lunch</b>
14:00-15:30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Activities on-sea</li> <li>✓ Site Selection</li> <li>✓ Transect Deployment</li> <li>✓ Fish Survey</li> <li>✓ Invertebrate Survey</li> <li>✓ GPS/Map Marking</li> <li>✓ Final results</li> </ul>
15:30-17:00	<b>Break</b>
17:00-18:00	Review and Discussion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Data entry and verification</li> <li>➤ Data analysis</li> </ul>
18:00	End of Daily Activities

**Day 11**

	<b>SESSION III (outdoors) CORAL REEF SURVEY AT SELECTED SITE REEFCHECK METHOD</b>
08:30-12:30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Activities on-sea</li> <li>✓ Survey of selected site;</li> <li>✓ Data collection;</li> <li>✓ Data analysis;</li> <li>✓ Data evaluation;</li> <li>✓ Final results</li> </ul>
12:30-14:00	<b>Lunch</b>
14:00-15:30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Activities on-sea (Cont'd)</li> <li>✓ Survey of selected site;</li> <li>✓ Data collection;</li> <li>✓ Data analysis;</li> <li>✓ Data evaluation;</li> <li>✓ Final results</li> </ul>
15:30-16:00	<b>Break</b>
16:00-18:00	Open discussion on findings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Data entry and verification</li> <li>➤ Data analysis</li> </ul>
18:00	END OF DAILY ACTIVITIES

**Day 12**

	<b>SESSION III (outdoors) CORAL REEF SURVEY AT SELECTED SITE REEFCHECK METHOD</b>
08:30-12:30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Activities on-sea (Cont'd)</li> <li>✓ Survey of selected site;</li> <li>✓ Data collection;</li> <li>✓ Data analysis;</li> <li>✓ Data evaluation;</li> <li>✓ Final results</li> </ul>
12:30-14:00	<b>Lunch</b>
14:00-15:30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Activities on-sea (Cont')</li> <li>✓ Survey of selected site;</li> <li>✓ Data collection;</li> <li>✓ Data analysis;</li> <li>✓ Data evaluation;</li> <li>✓ Final results</li> </ul>
15:30-16:00	<b>Break</b>
16:00-18:00	Open discussion on findings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Data entry and verification</li> <li>➤ Data analysis</li> </ul>
18:00	END OF DAILY ACTIVITIES

### Days13

<b>SESSION III (outdoors)</b> <b>CORAL REEF SURVEY AT SELECTED SITE</b> REEFCHECK METHOD	
08:30-12:30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Activities on-sea</li> <li>✓ Survey of selected site;</li> <li>✓ Data collection;</li> <li>✓ Data analysis;</li> <li>✓ Data evaluation;</li> <li>✓ Final results</li> </ul>
12:30-14:00	<b>Lunch</b>
14:00-15:30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Activities on-sea (Cont'd)</li> <li>✓ Survey of selected site;</li> <li>✓ Data collection;</li> <li>✓ Data analysis;</li> <li>✓ Data evaluation;</li> <li>✓ Final results</li> </ul>
15:30-16:00	<b>Break</b>
16:00-18:00	Open discuss on findings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Data entry and verification</li> <li>➤ Data analysis</li> </ul> <b>DRAFT REPORT ON ACTIVITIES AND FINDINGS</b>
18:00	<b>END OF DAILY ACTIVITIES</b>

### Days14

<b>SESSION III (outdoors)</b> <b>CORAL REEF SURVEY AT SELECTED SITE</b> REEFCHECK METHOD	
08:30-10:30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Review on the ReefCheck sites done</li> <li>✓ Data Entry</li> <li>✓ Data Analysis</li> </ul>
10:30-12:30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Discussion on DRAFT REPORT</li> <li>✓ Remarks</li> <li>✓ Amendments</li> </ul>
12:30	<b>CLOSURE OF THE REEFCHECK TRAINING PROGRAMME</b>
12:30-14:00	<b>Lunch</b>

## **Annex 3**

### **ReefCheck Data Koh Rong and Koh Tres, Cambodia**