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No. 180

Livelihood Strategies Amongst Indigenous Peoples in the Central Cardamom Protected Forest, Cambodia

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S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies

Singapore

26 June 2009

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Acknowledgements

This report would not have been possible without the important contributions of many individuals and organizations. I wish to express my heartiest gratitude to Dr. Mely Caballero-Anthony, Associate Professor at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), Singapore, and Head of the RSIS Centre for Non-Traditional Security Studies, for her inspiration and active involvement in supervision and consultations. I would also like to express my appreciation to the staff of the RSIS Centre for Non-Traditional Security Studies for their contributions and comments. I am grateful to all the villagers and local authorities in Kandal Village of Tatei Leu Commune and Prey Svay Village of Thmor Doun Pove Commune in Thmor Bang District, who kindly welcomed my visit and provided valuable information to me during my fieldwork. I would also like to acknowledge the assistance of Conservation International (CI) staff for the information and kind advice they provided for the study. Special thanks to Mr. Seng Bunra, Country Director of CI, and Mr. Ouk Kimsan, CCPF-CP Programme Manager, for allowing my research in the Central Cardamom Protected Forest, Cambodia, and I would like to thank Mr. Eng Polo, CCPF-CP Community Engagement Coordinator, and Ms. Hot Chanthy, Community Engagement Assistant, for providing information about their project activities, the historical background of conservation in the Central Cardamoms Protected Forest and the customs of indigenous communities in Thmor Bang. Thanks to the Forestry Administration (FA) officials who facilitated my stay at Thmar Bang for fieldwork activities and data gathering. Finally, I would like to thank the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) of Canada for the research support grant in producing this paper.

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Abbreviations

ABE	The Association of Buddhists for the Environment
ADB	Asian Development Bank
AFD	l'Agence Française de Développement
CCPF	Central Cardamom Protected Forest
CI	Conservation International
CEDAC	Cambodian Center for Study and Development in Agriculture
CNRMC	Commune Natural Resource Management Committees
DANIDA	Danish International Development Agency
DFW	Department of Forestry and Wildlife
DFID	Department for International Development
FFI	Flora and Fauna International
FA	Forestry Administration
MOJ	Ministry of Justice
MoE	Ministry of Environment
MAFF	Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries
NRM	Natural Resource Management
NCDD	National Committee for the Management of Decentralization and De-concentration Reform
NGOs	Non-governmental organizations
NTFPs	Non-timber forest products
PLUP	Participatory Land Use Planning
PFs	Protected Forests
PAs	Protected Areas
RCG	Royal Cambodian Government
SCW	Save Cambodia's Wildlife
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

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Abstract

At present, the indigenous people in the Central Cardamoms Protected Forest (CCPF) are facing a problem in trying to improve their livelihoods. Thmor Doun Pov and Tatei Leu are amongst the small communities scattered in the CCPF, where the past has been difficult and the future is uncertain for them. The indigenous people in Thmor Doun Pov and Tatei Leu, Communes of Thmor Bang District of Koh Kong Province, like so many other small indigenous communities in Cambodia, have been having difficulty in adjusting to a series of significant changes, particularly concerning their livelihoods. Their natural resource-based livelihoods are being challenged by the various impacts of governmental policy, as well as social, cultural and ideological issues that have arisen in recent years. This study asks what these challenges are and how they impact upon these indigenous peoples' livelihoods. The main objective of this study is to understand the various interventions by the government with regard to natural resource management policies, and how NGOs and other actors such as migrants and investors are affecting the livelihoods of the indigenous people. Therefore, this paper discusses the different interventions and different agenda these players have, and how these interventions fit in with local perspectives and agenda, particularly in the case of the CCPF. It also examines the livelihood diversification strategies that indigenous people use to cope with the challenges of such interventions.

This Working Paper is the result of the research conducted during the author's fellowship in RSIS under the RSIS Centre for NTS Studies' Cambodian Research Fellowship Programme in 2008. To find out more about the RSIS Centre for NTS Studies, please visit <http://www.rsis.edu.sg/nts/home.html>.

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He conducted a research on "Livelihood Strategies Amongst Indigenous People in Central Cardamom Protected Forests, Cambodia". The main objective of the study is to determine the impact of interventions such as government – natural resource management policies, and NGO interventions, as well as the impact of newcomers/outside on livelihoods of indigenous people and how these indigenous are coping in livelihoods. He expected that the study will be made to understand policies and practice linkage and to analyze opportunities to enhance the rights of indigenous people in order to access and use the natural resource in more sustainable way. The report from this study will also be useful to a wide ranged stakeholders engaged in promoting natural resource management in Cambodia, which will help development practitioners, NGOs, and government to develop better strategies to combine livelihood programmes and natural resource management components into rural communities, especially with marginalized and indigenous people.

I. Introduction

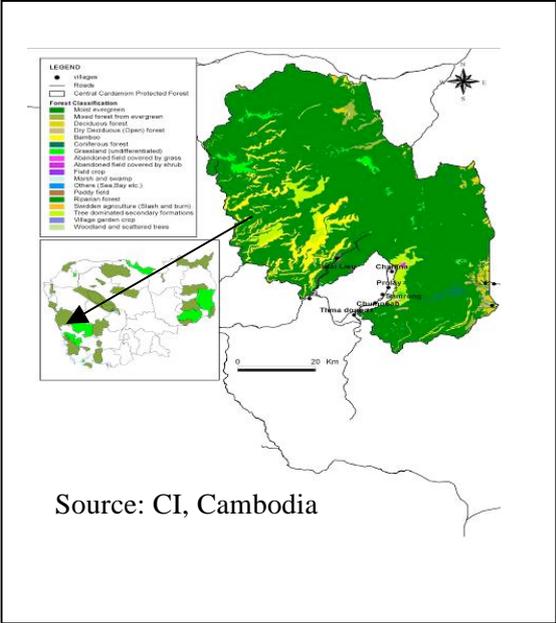
1. 1. Background

Cambodia has an estimated population of 11 million to 14.8 million people, approximately 90 per cent of them being of Khmer ethnicity and complemented by Vietnamese, Cham, Lao, Chinese and indigenous ethnic groups. The indigenous ethnic groups constitute approximately one per cent of the overall population (UNDP, 2006). Indigenous people in Cambodia, like other indigenous groups in many other countries of the world, practise a unique way of life and have the capacities and means of living based on the natural resources around them. Indigenous societies have developed not only in terms of preserving the resource base but also in regulating the distribution of those resources among the community members (Jeremy, 1999). However, due to globalization, the world of the indigenous people has changed and the territories of these indigenous communities have become a target for private investment projects and exploitation of natural resources such as logging for timber; planting coffee, oil palm and cashew nuts; and mining for gemstones and gold. The problems of the indigenous people seem to be ignored and they are always excluded from the consultation and decision-making processes, and their way of life—livelihood, culture and language—is threatened. The indigenous people of Cambodia are a marginalized group with poor access to justice through the formal legal system (Backstrom et al., 2006). Powerful people and outsiders take advantage of them (MOJ and UNDP, 2007). These trends affect the indigenous people's livelihoods.

The indigenous people in Thmor Doun Pov and Tatei Leu communes of Thmor Bang district, like so many other small indigenous communities in Cambodia, have been suffering from a series of significant changes, particularly those concerning their livelihoods. Their natural resource-based livelihoods are being challenged by the impacts of governmental policies, social, cultural and ideological aspects. Johnston (2000) points out that environmental history is a useful means of explaining such changes, locating people and their lifestyles and activities in the context of people-place relationships and illustrating the changing patterns of these relationships over the past. Two communes found in Thmor Bang district form part of the Central Cardamom Protected Forest (CCPF), a protected forest established in 2002. The indigenous people living in that area do not understand why their areas have become part of a protected area. From the beginning, they were not well informed and the changes taking place were never clearly explained to them. It is very important that the major stakeholders involved—such as the government Forestry Administration (FA) and

non-governmental organizations (NGOs)—identify their roles and duties within the indigenous mountain of CCPF. These interventions require much participation and understanding from the indigenous people in order to gain their support. In addition, keeping external actors such as internal migrants and investors informed is also very important because many external actors arriving from other places into CCPF are ignorant and unaware of the existence of the protected forest management system, so they take advantage by extracting more of the area’s natural resources than what the indigenous people have done. All these problems are currently occurring within the CCPF, and these can lead to challenges which may have an impact on the livelihood of the indigenous people.

1.2. Statement of the Problem



During the Cambodian civil war, the CCPF was controlled by the Khmer Rouge. The CCPF is home to the indigenous people who call themselves Khmer Daeum, Chong or Poar, which refer to the old culture of Khmer, and they are still living in this area after the years of conflict. However, they have lost their language through long periods of interaction with the more dominant Khmer and newcomer cultures. In general, these groups still identify themselves as culturally distinct, preferring the term “Khmer Daeum” or “Leu” (Upland Khmer) to

differentiate themselves from the newcomers arriving from the lowlands.

The livelihood of the indigenous people in the CCPF has traditionally depended on shifting cultivation and harvesting non-timber forest products as well as hunting. Since the Cardamom Mountains were declared Protected Forests (PFs), shifting cultivation of the indigenous people has been banned. This has put extreme pressures on the indigenous people to adopt a new system of livelihood strategies. Local and international NGOs—Conservation International (CI), Save Cambodia’s Wildlife (SCW), Care International and the Association of Buddhists for the Environment (ABE)—have been cooperating with the Cambodian government—namely the FA—to conserve the area’s natural resources and provide livelihood support to the indigenous people in order to secure their rights and seek environmental sustainability.

Another challenge for indigenous livelihood strategies is the entry of external actors who have migrated from the lowlands to the Central Cardamom Mountains as well as the possibility of economic development. The impact of the external actors not only causes the diminishing of natural resources for sustaining the livelihood of the indigenous peoples but it also weakens their cultural and social resources. Recently, there has been more pressure to natural resource extraction for economic development projects, causing many changes within the indigenous communities. Therefore, it is very interesting to ask what the challenges are and how they impact upon the indigenous people's livelihood as a result of these different interventions and policies.

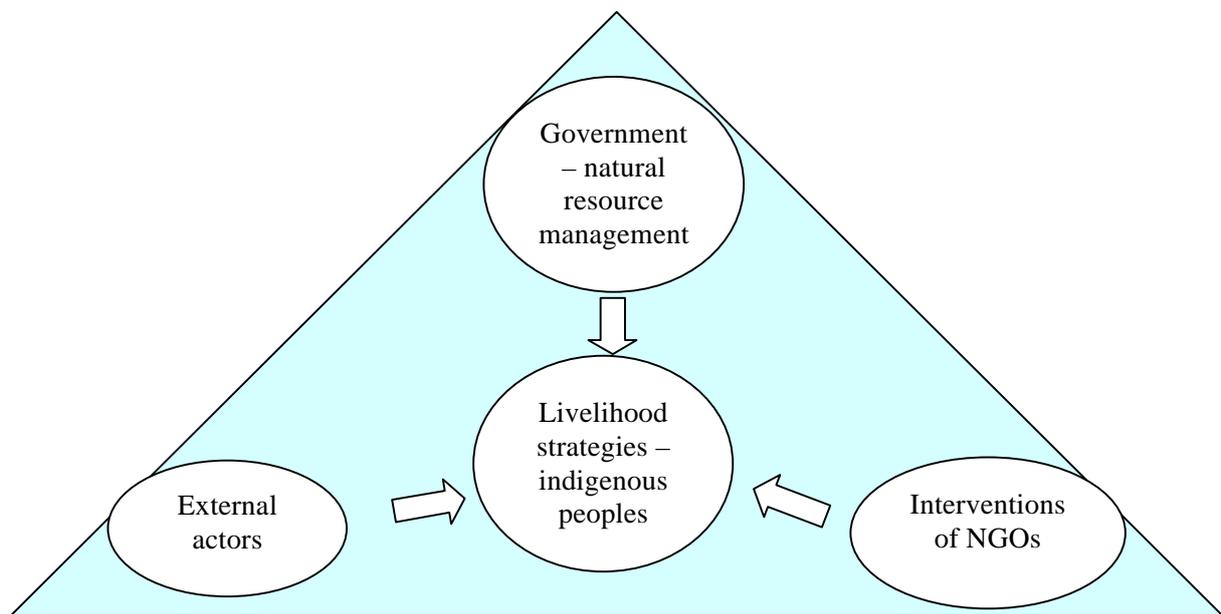


Figure 1: The impacts of interventions into indigenous communities

1.3. Research Questions

The study aims to review the questions below and discuss the practical and operational consequences and constraints of the approaches to sustain the livelihood of the indigenous people in the CCPF of Cambodia.

1. What are the challenges and the impact of these different interventions and policies to the indigenous people's livelihood (government natural resource management policies, NGOs and external actors)?
2. What are the indigenous people's responses to the approaches of NGOs and government policies in natural-resources management?

1.4. Objectives of Study

- To determine and emphasize the various interventions and interactions, ranging from the government's natural-resource management policies, NGOs' interventions and external actors with respect to the livelihood of the indigenous people.
- To examine the indigenous people's livelihood diversification as a coping strategy and adaptive strategy in the CCPF.
- To discuss the practical and operational consequences as well as constraints in the sustainable livelihood approaches adopted by the indigenous people in the CCPF; and to analyse the opportunities to enhance the rights of the indigenous people to access natural resources in a more sustainable way for their livelihood.

II. Framework of the Study/Analysis Approach

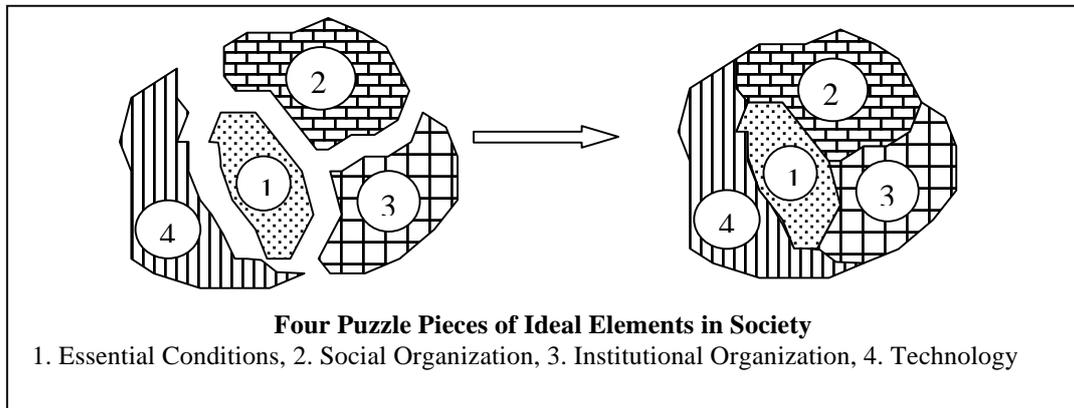
2.1. Scope of Study

The study looks at how the natural resource-based livelihoods of the indigenous people in the CCPF are being challenged by the chain effects of governmental policy, social, cultural and ideological aspects. The study is limited to the Prey Svay village in the Thmor Doun Pov commune and the Kandal village in the Tatei Leu commune of Thmor Bang district in the Koh Kong province, so the findings and results cannot be generalized for the whole population within the country since the study is conducted within a narrow scope. However, the results of the study can be applied for the same geographical area among the indigenous people.

2.2. Conceptual/Analytical Approach

The research uses Chay Navuth's model on the ideal elements in society (essential conditions, social organization, institutional organization, institutional organization and technology) as the initial basis for this study. Chay Navuth developed this model in order to provide an opportunity for development assistances to consider the role of community organizations/institutions, which are key factors to design better strategies for project implementation. He has mainly stressed on the reality of the community. Based on this model, a new model was proposed for working with the local communities, one that could provide a clearer explanation of the impact of the interventions in the people's livelihood. In the case of the CCPF, this model could be used by the government, NGOs and other development practitioners working on natural resource management so as to help meet the needs of the indigenous people and help them adapt their livelihood strategies accordingly.

Figure 2: Rethinking Chay Navuth’s model on four puzzle pieces of ideal elements in society in order to take into account in the case of CCPF



Source: Chay Navuth, 2006

2.3. Research Methodology

2.3.1. Primary data collection

In order to assess the impact of natural resource management policies, NGO activities and the actions of other external actors, field research was conducted and data was generated from a sample size of 42 household respondents from two villages of the Thmor Doun Pov commune and the Tatei Leu commune, Thma Bang district in the Koh Kong province (Prey Svay and Kandal villages), where the indigenous people live predominantly. The research also collected information from NGOs and the FA, as well as the local government in the CCPF. The primary research methods were as follows:

- a) Observation:* Participatory observation was conducted to build the trust with people by using informal talks to get important data that would lead to ideas for the next phase of focus group discussions and in-depth interviews.
- b) In-depth interviews with informants:* Interviews were also conducted with relevant government personnel—FA staff, rangers—and other relevant NGOs that have been working in the CCPF, because they are the key institutions and bodies that influence livelihood strategies of the indigenous people there. In addition, local authorities (commune chiefs and village chiefs) were also interviewed.
- c) Survey questionnaires:* The questionnaires were designed and used to interview target indigenous people.
- d) Focus Group Discussion (FGD):* Small groups of people were brought together so that it could lead to more natural exchanges of information and to gain more details. These

discussions explored the interactions and experiences of the informants on the issues raised, and provided more confidence among the informants and to facilitate a deeper understanding of the information.

2.3.2. Secondary data collection

Secondary data gathering methods involved a combination of reviewing available government records, NGOs' reports, documents and policies concerning natural resource management and livelihood management. Theories and concepts in relation to rural livelihood management/framework, natural resource management (NRM) and indigenous knowledge have been put into discussion within this study. This study also looks at lessons learnt from experiences of various interventions and development projects in indigenous communities in Cambodia. The review was carried out to provide a better understanding of the impact of these policies on indigenous people's livelihood strategies and to look for ways to specifically address how these policies would have the best impact on the livelihood of the indigenous people.

2.4. Organization of Study

This research describes the responses of the indigenous people towards different interventions within the CCPF and the impact on their livelihood strategies. It also provides readers with some background of the conservation project in the CCPF, Cambodia. This study is divided into six chapters:

- Chapter 1 provides an overview, research problem statement and significance of the study, as well as the objectives of the study.
- Chapter 2 shows the framework of the study or analytical approach, which consists of the scope, conceptual approach and research methodology of the study.
- Chapter 3 looks into the theories and concepts of sustainable livelihood approach and framework. This has been provided as a way to deepen the understanding of the challenges to the livelihood of the rural poor. This chapter also helps readers understand more about the local communities, traditional ecological knowledge and Chay Navuth's model on the ideal elements in society (essential conditions, social organization, institutional organization and technology) and how these concepts and theories can be applied to support development projects within local communities, especially in the case of the CCPF. In addition, this chapter explores some experiences of development assistance and interventions in order to identify a better approach within community development.

- Chapter 4 provides a historical background of the CCPF, the indigenous peoples in the Cardamom Mountains and the history of a conservation project in the CCPF. It also describes the challenges in natural resource management in Cambodia and provides an overview of rural poverty in Cambodia.
- Chapter 5 deals with the results of the research and discusses the challenges and their impact on the different interventions and policies on the indigenous people's livelihood. This chapter focuses on modifying Chay Navuth's model on the ideal elements in society, which consists of four elements, namely, the essential conditions, social organization, institutional organization and technology so that the new model can be proposed to suit local perspectives in the case of the CCPF. It will also look at the rural livelihood system framework of analysis, which focuses on the aspects of natural resource, economic, social and institution, and which is applied to the case of the CCPF. This discussion will also draw attention to prospects for better interventions for reconciling conservation and development in the CCPF. The following are included in the discussion within this chapter:
 1. The role of conservation NGOs in the CCPF
 2. Coping strategies and livelihood aspirations
 3. Forestland and livelihood security
 4. The responses of the indigenous people to newcomers
 5. The responses of the indigenous peoples to conservation in the CCPF
 6. The impact of interventions in the CCPF
 7. Rural household livelihood system
 8. Different agenda of different interventions into the communities
 9. Engaging and blending local institution with external interventions
 10. Future development and conservation in the CCPF
- Chapter 6 concludes by indicating and introducing a new model that has been modified from Chay Navuth's model, which applies to the case of the CCPF.

III. Literature Review

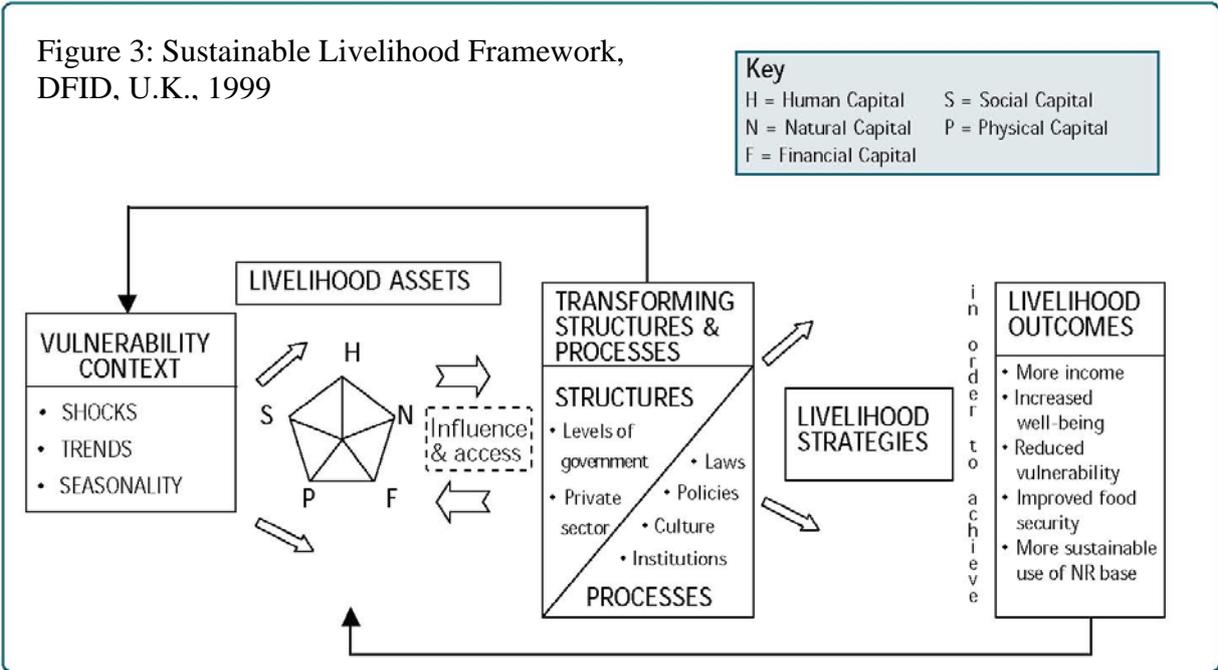
3.1. What is Sustainable Livelihood?

The definition of livelihood has been extensively and continually discussed among academics and development practitioners. Simply understood, livelihood is about the ways and means for making a living, based on the assets available and how people use them to sustain their livelihood. The term “sustainable livelihood” was first used as a development concept in the early 1990s. Chambers and Conway (1992) define and suggest that livelihood is sustainable when communities can cope with and recover from stresses and shocks, as well as maintain their capacities and means of living, including food, income and assets. Chambers (1997) has continually pointed out that the livelihood of most poor people is diverse and often complex. They have not just one source to support their households but several. Different members of the household seek and find different sources of livelihood support in different ways and in different places at different times of the year. The more choices and flexibility that people have in their livelihood strategies, the more secure they are and more able to cope with “shock” (Cathryn, 2000). Therefore, when the environment surrounding their community is affected, their livelihood will not be sustainable, as they cannot enhance and maintain their capacities for living. Fluctuations in resource abundance, seasonal cycles of resource use and changes in access create conditions that bring challenges to rural households, and the stress tends to be ongoing when the resource declines, as a result of seasonality issues such as lean times, and also perturbations and fluctuations within the social ecological system (Marschke and Berkes, 2006).

3.2. Sustainable Livelihood Approach

There is a lot of debate on the sustainable livelihood approach. The U.K. government agency, the Department for International Development (DFID), has the most notable debate on dealing with the sustainable livelihood approach. Sustainable livelihood approaches are centred on people and their livelihood by looking and prioritizing people’s assets (tangible and intangible), their ability to withstand shocks (the vulnerability context), and policies and institutions that reflect poor people’s priorities rather than those of the elite (Sustainable Livelihood Approaches: www.livelihoods.org/SLdefn.html). Within their Sustainable Livelihoods Guidance Sheets, DFID, U.K. (1999) has clearly presented the main factors that affect people’s livelihoods and the typical relationship. The DFID sees that livelihood is the means by which households obtain and maintain access to the resources necessary to ensure their immediate and long-term survival. To do so, they draw on human, natural, physical,

financial and social capital. This framework and concept of sustainable livelihood development is central to strategies for rural poverty reduction. It also requires and emphasizes participation, multi-coordination from all sectors or agencies, and flexibility (Figure 3). Some scholars and field development practitioners argue that the DFID framework seems to be complicated and it is too intellectual and conceptual to have practical ground application. However, the definitions of livelihood are dynamic and complex so that the sustainable livelihood framework must conform to the definition of “livelihood”. The DFID’s framework is a Western concept. This approach needs to look into rural dynamics and realities so that it can better understand rural life and the environment that people are interacting with. For example, forests are always connected to indigenous and rural peoples’ values, cultures and traditional belief systems. Scoones (1998) also illustrated that the “sustainable livelihoods” relates to a wide set of issues that encompasses a much broader debate about the relationships between poverty and the environment. The National Committee for the Management of Decentralization and De-concentration Reform (NCDD, 2003) has provided greater insights by identifying four critical elements (natural resource aspect, economic aspect, social aspect and institutional aspect) that are very significant for development practitioners prior to starting any projects or livelihood analysis with poor people. Therefore, in Chapter 5, the rural livelihood system in the context of Cambodia is discussed, especially as it is much related to livelihood strategies and aspirations of the indigenous people.



Source: DFID UK 1999

3.3. Communities, Indigenous Knowledge and Conservation

Programmes to reduce poverty often fail to account for the important linkage between natural resource conservation and the livelihood of the rural people (Stephen, 2006), and it remains controversial when discussing about conservation and development. The ideas of having communities in ownership harmonization, alignment, participation and mutual accountability have been discussed much in the development context. Renwick, Chambers et al. (2004) have stressed and focused on learning from poor people's experiences called "immersions or reality checks", which refer to better awareness of the realities of the poor and marginalized people because these are practical means for development professionals to provide the right help to poor people. This emphasizes the need for development assistance providers to understand the voices of the community related to social, culture and local knowledge and the environment they have interacted with, and this will be discussed in Chapter 5.

It is very important to look back and collect local indigenous knowledge in a more systematic way as it has great potential to help better manage the resources for sustainable livelihood. There is a need to understand the indigenous/traditional knowledge systems (culture beliefs, knowledge and practices) and then proceed with an understanding of the processing or functional relationships (Berkes, 1998). Indigenous or traditional knowledge refers to how indigenous people use their knowledge in their relationship to the local environment. Indigenous people often have their own approach to conservation and management of resources, and use their resources to support their livelihood (timber, non-timber forest products and food) in their communities. Marchke and Berkes (2006) suggest that using traditional knowledge is another way of conducting natural resource management. However, looking at the past experiences of the development projects involving the poor community, sustainable livelihood analysis and conservation ideas do not pay enough attention to indigenous or traditional knowledge. In Chapter 5, the study discusses the importance of understanding the situated knowledge of the local community for practical means in order to support development interventions and provide other assistance.

The indigenous people in Cambodia have their own religious practices, rules of kinship and social obligations, authority, customary law, conflict resolution and decision making. They use, maintain and control natural resources through a system of self-management to support their own subsistence (ADB, 2002). For instance, besides providing livelihood support, the northern part of Cambodia's forests is still part of the religious beliefs of the indigenous communities, who are largely animist. Many local people believe that spirits inhabit the forest and are responsible for the well-being of the community. If the forest

is lost, their belief system is also lost (Graeme et al., 2006). Traditionally, rural Cambodian communities or households have good social capital forms. Rural communities have a good cooperative relationship among households for economic and social activities, pagoda associations, religious ceremonies and other social networks through local community organizations. Many development programmes from international assistances and development partnerships quite often do not recognize the existing network of local community organizations and try to establish new committees and community groups to support their projects. Chay Navuth (2006) has looked at the importance of grassroots level community in supporting international development assistances. In the present development discourse, Chay Navuth has discussed two types of communities—artificial and naturally-emerged communities. An artificial community refers to the formulating of a new community, a naturally emerging community focuses on adapting to the existing traditional community. Chay Navuth suggests that the existing traditional community roles—community organizations and religious beliefs—are the key points that development organizations should consider when designing development programmes. The ideal elements in society or community that were introduced by Chay Navuth (2006) are very critical points, which all interventions from government, NGOs and relevant stakeholders engaged in promoting natural resource management and livelihood integration programmes need to take into account. Chay Navuth's model (Figure 2) is very significant and it speaks of the case of the indigenous people, and it will be discussed further in Chapter 5.

In addition, this discussion will modify Chay Navuth's Model to suit the local perspectives in the case of the CCPF. The following are the four critical elements in society:

- 1- *The essential conditions* – ecological and demographic conditions within society/community (water, land, rivers, forests, etc)
- 2- *Social organization* – human groups and grassroots level, local cooperative or grassroots level community representing social organization
- 3- *Institutional organization* – commonly explained and referred to as intangible or non-materialistic, including norms, values, cultures and ideas. However, other scholars use the term “social fabric” or “social capital”.
- 4- *Technology* – the technical application that the villagers develop or are imposed upon them to survive. For example, people start their cultivation in May and June because those are the rainy months.

3.4. Experience in Interventions/Development Projects into Local Communities

Before moving on to the next chapter, it is necessary to look back at some experiences and lessons learnt in the past and see how development programmes can improve project implementation when they intervene in the local community. The following are three case studies of lessons learnt about development programmes from different sites in Cambodia that show the pressure on cultural loss and social suffering in some communities. The best practices are explored in this section to identify how development projects can incorporate traditional knowledge and rules of rural communities.

Wildlife Alliance (formerly WildAid) has been working with the FA to manage and conserve another large forested area in the southern Cardamoms, which may also be given official protection status. Wildlife Alliance was sponsoring pilot resettlement activities in the southern part of the Cardamom Mountains area, relocating people (many of them indigenous) out of forest areas. People were given land, financial and technical assistance to set up a new area (Jeremy et al., 2004; Oglethorpe et al., 2007). It is questionable how the indigenous people affected have adapted because they might have suffered a loss of their identity as well as their sense of locality and culture when they moved to the new place that they were unfamiliar with and had to adapt to new situations and changes. This case highlights the relationship between the indigenous people and natural resources—especially forest resources—because their livelihood has been based on these resources for many generations and they wish to carry on with it for future generations. It is very important therefore that institutions recognize this issue, as they can have a great impact on the forest management and livelihood of poor people.

Another example concerns economic concessions¹ and the indigenous peoples in the northeastern part of Cambodia. The economic concessions have been taking over large tracts of land used by the indigenous people since the government approved the operation of investment projects for planting 20,000 hectares of oil palm and the construction of a palm oil mill in O Yadao district of Rattanakiri province (McAndrew, 2004). The concession has affected the livelihoods of 4,500 people, mostly ethnic Jorai, living within the six communes of the concession area. It is clear that the indigenous people are affected by political, economic and social changes, since they are making a living on marginal lands. In this case,

¹ Concessions are agreements for a specified period of time between the government and a private investor for the exclusive right to manage and harvest a section of forest, in exchange for certain investments and the payment of royalties and fees.

the government has not taken much effort to study the environmental impact, especially the effect on indigenous culture in areas where the indigenous people have lived for a long time.

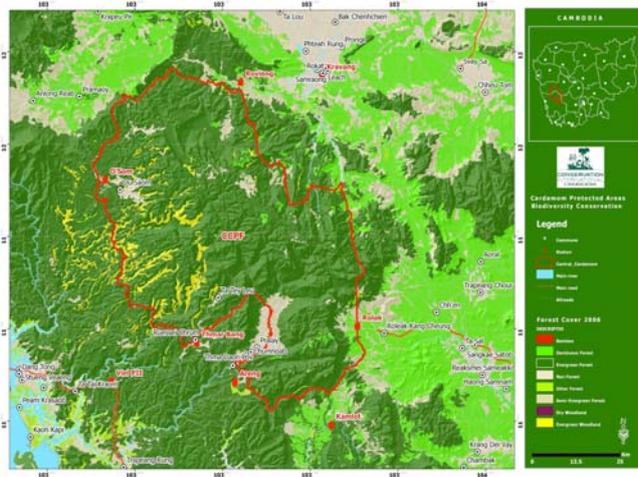
The third case study, even though it is not related to indigenous groups, has shown that conservation programmes can make use of and modify the traditional knowledge of the communities. The Association of Buddhists for the Environment (ABE)² is an organization run by Buddhist monks, with the aim of strengthening and empowering Buddhist monks in Cambodia to protect natural resources and create a cleaner and healthier environment. The programme has been implemented through the special role of Buddhist monks in guiding local communities in understanding and protecting natural resources, as well as improving the environment. This has been done by using pagoda-based environmental activities as an example for the local communities, where they can apply pressure on those abusing the environment to change their behaviour. Their recent main projects have been based in the Koh Kong province (some activities are also based in the Cardamoms) and Kampong Chhnang province. These projects have been very successful in working with local communities, as they work with Buddhist monks through the pagoda and the Buddhist system of education to communicate ideas. These projects demonstrate that ABE has maintained the religious role and beliefs through adaptations and modifications of conservation ideas because most rural Cambodian people are Buddhists.

After discussing the experiences in interventions and development projects in local communities, the next chapter will provide the background on challenges in natural resource management and rural poverty in Cambodia, and to discuss the main challenges and opportunities of the indigenous people in the CCPF.

² The Association of Buddhists for the Environment (ABE) is an organization that involves monks from all 23 provinces in Cambodia working to strengthen the Sangha in its efforts to protect the environment. For more detail, visit www.sanghanetwork.org/.

IV. The Historical Background of the CCPF

4.1. Location of the CCPF



Source: CI Cambodia

The Central Cardamom Protected Forest makes up 401,313 hectares of forest located in the southwestern part of Cambodia. It is one of the conservation areas of the Cardamom mountain range under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Agriculture Forestry and Fishery, Forestry Administration. It lies between two wildlife sanctuaries: Phnom Samkos to the west (339,000 hectares) and Phnom Aural to the east (245,000 hectares)³. The

survey conducted by Flora and Fauna International (FFI, 2000) states that the Central Cardamoms hold immense national and global biodiversity value, provides critical watershed functions for the country, and has potentially important cultural significance. It also demonstrates that the majority of the area is unsuitable for legal logging under Cambodia's Forest Harvest Code of Practice.

Thmor Bang district, the site chosen for the research project, is located in the CCPF of Koh Kong province within the CCPF. There are five communes in Thma Bang district (Russey Chrum, Ta Tai Leu, Prolay, Thma Daun Pov and Chamneab). The total number of families and population of communities in Thmor Bang district are 650 families and 2,598 people.⁴ However, there are no statistics to show the number of indigenous people of the Cardamoms.

4.2. Indigenous Peoples in the Cardamom Mountains

In Cambodia, the indigenous ethnic groups constitute approximately one per cent of the overall population and the majority have their homes in the highlands and mountainous areas. Cambodia's indigenous populations are mainly found in the scarcely populated extremities of the country in the border areas with Vietnam, Laos and Thailand. Indigenous people are

³ The results from technical studies and scientific research on the management of the Central Cardamoms as Protected forest for conservation of watershed and biodiversity, and it is under the Cardamom Conservation Programme of Conservation International and Department of Forestry and Wildlife, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries.

⁴ Data resource from Conservation International (CI).

among the poorest people on earth. Indigenous people are identified by the Asia Development Bank (ADB) as those with specific social or cultural identities distinct from the dominant or mainstream society, which makes them vulnerable to being disadvantaged in the process of development (ADB, 2002).

The indigenous people in the Cardamom Mountains largely belong to the Mon Khmer Pear (Por, Samre' Samray, Chong's group, which are closely related to Chong and Chong-Samre' in Trat Province, Thailand, and Chongla and Chong Heap, in Chanthaburi Province, Thailand). Many groups that live in the Cardamom Mountains of Cambodia have lost their language through long periods of interaction with the more dominant Khmer culture. Other groups, such as the Sa'och in Kampong Som Province, have suffered heavily due to slave trade and through long periods of fighting between the Khmer and Thai empires. In general, these groups still identify themselves as culturally distinct, preferring the term "Khmer Dauem" (old culture of Khmer) to differentiate themselves from the newcomers from the lowlands. During the civil war, the Khmer Rouge controlled the Cardamom Mountains and thousands of Khmer Dauem living in the Cardamom Mountains were driven from their homes, becoming slaves on Khmer Rouge collective farms (Jeremy et al., 2004). Their livelihood follows the traditions of hunting and farming that once sustained both their communities and the forest around them. However, the world of the Khmer Dauem is changing, as it has been for Cambodians throughout the country, after the civil war.⁵ When the indigenous people returned to their homeland in the late 1990s, many had to work on logging or hunting wildlife for the illicit wildlife trade. They had few other choices to survive, since their original way of life had been destroyed. The indigenous communities in the Cardamoms conduct rotational shifting cultivation, which most conservation organizations and government believe is unsustainable slash-and-burn agriculture, and are destroying vast tracts of forest. However, the indigenous people still believe that their traditional practice of shifting cultivation has been sustainable for many generations and they respond that the present danger of environmental destruction is due to movement of people from outside their community and to economic development.

4.3. A History of Conservation in the CCPF

During the 1990s, the government began privatizing its national forest by selling it in the form of forest concessions. Therefore, the forests of the Cardamom Mountains have become vulnerable to both human encroachment and commercial logging. However, timber

⁵ Environmental Change and Security Programme: *Conservation and Care in Cardamom Mountains*, 2008.

concession companies were stopped in 2002 and withdrawn from the Cardamom Mountains. The results of these problems and biological surveys of the areas carried out in 2000 and 2001 by Fauna and Flora International (FFI) and FA have provided the justification to establish the first ranger forces in these mountains and begun developing management plans for the protected forests.

In January 2001, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Conservation International to provide financial and technical support to the Department of Forestry and Wildlife (DFW) to protect the CCPPF. The Royal Cambodian Government (RCG) decided to declare and protect a swath of the Cardamoms that has come to be known as the Central Cardamom Protected Forest, which measures 401,313 hectares under the jurisdiction of MAFF, by 31 March 2002.⁶ The government troops focused mainly on law enforcement, patrolling the forest and park to keep loggers and poachers away.

4.4. Challenges in Natural Resource Management in Cambodia

As a result of illegal activities and great losses in forests, policymakers and development practitioners have a deeper understanding of natural resource management issues in the country. Environmental and resource degradations have been widely recognized as a crucial constraint towards reducing poverty among the most marginalized and indigenous people, who remain largely in rural areas. The government has introduced striking legislation to govern and protect the natural environment. It has struggled to enforce environmental regulations in the face of corruption and illegal activities. It has shown interest in reducing deforestation and setting up protected areas. In 1993, Cambodia's Protected Areas (PA) system was declared by royal decree, and the Ministry of Environment was also created at that time.

However, during that time, there was no consultation with the local people in determining where these Protected Areas would be (Jeremy et al., 2004). In 2008, the government passed the Protected Area (PA) Law. The objectives of this law are to ensure the management, conservation of biodiversity and sustainable use of natural resources in protected areas. The management of PAs is under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Environment through its own secretariat, the Nature Protected and Conservation Administration or NPCA (MoE, Protected Area Law, 2008). In addition, the FA has declared

⁶ Report on the Declaration the Central Cardamoms as Protected Forest, produced by Conservation International and the Department of Forestry and Wildlife, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries, and Conservation International in 2002.

its own system of three large Protected Forests (PFs) and a conservation area, assisted by donor funding in 2002. Therefore, the total area of PAs and PFs combined in Cambodia is presently 25 per cent of the country. This National Forest Law allows for the delineation of the country's forests into production, protection and conservation categories. This system very much impacts upon the people's livelihood and the indigenous people because they live in several areas that are protected under the MoE and FA. Most traditional lands and forests were declared protection areas. At the same time access to these forests and other natural resources are limited in their communities, so that it is very difficult for local people to adapt to this new system (Jeremy et al., 2004). It is very crucial because the indigenous people live inside the protected areas. If protected area policies benefit local livelihood, they are more likely to recognize the legitimacy of the protected areas. Communities need to adjust to different regulations, enforcement and other government instructions (Jeremy et al., 2004).

However, local areas are also beset by illegal activities such as land encroachment, forest destruction and other natural resource losses caused by powerful persons and elites in the country (USAID, 2004). Local people complain that the benefits often do not reach the local level and that local officials from the FA force people to follow regulations that simply do not make sense to them.

4.5. Rural Poverty and Livelihoods in Cambodia

Cambodia is an Asian country rich in natural resources, especially with regard to forest resources. These resources play a major role in providing important functions such as ecosystem preservation, biodiversity conservation and the protection of social and water resources, but they also play a vital role in contributing to the socio-economic development of the country (The Atlas of Cambodia, 2006). Particularly, forest resources are significant in improving the livelihoods of rural people. Non-timber forest products (NTFPs) play a very important role in supporting the livelihood of the local communities. Despite the globalization of the world's economy, NTFPs remain an important source of income for hundreds of millions of rural people (CFI, 2006). Most people in Cambodia are dependent on the forest in many different ways, from meeting domestic requirements for fuel, food, bush-meat, medicine and construction materials, to earning an income from enterprises associated with the forest, such as resin-tapping, charcoal manufacture and even illegal logging. The indigenous people are the most directly forest-dependent, and their livelihood and cultures are intimately linked with the forest and whose way of life is threatened by the spread of settled agriculture (Monan, 2004).

Rural livelihood improvement plays a very important role in rural Cambodian poverty reduction. A changing number or composition of household members and resources in their community will lead to changes and impacts to the livelihoods of households and to whole communities. Although agricultural activities cover much of the calendar year, rural livelihood has also been highly dependent on common property resources such as fisheries and forests, to which access is open to all (Mckenney and Tola, 2002). However, Cambodian rural livelihood faces increasing challenges due to a rapid decline in these resources.

Cambodia still remains one of the poorest countries in the world. Approximately 80 per cent of Cambodia's population live in rural areas and 71 per cent depend primarily on agriculture (largely rice) and livestock for their livelihood (World Bank, 2006). Cambodian poverty figures indicate that there has been a decline from 47 per cent of the population in 1993 to 35 per cent in 2004. However, most people who live in rural areas remain poor and their livelihood depends on income from agriculture and natural resources (World Bank, 2006). An appraisal of natural resource management and livelihood programmes in Cambodia conducted by DANIDA and DFID (2005) shows that natural resource and land management issues are at the core of the poverty-environmental nexus in Cambodia. Landlessness, insufficient land, insecure titles over land, women's access to land and unclear rights leading to land conflict all contribute to insecure livelihood. The World Bank Poverty Assessment (2006) has highlighted the increasing inequality between the rich and the poor, urban and rural dwellers and has noted that the issue of poverty in Cambodia today is essentially one of rural livelihood. Ethnic minority groups are over-represented among the poor, often because they live in remote rural areas and tend to have poorer access to services and decision-making.

V. Results and Discussion

This chapter deals with the questions of what the challenges are and the impact of these different interventions and policies on the indigenous people's livelihood (government natural resource management policies, NGOs and external actors), and what the indigenous people's responses have been. In order to explore that, this chapter focuses on the coping strategies and captures the livelihood aspirations of the two communities, discusses the practical and operational consequences and constraints of sustainable livelihood strategies, and analyses opportunities to enhance the rights of the indigenous peoples to access natural resources in more sustainable ways. Finally, the discussion will turn to the different agenda of interventions, and how these interventions fit with local perspectives or community agendas in order to produce better and positive outcomes for natural resource management and improve the livelihood of people, as well as promoting community cohesion. The results can help development practitioners and NGOs to develop better strategies to combine livelihood programmes and natural resource management components into rural communities, especially with the indigenous people.

5.1. The Role of Conservation NGOs in the CCPF

There have been several NGOs working in the CCPF, such as Conservation International (CI), Save Cambodian's Wildlife (SCW), Care International, The Association of Buddhist for the Environment (ABE) and the Cambodian Center for Study and Development in Agriculture (CEDAC). However, the study is interested in looking at the role of CI in the CCPF because CI is the first NGO to be approved by the Royal Cambodian Government to enter the CCPF.

In 2001, CI implemented a programme of forest conservation in the CCPF. CI had been working with FA to prevent the illegal activities of illegal logging, land clearing and wildlife hunting. To this end, CI and FA created operation stations/ranger stations in the CCPF so that the rangers can detect people that are involved in illegal forestry activities. The rangers also sought to prevent settlers encroaching onto protected forestland. In the beginning, forest conservation only dealt with the enforcement of forest law and it took a hard stand against people doing any resource extraction in the CCPF. As a result, CI and FA had quite poor relations with the people because of the restrictions on access to the natural resources, which made people frustrated and dislike the interventions of CI and FA. However, in the past years, this approach has changed and they have worked with the local communities, recognizing that the forest could not be protected and conserved without the involvement of local communities. Indigenous peoples have been living there for generations, and they know

more about the forest than anyone from the outside. Conservation processes brought by CI and FA had to make sense as far as the indigenous people are concerned, both spiritually and economically.

Due to past poor relations with local communities, CI and FA have been working to build relationships and engage communities as partners in conservation, and the Commune Natural Resource Management Committees (CNRMCs) have been established within five communes in Thmor Bang district. Community agreements have been signed between CI and the communities in which incentives are provided as financial support (\$4,000–\$4,500 per year) in return for agreements from the villagers not to hunt wildlife and cut down trees, and for help in the protection of natural resources by the communities. Communities can use the money to buy buffaloes, tractors and others for cultivation purposes. Community rangers have been formed to protect the Cardamom forests and report illegal activities to CI, which provides a source of income to the villagers. This also aims to build governance and capacity in the community to allow them to manage their own natural resources. A community ranger team has four members—one from CNRMC, one villager and two policemen. The team patrols for five days and four nights, three times in a month. The rotation method is selected by the patrolling member, especially by the villagers and CNRMC member.

Participatory Land Use Planning (PLUP) has been officially adopted by the government as the means by which land will be allocated for different uses. Early in 2004, CI, in conjunction with the FA, developed land use plans with the indigenous communities in the CCPF with the aim of delineating community use areas and securing their rights, both to gain their livelihood and live inside the Protected Forest. CI helped to set up a committee for the management of land and natural resources in the planning area. This became the Commune CNRMCs, elected by the villagers of each commune of Thmor Bang district in order to utilize the concept of PLUP. CI has led a participatory land-use planning process that has clarified land-user rights and created local institutions. The process has resulted in the production of the maps of five communes, designating community land, forest estate and other land-use categories.

5.2. Coping Strategies and Livelihood Aspirations

The indigenous people of Kandal and Prey Svay returned to their villages during the 1990s after having previously been forced by the Khmer Rouge and civil war to move to Chi Phat, in the southern part of the Cardamoms. They are totally dependent on natural resources—such as forest resources and forested land—for their livelihood. Most commonly, it consists of

gathering wild food, fishing, hunting and shifting cultivation. The natural environment also encompasses spiritual and cultural practices among the indigenous people. However, for the past several years, the livelihood of the indigenous communities has been faced by increasing challenges due to a rapid decline in natural resources, which has led to restricted access to resources. Most household livelihood in both Kandal and Prey Svay villages have by now become a mixture of farming activities, which is commonly explained as “*chamkar*”, that grow such things as upland rice, vegetables and fruits, bananas, sweet potato, coconut, corn, peanuts, soy beans, taro, papaya and pumpkins. In addition, fishing, which is still being practised in streams, lakes and rivers, adds to their subsistence. Fortunately, the indigenous people of Kandal village can cultivate padi while the villagers in Prey Svay cannot because their land is hard to plough by cow or buffalo.

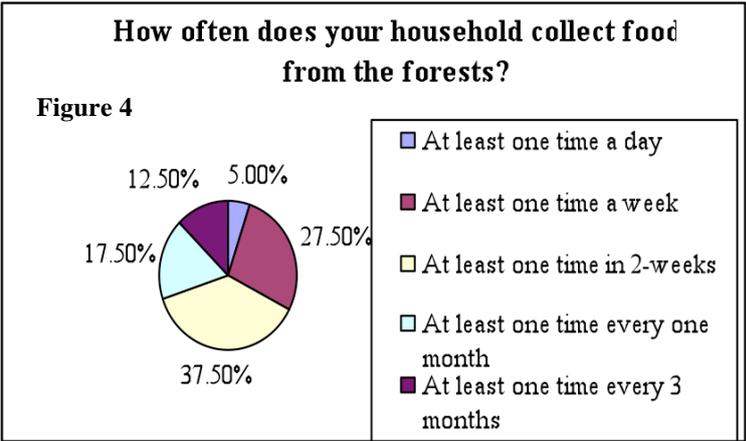
As land plays a very important part in their livelihood strategies, most households in Kandal and Prey Svay want to open up more farmland (71.4 per cent) because they worry about their households and families in the future, especially their children. Their communities have been restricted access to natural resources. They have shown an interest towards shifting

agriculture because most of them would like to keep their traditional practices on shifting cultivation and padi cultivation in the future, and these livelihood strategies play a very important role in supporting their households. Since they have practised traditional cultivation for many generations, they still wish to continue this practice in the future. Most of them complain that they will not have enough land to give to their children due to the restriction policies. Agriculture plays a very important role in the people’s livelihoods. In order to reduce and minimize future challenges, environmental conservation and livelihood integration policy must be well implemented to fit the needs of indigenous communities in the CCPF.

Table 1: Livelihood aspirations and future support		
Livelihood aspirations and future support	Respondents	Percentage
Allowing the opening up of farmland	30	71.4%
Support for agricultural training	23	54.8%
Making people free to access resources as previous times	15	35.7%
Allowing people to manage their own resources	26	61.9%
Allowing shifting cultivation as previous times	21	50.0%
Improving infrastructure (schools, health centres, roads, etc.)	37	88.1%

Source: This table is generated from field research

This change reveals that the livelihood of the people in the CCPF does not only depend on shifting cultivation anymore. The communities have natural assets in abundance that can be used to sustain their livelihood and meet their basic needs, but when these resources are limited it may lead to hunger and stress. This will push them to cope with the diversification of their livelihood activities. The sample households responded (54.8 per cent) that they would like to see the support of NGOs or FA in providing new skills on growing vegetables and fruit trees rather than to restrict them from using the resources. Through providing new livelihood strategies they will not continue to use the forest in illegal ways, as they will have livelihood specialization, and can achieve better livelihood outcomes. Without this support, they wish to freely use or work on shifting cultivation as in previous times (50 per cent) and propose that natural resources be under the control or management of the community (60.9 per cent). Improving infrastructure (88.1 per cent) such as schools, health care and especially roads are the priorities for the villagers to transport their agricultural products to market.



Source: The chart is generated from field research

When people think and care about the outcome of their livelihood and the future of their households, they might work harder and find other alternatives to generate more income sources. Household members need to work more on farming and exploit more natural resources to support their living. Coping strategies may force people to make decisions favouring security and short-term gains, especially the extraction of natural resources (Figure 5). A livelihood that socially and sustainably copes with and recovers from stress and shocks, and provides for future generations (Chambers and Conway, 1992) so that a change in legislation banning cutting down trees of a particular type and clearing land for shifting cultivation within their communities may push people to change and adapt their livelihood

activities. These factors are the constraints within households that prevent people from achieving their livelihood aspirations. However, forest resources still play important roles as coping livelihood strategies of the indigenous people in the Kandal and Prey Svay villages (Box 1).

Box 1: Response of a villager in coping with livelihood strategies

Deu Hab, aged 41, chooses the coping strategies of logging of resin trees when her family could not produce enough rice from *chamkar* and their rice padi. Her household generates a small income from selling resins to the market and her husband can collect resins two to three times (worth about US\$20 to US\$30 each time) a year. To deal with the shocks, her household also uses the forest primarily for subsistence purposes such as collecting wild vegetables, mushrooms, leaves, fruits and bamboo when there is no more rice to eat. Thus, the household goes to the forest for food consumption.

Table 2: Comparing the past and the current livelihood activities/strategies

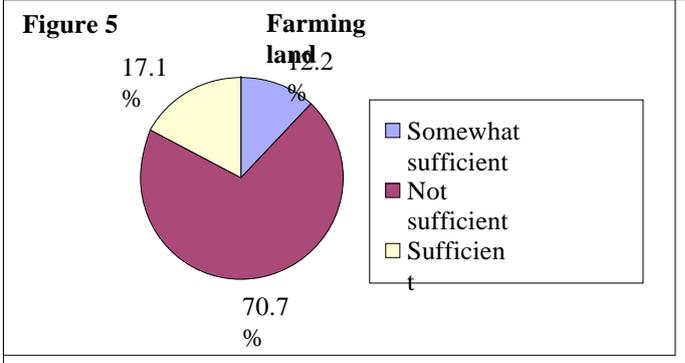
Past livelihood activities/strategies	Percentage	Current livelihood activities/strategies	Percentage
Shifting cultivation	100%	Shifting cultivation (vegetables, fruits, rice)	100%
Collective NTFPs	100%	Collective NTFPs	92.5%
Padi rice field	32.5%	Padi rice field	52.5%
Wildlife hunting	50.2%	Wildlife hunting	15%
Fishing	73.8%	Fishing	82.5%
Livestock raising	57.1%	Livestock raising	100%
Workers/labourers on farms	0%	Workers/labourers on farms	15%

Source: The table is generated from field research

Shifting cultivation is still the main livelihood source for the people in Kandal and Prey Svay villages. However, it has presently transformed into cash crop plantations and fruit gardening because they sell some agricultural products to markets through a middleman. Although environmental conservation intervention has been introduced in the communities, collecting food from forest resources has been practised by the large majority of the sample households. Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFPs) are still part of their livelihoods, and these

can play a very important role in supporting their everyday needs. Notably, all households have raised livestock as a response to the stress and shock.

5.3. Forestland and Livelihood Security



Source: Chart is generated from field research

Most households expressed difficulty in improving their livelihood conditions when law enforcement efforts began in their communities. This restricted and limited access to the natural resources. Presently, the shifting cultivation areas are small due to the limitation to clearing new land in their communities. Since land is an important asset for agricultural production, it is the largest issue for the people; 70.7 per cent of household respondents indicated that they did not have sufficient land for agricultural activities. However, they tended to give answers for the future of their livelihood aspirations, and households also responded that they wished to increase traditional shifting cultivation, because they believed that it could increase yields within new land and more fertilizers, so they could offer some land to their children.

Nevertheless, FA only permits them to cultivate within their old land, and rangers have the right to arrest the villagers when there is any illegal activity. Many villagers have not been able to obtain legal titles to the land they had used for generations. They expressed their concerns about this uncertainty over resources, rights and land use. Most households responded that there was no need to ask for permission to clear the forest for new shifting cultivation. Food security is a strong interest for indigenous communities and they are not sure if they are allowed to use more land. To respond to this issue, the Participatory Land Use Planning (PLUP) project has been conducted by CI and FA in order to provide and create clear administrative boundaries and to understand the various land-use categories within the villages and commune boundaries. The process is still ongoing. Out of this process, CI and FA have produced a map that demarcates the protected forest areas, reserved forest areas and

farming areas as well as identifies the spirit forest areas of the local communities. This is also done so that any expanded cultivation areas can be easily identified.

5.4. The Responses of the Indigenous Peoples to Newcomers

Newcomers that arrive from lowland areas are usually motivated to improve their livelihood by settling on agricultural land and making use of fertile soil in this area. As some parts of the Cardamoms used to be forest concession zones, people from the lowland areas used to work as workers and have resided in this area since the 1990s. Even though all logging concession activities have been stopped, these people have remained in the Cardamoms. These people not only extract natural resources but they also affect the customs and traditions of the indigenous people. In recent years, Road 48 has been built across the Cardamoms, which connects the economic activities and people from Phnom Penh with Thailand. It has also attracted people from the lowland areas to the Cardamoms.

However, the indigenous people of the Cardamoms are not so happy with these newcomers because they tend to extract the natural resources and take land more easily than themselves. The indigenous people have always had a strong relationship with their environment and resources, but their skill levels in dealing with external markets are generally low so influences from external markets easily change their way of life. For example, in early 2000, the dragon fish was traditionally not eaten by the indigenous peoples but when newcomers entered the Cardamoms they were smart and they knew that the dragon fish was valuable. So they started to catch and overexploit these resources for markets. Taught by these newcomers, some indigenous peoples also became involved and followed the example of the newcomers. Subsequently, the dragon fish population suffered a significant decline but is now, with the help of CI and FA, under the protection of local communities.

5.5. The Responses of Indigenous Peoples to Conservation in the CCPF

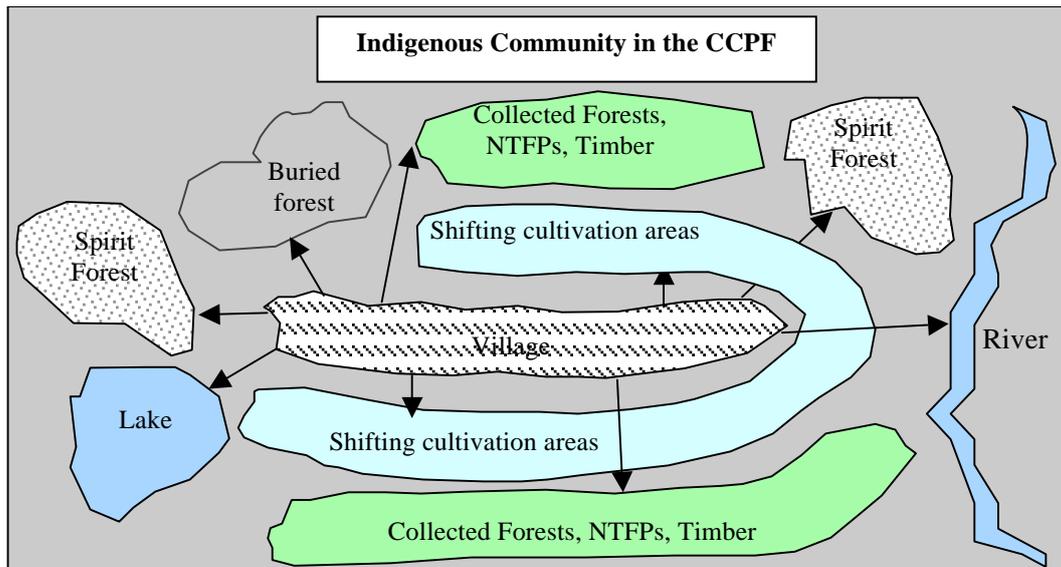
The indigenous people have been using natural resources for many generations, and they know more about the forest than people from outside their communities. Their knowledge about conservation has existed within their community for a very long time. Despite long interaction with the dominant Khmer culture from the lowland areas and significant changes through the civil war, the livelihood of the indigenous people in the Cardamom Mountains still largely depends so much on natural resources and they still maintain some unique culture and belief systems. For example, they believe in spirit forests, as the spirits provide them with a peaceful community if they use their resources in proper ways. With respect to conservation, they have their own way of understanding, relationships and managing

resources. NGOs and FA have gradually recognized and accepted the traditional belief system of the indigenous people and how traditional knowledge can be applied to contemporary natural resource management problems in the Cardamom Mountains. Believing in the spirit forests not only provides biodiversity habitation and makes a good environmental conservation structure but it also shows the spiritual centres where ancestral rituals are performed and provide cultural continuity from generation to generation. People do not touch the spirit forests because they do not dare to cut down these trees as they are taught that those belong to the spirits. In another example, the indigenous people in Kandal village of Tatei Leu commune believe in the spiritual lake, and the villagers do not overexploit this lake. Otherwise, they would be harmed by the spirits. The villagers are allowed to fish only once a year together (fishing ceremony) in this lake. Before they fish, the older people pray and make offerings to the spiritual lake to seek permission. The people respect the lake because they believe in the power of the spirits. If they do not, a serious accident or death— caused by the spirits—may happen. Therefore, it is very important that all development projects and interventions must pay attention to and understand this traditional knowledge, which will determine the success of the projects. Understanding people’s views (Box 2 and Box 3) is critical for both conservation and development projects, and local people are keen to give their responses because these often directly impact their livelihood.

Box 2: Response of a villager to the conservation programme

Kang Joy is one of the indigenous people in Prey Svay village who recognized that the community had been affected by such interventions and policies in the late 1990s (economic concession) and the early 2000s (Protected Forests). He is 54 years old and there are seven members in his household. Even though the past has been lost in terms of language and their traditional way of life, he and his family still identify themselves as indigenous people (Khmer Dauem/Chong) in order to differentiate themselves from newcomers. He wishes that the belief system of the indigenous peoples will survive. In the past, the indigenous people believed in the spirit forests, had a good place to bury their dead, and had zones to get Non-Timber Forest Products as well as enough land for shifting cultivation. Since the conservational policies have been introduced into the community and the past poor relations between conservation NGOs/FA and the people, he seemed to have lost trust in the outsiders, because he found that the traditional way of life has been lost, as people cannot use the resources as before.

Figure 6: Indigenous Peoples and their Relations within the Environment



Source: This diagram is based directly on the field work conducted for this research

Although there have been some bad relations between conservation NGOs/FA and the local people for several years, there are some people who support and have a positive impression of the conservation projects within their communities because they can prevent or stop outsiders or newcomers from entering and exploiting their natural resources. In addition, land, forests and wildlife are important natural resources for future generations.

Box 3: Response of a villager to the conservation programme

Doung Has, 38 years old, village chief of Kandal, showed his support for conservation policies although in the past years these policies were very severe in terms of resource extraction in the Cardamom Mountains. As one of the original people from the Cardamoms, he did not recognise that these resources, especially land, which is more speculated on today, are valuable. He believed that some rich and powerful people were behind the cutting down of trees and wildlife trading. Within the village, there are about 10 to 15 new families from the lowlands and these new people are smarter than the indigenous people of the Cardamoms. They can make more money than the original Cardamom people as they have more land. He wished to keep all natural resources for future generations, as it was in the time of his ancestors. In the past, there was a lot of wildlife but now the new generations cannot see much wildlife. People from outside see the benefit of the forests and wildlife so they do not indulge in illegal hunting. For them, they used to hunt wildlife but only for food consumption, not for selling. Therefore, he supports the conservation projects that have taken place within the community.

5.6. Impacts of Interventions in the CCPF

The loss of the forest resources is causing shock to households. The increase of newcomers and law enforcement (restriction and limitation to natural resources) in the forestry sector are also exerting pressure at the community level. The result is the loss of trust and the breaking down of social organization and institutional organization as well as the traditional belief system. This is genuinely affecting the livelihood of the people. Looking at the past interventions from conservation programmes, CI and FA have had poor relations with the people because they mainly conducted forest law enforcement and had strict policies against people doing any resource extraction in the Cardamoms. They have stopped hundreds of people from the CCPF from conducting illegal logging, so these people did not like CI and FA for a long time. Responding to such interventions, the indigenous people think that they have to learn to live with changes and uncertainties created by various government policies as well as the agenda of donor agencies and NGOs. Berkes (1998) states that conservation programmes often need to encompass a broader view of the role of local people of the area, their knowledge and interest, and their social and economic needs. In the past several years, CI and FA have taken a more holistic approach to conservation and have hired community specialists to work with the indigenous communities in order to improve relations with the people and raise understanding about the projects, as well as to encourage them to understand the environmental value in their communities and to live in harmony with nature. There is a growing recognition that the livelihood programmes and support from NGOs will reduce the pressure on natural extraction from the local people, when they may have other alternatives for their livelihood improvement. Both Kandal and Prey Svay villages are taking advantage of the newly created policies that are supported by NGOs, and they have now been working with villagers to provide vegetable seeds, pig husbandry, rice banks and women's saving schemes, and other incentive programmes in order to encourage them to be involved in conservation programmes.

Interestingly, the lives of the indigenous people in the CCPF are now also filled with uncertainty and challenges caused by external actors (rich and powerful people, as well as internal migrants from the lowlands of Cambodia). These factors are not only affecting their livelihood conditions but are also destroying their culture and belief systems. A strong commitment from the government is required to deal with the emergent issues because they can lead to environmental destruction and the indigenous people will be the losers or victims. Therefore, better basic services and social safety nets and other help in finding solutions to these changes should be provided to the indigenous people of the Cardamoms, and the

government must play a vital role in making it move forward. These days, more NGOs are interested in working in the CCPF in order to introduce and provide better solutions for the indigenous people. It should also be questioned whether the people are happy with the role of NGOs in their communities, especially when such interventions come with different agenda or approaches for the communities in question. How will their activities affect their traditional belief systems, culture, practices and the traditional knowledge of the community? In order to explore the issues, it is worth having some discussions on the agenda of the different interventions within the indigenous communities of the CCPF. Before starting to explore the main issues on the different agendas in the CCPF, it is important to understand the Cambodian rural livelihood system, especially in the context of indigenous livelihood strategies. It is highly significant and relevant to the case of indigenous communities in the CCPF today.

5.7. Rural Household Livelihood System

This study adapts the framework of the Cambodian Rural Livelihood System or Analysis (Figure 7), which will be discussed and explored in this section. This framework is significant in the case of indigenous communities in the CCPF. The DFID (1999) makes the point that the roles of the state, private sector, civil society and community need to be interlinked to attain sustainable livelihood. Even though the DFID framework reflects all factors in the society such as the government, civil society, private sector and local community, it seems that it is too intellectual and complex. Before coming to the DFID framework analysis, more attention could be paid to understand the ground- or grassroots-level realities so that all interventions or development programmes can make better sense as far as the local communities are concerned.

The rural livelihood framework of analysis was introduced by the National Committee for the Management of Decentralization and De-concentration Reform (NCDD) in 2003 to the indigenous communities in the northern part of Cambodia—the Rattanakiri and Monduliri provinces. This framework of analysis is relevant to the indigenous people's livelihood in the Cardamoms and it really suits the case of indigenous communities in the CCPF. The rural livelihood system consists of four critical elements, namely, natural resources, economic, social and institutional aspects, which are complex and inter-related. These four critical elements or aspects can support rural livelihood aspirations of the rural household or family and individual. Depending on their household size, different households and families have different livelihood aspirations, but are strongly connected and influenced by natural

resources, economics, social and institutional aspects (Figure 7). Therefore, when any element or aspect is affected, it will also affect the other elements, which can lead to stress and shock, and impact on the people's livelihood. It is imperative that all interventions in the CCPF look into these four aspects of the community so that they can produce better results in supporting the people's livelihood within the rural community. Referring to this framework analysis, it can be explained as follows:

1. **Natural Resource Aspect** – Refers to essential conditions the community or society has, such as forest, land, water and biodiversity, because these resources play a very important role in achieving the sustainability of rural livelihoods. It can be achieved when the natural resources within their community are well managed and conserved or enhanced for future generations. The indigenous people in the CCPF are facing challenges in managing and conserving their natural resources under the existing government policy and other interventions. It is very important that the policy and interventions examine carefully the natural resource needs and aspirations of the communities. When a forest law has been enforced within an indigenous community, it has restricted and limited community access to natural resources. Policies and interventions have not drawn much attention to the importance of natural resources in influencing the rural livelihood of the Cardamoms' inhabitants. Thus it can be blamed for not being able to sustain the people's livelihood. Influences from external actors (newcomers and economic development) easily affect the indigenous people, because they are the main actors who exploit the natural resources more than the people in local communities. The conservation and development perspectives need to be well balanced and this will also be discussed in the next section of this chapter.
2. **Economic Aspect** – In order to survive and fulfil local livelihood aspirations, most rural people in Cambodia depend on the natural resources around their community, i.e. land, water, forest products, NTFPs, farming products, fishing and other aquatic resources. There is a particularly close relationship between natural resources and economic health for rural households. The livelihood of the indigenous people in the CCPF is strongly connected to their natural resources. However, interventions have not heeded an understanding of the relations between natural resources and economic aspects by the policymakers within the indigenous communities in the CCPF, where resources are limited and restricted. Thus the indigenous people are worried about

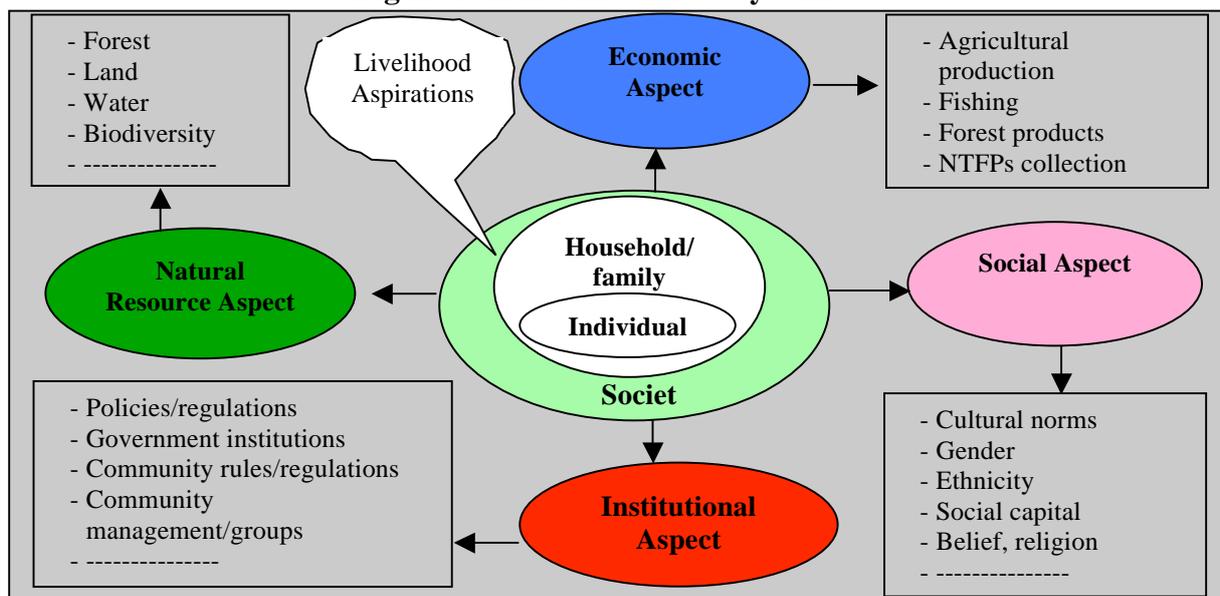
their future livelihood condition. As discussed in the results, the people are concerned with accessing their resources, especially land. More effort needs to be taken in order to provide proper access to natural resources so that the people can ensure their families' economic stability and well-being.

3. **Social Aspect** – This can be viewed as culture, norms, gender, social capital/social organization, belief systems and regions in the community. These are largely related to common resources, which people share with each other for their survival. For example, they exchange labour and time in farming activities. Traditional belief systems can include spirit forests and spirit lakes. Livelihood analysis must pay more attention to these aspects. In the past, the interventions did not look much at this social aspect within the indigenous communities of the CCPF, and the interventions have affected the traditional way of life. Providing better interventions in the communities can improve both people's livelihood and conservation. Government and NGOs require comprehension on the social aspects of the community so that they can bring better livelihood support as well as better conservation programmes to the villagers (see model in Figure 9). When they place restrictions and limitations on natural resources, the social aspect can break down because people need to survive and they may not respect their customs anymore. Therefore, institutions need to provide and secure the people's rights and help the indigenous communities build up their social organization/social capital and other belief systems.

4. **Institutional Aspect** – In order to improve the economic well-being of the family or household, protect natural resources for sustainable uses, and respect the social framework within the community, policies must include the people's livelihood aspirations. Whenever society or the community has any conflict or any problem concerning their livelihood, the institution needs to play a vital role to solve the problems within the community. In 2001, the Cambodian government declared the Protected Forest system in the CCPF because they wished to stop illegal activities and use natural resources in a proper and sustainable way. However, the people have neither understood nor been informed about why their areas have become Protected Forests, which in turn has affected the natural resource-based livelihood of the local people. Their livelihood has been challenged by policies and institutional roles so that they are required to adapt to new challenges. Therefore, institutional role models must

conduct their work with the transparency and accountability that is required, and integrally engage with the local community. It is imperative that they understand the natural resources, economics and social aspects within the community. The institutional aspect refers not only to the top level of central and local governments but it can also be local institutional roles or existing roles such as community rules/regulations, associations or religious community, which are influential to the livelihood strategies of rural people.

Figure 7: Rural Livelihood System



Source: This framework was derived after consultations with the National Committee for the Management of Decentralization and De-concentration Reform (NCDD), Cambodia

5.8. Different Agendas of Different Interventions into the Communities

• Indigenous Peoples Perspectives Towards Development

With regard to the agenda of the indigenous people, they hold their own diverse concepts of development, based on their traditional values, vision, needs and priorities. Their visions and objectives are to strive for recognition of their identities, their ways of life and their rights to traditional land, territories and natural resources (UN, 2007). The indigenous peoples in the CCPF, like so many indigenous communities in the country and the world, want to keep using their traditional practices to maintain and control natural resources through the system of self-management to support their livelihoods. At present, the indigenous peoples in the CCPF are facing problems in coping with their livelihood strategies. Thmor Doun Pov and Tatei Leu are among the small communities scattered in the CCPF where the

past has been lost and the future uncertain for them in terms of language, culture, practices and traditional belief systems. Communicating with the local communities of the Cardamoms is a sensitive matter, as they are very wary of outsiders coming in due to past miscommunication with the government and foreign NGOs. It is difficult for the indigenous people in the Cardamoms to understand why outsiders are seemingly encroaching into their land and instructing them how to live, restricting their access to the forest from which they have always lived. This incites animosity among them.

- **Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs)**

Many development programmes focus on improving rural livelihood conditions and fighting poverty reduction, and they like to bring ideas for sustainable development into the community. Different types of development assistance or actors involved are the result of the preferences of and negotiations between the donor and the recipient government (Chay Navuth, 2006). However, when implementing their projects in the communities, different NGOs have different agenda, which are also based on the agenda of the donors who provide the funding. In the case of the CCPF, CI has been working with the FA since 2002 to improve law enforcement and build ranger capacity for patrolling the forests. Later, they started to be involved in the community. Since then, other NGOs such as Save Cambodia's Wildlife, Care International Cambodia, Association of Buddhists for the Environment and the Cambodian Centre for Study and Development in Agriculture (CEDAC) have followed. Agreements on natural landscape preservation and natural resource management have been introduced with new approaches, which are based on community involvement and participation. These ideas have been adopted by conservation NGOs, which are currently working in the CCPF. It is good to have multi-interventions and approaches in order to improve community conditions but the roles and duties of each NGO need to be well explained to the community. Even though they work within the same community, they often have different ways or approaches in working with people. When different NGOs come into the same community, they create and form different groups or committees, which make people frustrated and confused, as their knowledge is often limited. The interactions and networking between NGOs is seemingly still not strong enough because they follow their own agenda, and this can have negative effects, even though the original ideas and objectives had been to encourage people to live in harmony and practise livelihood strategies favourable to forest conservation.

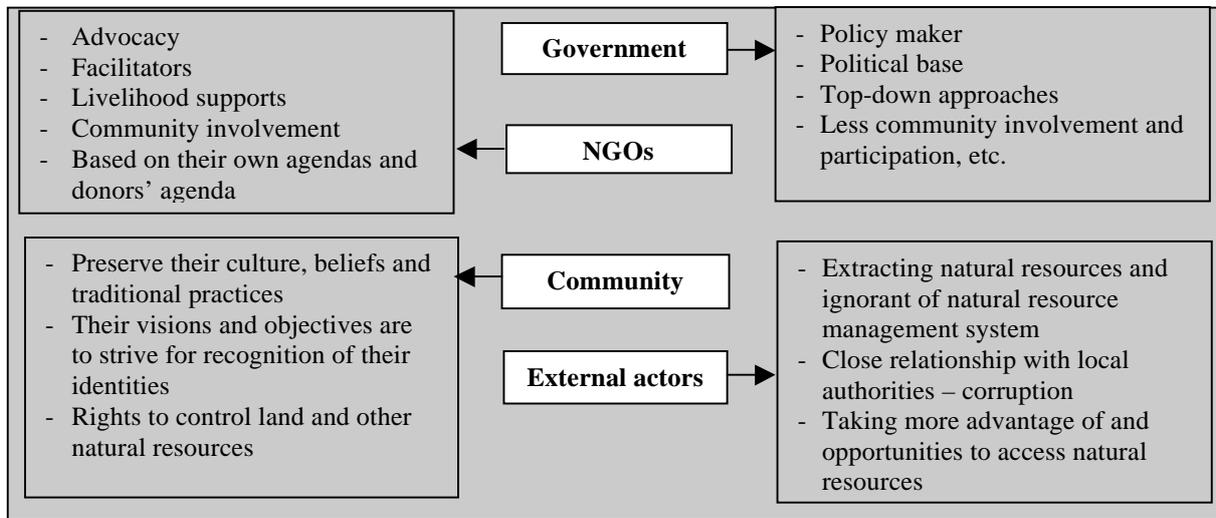
- **External actors – Internal Migrants and Development**

In Cambodia, rural to rural migration occurs as a result of landlessness and the desire of the poor for access to natural resources. As the population grows and available land in the lowland agricultural areas become scarce, people begin to relocate to Cambodia's highland areas, which contain relatively high natural resource wealth (ICEM, 2003). The main factor that influences the people to migrate is the desire to improve their livelihood strategies. In the case of the CCPF, the newcomers have easy access to forest previously, and now has converted it into other land uses. They are viewed as "smarter" by the indigenous peoples of the Cardamoms because they often ignore forest regulations. This reality creates no incentives for forest management and protection among the local people on the ground. Another issue is that now the Cambodian government is interested in turning some parts of the CCPF into dam or hydropower projects. A recent ADB report (2007) shows concern about the five hydropower dams being planned in the CCPF, which are expected to displace hundreds of people and inundate the agricultural land. Such development projects will be implemented when there is approval from the government, and it will strongly affect local livelihood in the CCPF.

- **Government – Natural Resource Management Policies**

The government policy influences all stakeholders, and their decision-making process is often top-down. Most indigenous people in Cambodia have very little participation in or influence over the development process that directly affects their communities (Kristina Chhim, 2005). This current issue arose due to a lack of interventions, which can be explained by referring to the structure of framework adopted by the government on natural resource management policies throughout the country. The policy on natural resource management is already in place but the means, capacity and will to implement it remain weak (USAID, 2004). When Cambodia's Protected Forest system was declared in the Central Cardamoms in 2001, there was no consultation with the people in determining where the Protected Forest should be and why the forest became a protected zone, and that their traditional forestland would be limited. As access to the forest and land are key factors in people's livelihood, a sense of justice needs to be provided.

Figure 8: Different agendas of interventions and the community



Source: This diagram was drawn following the discussion as above

5.9. Engaging and Blending Local Institution with External Interventions

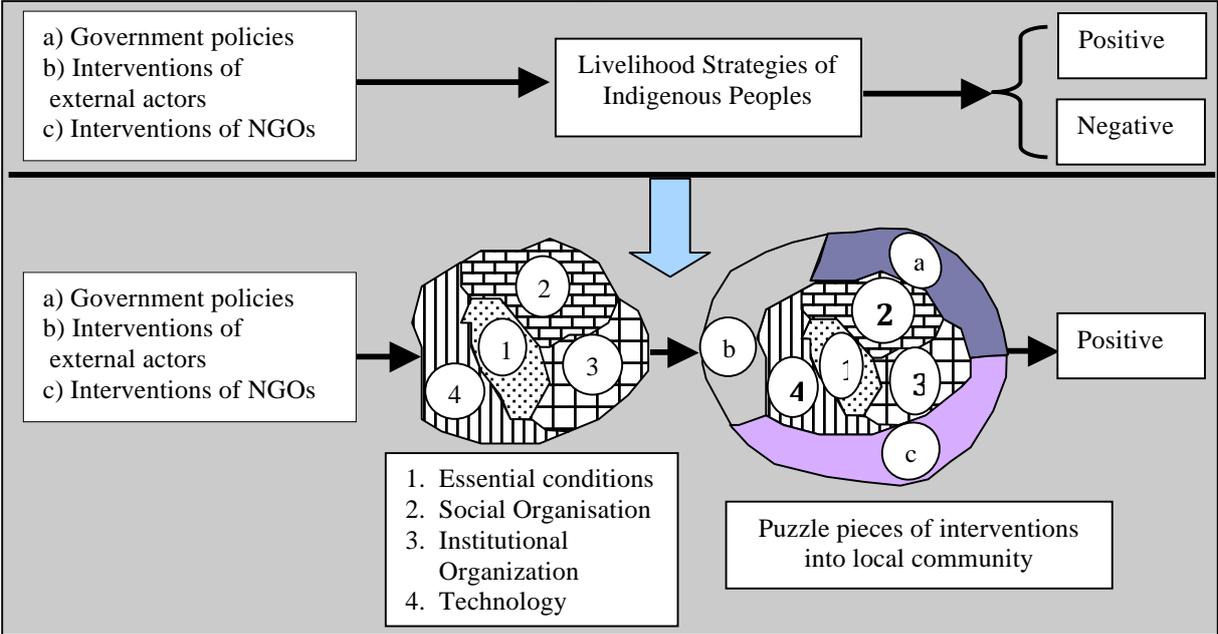
Turning the discussion to the case of the indigenous people in the CCPF, and how different interventions should be made, it will look at the different agenda of interventions into the community, and how the negative impacts of these interventions will be managed and reduced. While some development practitioners argued that they found it hard to work with the local people because most of them were uneducated, it is very interesting to reverse the question by asking how hard it is for the local people to work with educated people or professionals from outside their communities. Renwick, Chambers et al. (2004) talk about “immersions” or “reality checks” as a means of achieving such understandings, which require professionals to have strong relationships with the poor. Development projects often lack interaction or contact with poor people and also opportunities for direct experiential learning about the poor, their lives and their conditions.

Marschke and Berkes (2006) suggest that building social-ecological system memory is another way to foster learning opportunities. These have been done by using traditional knowledge systems and applying them in natural resource management. It needs to make sense to the indigenous people, and work through their traditional knowledge system, and add new knowledge in a wise and responsible way. It requires respecting traditional knowledge, social capital, existing role, religions, land-use rights and other natural resources extraction of the indigenous people so that all different agenda from different interventions can suit local perspectives and agenda. These are the main parameters of failure and success of any

development assistance or interventions into local communities, because the poor know their problems better than professionals and hence need to be heard and heeded.

The four puzzle pieces of ideal elements in society which have been pointed out by Chay Navuth (2006), namely, essential conditions, social organization, institutional organization and technology (Figure 2 and Figure 4) are critical points and reinforce the idea that interventions can produce positive changes for indigenous communities, as in the case of the CCPF. Navuth’s model draws our attention to culture and locality when working effectively to support the community. When FA and CI first introduced forest law enforcement (modern system of forest governance) in the CCPF in 2001, it was very hard for the indigenous peoples to adapt the new system of forest governance into their communities. Therefore, forest law enforcement also requires adapting to the traditional rules as well. FA, NGOs and other relevant stakeholders should find better solutions for both conservation and improvement of the indigenous people’s livelihood, because the local people often have their ways of thinking towards development and conservation based on the four critical elements that they have performed or practised for many generations. Therefore, it requires much attention from the government, NGOs and other development projects to learn directly from the field, so that they can blend their interventions in the four puzzle pieces of community or society. Based on this discussion, a new model is proposed to the government with regard to its natural resource management policies, to NGOs as well as other relevant external actors in the Cardamom Mountains (Figure 9).

Figure 9: Modifying Chay Navuth’s Model to Suit Local Perspective in the Case of the CCPF



Source: This diagram is drawn following the discussion above by modifying Chay Navuth’s model

Looking to this new model, it can be explained that government policies, interventions of external actors and interventions of NGOs have impacts on the livelihood strategies of people in both positive and negative ways. Therefore, to reduce the negative impacts on local communities, the above three factors require much attention by the ideal elements in society or community (namely, essential conditions, social organization, institutional organization and technology) so that the three factors can blend their agenda to fit local perspectives and agenda, and that is called the puzzle pieces of interventions into local communities. At the end, positive impacts will be made on the local communities. In reality, it is very hard to put all interventions in the same agenda. However, this model can provide great opportunities to all interventions and development projects to rethink about their impacts within local communities, particularly in the case of the CCPF at present. Engaging and blending local institutions or what Chay Vuth called “ideal elements in society” into different modern interventions requires strong commitment to ensure that natural resource management policy reflects and respects the local institutions. The outcomes of reflecting and respecting of the local institutions are important to continued attempts to adapt the indigenous people’s views and knowledge, which is a wider movement to manage the CCPF’s natural resources and improving livelihood conditions of the indigenous people in wise and responsible ways. Therefore, great attention is needed to determine appropriate roles from different interventions or agenda for supporting local institutions (ideal elements in society) in managing their resources. This will bring the local communities and external institutions closer.

5.10. The Future Development and Conservation in the CCPF

At present, the Cardamom Mountains are being targeted for investment projects because they have abundant natural resources such as timber, minerals, water, watershed and biodiversity. The Cambodian government is currently making strategic development investment in transportation and building hydropower infrastructure. The Forest Administration of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries and the General Department Administration for Nature Conservation and Protection, Ministry of the Environment, supported by UNDP, AFD, CI and FFI, have hired a consultant to develop and conduct a study on “Building a Strategic Vision for the Cardamom Mountains: Reconciling Development and Conservation”.⁷ This study asserts that development needs to focus on the environmental and social impacts of investments, and that their strategic vision should

contribute to the conservation of the biodiversity and ecosystem services of the Cardamom Mountains. It emphasizes the identification of the negative and positive impacts these projects will have on the livelihood of the local people of the Cardamoms so that the ensuing benefits can be shared and the conflict between conservation and development can be resolved.

The discussion to find the solution on what and how to work on conservation and development must be balanced in order to lead to benefit-sharing and sustainable development. In reality, it is always hard to do this. However, the links between environmental management and development should be well understood and explained to all stakeholders such as the local government, NGOs, investors, newcomers and other relevant beneficiaries, so that everyone can speak the same language when they talk about conservation and development in the Cardamom Mountains of Cambodia. Conservation and development are about the future. They will bring changes in the future but no one can predict it. Thus the changes may be positive and negative. Therefore, the exploitation of natural resources for economic development needs to be conducted in a responsible manner that will lead to positive changes. Even when trends move in the right direction, the poorest are often unable to benefit because they lack the assets and strong institutions working in their favour (DFID, 1999), so that it requires critical institutions that are responsive to the needs of the poor. The model on the Figure 9 strongly suggests incorporating both conservation and development ideas into the Cardamom Mountains in the future.

Land-use planning that incorporates farmland, economic development zones and conservation zones require much attention to the institutional role and a high participation from the local community. NGOs have been working with the government and local communities. However, they may have to improve the consultation and linkages of the development projects because NGOs can act as facilitators and bring up the issues to the government. A number of strategies have been discussed to deal with social development, economic development and conservation, which are expected to eradicate rural poverty. However, these strategies have often failed because the capacity and will to implement them remain weak.

⁷ Workshop on Building a Strategic Vision for the Cardamom Mountains: Reconciling Development and Conservation, 8–9 October 2008, which was attended by INGOs/NGOs and government officials.

VI. Conclusion

It needs to be highlighted and reiterated that the indigenous community may have their own practices and views on conservation, based on their traditional knowledge, culture, belief and practices. Chay Navuth's model points out some of these elements in society when he talks about essential conditions, social organization, institutional organization and technology. The traditional knowledge and modern system of forest governance and management need to be well integrated. New systems of forest governance should adapt to traditional systems, people's belief systems and practices. Otherwise they may affect their livelihood strategies for both the short and long terms. The new model in Figure 9 can offer great opportunities for the government, NGOs and other external actors to rethink their interventions in the CCPF in order to contribute and produce positive reinforcement and achievement that can lead to a sustainable livelihood approach within the context of indigenous communities in the CCPF today. Therefore, it is strongly suggested that the agenda of interventions should look into the agenda of the local communities so that they will blend in and fit the needs of people, and the new model in Figure 9 should be taken into account.

Conservational programmes and livelihood issues are always controversial. The livelihood strategies of the indigenous people in the Cardamoms, like so many other indigenous communities in Cambodia, are based on natural resources. It is also suggested that the framework of rural livelihood analysis of the four critical elements of natural resource, economic, social and institutional aspects (Figure 7) should be adapted because it is very crucial in providing better changes for indigenous communities in the CCPF. Therefore, it is very significant that any interventions need to understand these critical aspects in a rural community when coming to rural livelihood analysis.

The CCPF is becoming a potential zone for economic development, such as hydropower projects and mining. These are the future challenges for people of the Cardamoms as they will be easily affected by the impacts of it. A study on the view of local people on future conservation and economic development should be conducted, as these are parts of livelihood changes. A strong role of government agencies by adapting the model in Figure 9 must be taken when economic development is implemented and the policies, institutions and processes need to encourage an economic perspective that takes on pro-poor roles.

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