

**COMMUNITY BASED  
PROTECTED AREA MANAGEMENT  
AND SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS**

**A Case Study**

From Chi Ouk Village, Roveang District,  
Preah Vihear Province, Cambodia

**Researched and Written by**

By Seng Leang

Pouk Bunthet

Dul Vuth

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The decrease of forest resources in Cambodia has caused a serious impact on the livelihood of the local communities. Since 2002, being aware of this issue, the Department of Nature Protection and Conservation has cooperated with the Community Forestry Research Project (CFRP) in Cambodia to facilitate and develop a Community Protected Area in Chi Ork village, located in Kompong Thom Province. This case study examines whether the development of Community Protected Areas really contributes to upgrading the livelihood of local communities.

The decrease of forest resources, particularly the loss of resin trees, which is the most important traditional income generation source of the local villagers, has caused great concern about their living and the future of younger generations. The community protected area has operated since February 2002, following completion of a survey to understand the relationship between local community and forest resources within the area. The establishment of the Community Protected Area has shown the local community that they have specific rights to participate in managing and using natural resources appropriately.

The establishment of the Community Protected Area resulted in certain positive results including recognition of the legal rights of community in managing natural resources, reducing illegal and anarchical activities, improved capacity, understanding and involvement of community, support by competent institutions, particularly the Ministry of Environment, local authorities and the community management structure. These factors contributed to improving natural resource management as well as upgrading the livelihood of the community.

The result achieved so far has not immediately brought added benefits to meet the needs of the community but it has contributed in protecting the forest resources in the area. Furthermore, local people have become well aware of their rights and duties in managing and using these resources. Importantly the support and involvement by the local authority and competent institutions in the process is well recognized by all stakeholders.



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## Preface

### The Case Study Process

The CBNRM Initiative plays an important role in providing basic skills for PRA research, analysis of information, writing and documentation, to a growing group of Cambodian professionals. In response to an increasing demand from various partners to document their experiences and lessons learned in relation to natural resource management, the CBNRM Initiative has conducted a series of training courses on case study writing.

The first major training workshop on case study writing was in Siem Reap in July 2001. This event brought numerous stakeholders, some who had not come together for a decade, to discuss natural resource management experiences, analyse CBNRM concepts, and learn how to write a case study using a 10 step case study writing tool kit. A proceedings report called "*Stories from the Tonle Sap*" and a revised Case Study Writing Tool Kit were produced that, together with the positive learning experience, generated demand for another training workshop in Ratanakiri in November 2001. This workshop produced the "*Stories from the Uplands of Ratanakiri*" Case Study Training report and an updated version of the Case Study Writing Tool Kit.

In May 2002, the CBNRM Initiative co-facilitated a Synthesis and Reflection Workshop in Koh Kong to review the draft case studies with the local partners and related stakeholders. In November 2002, a national CBNRM workshop was held in Phnom Penh to present the case studies and lessons learned and to start thinking about next steps for action on CBNRM in Cambodia. In October 2003, CBNRM, in cooperation with PMMR and CFRP projects, organised the third training workshop on case study writing in Phnom Penh. Hot topics around Cambodia were brought together by participants from different organizations to be discussed and documented. At the regional level, Regional Community Forestry Training Centre (RECOFTC) organised two trainings on 'Pen to Paper'. After the second training course, a case study on land concession issues was developed. The training manual on case study writing has been adopted by RECOFTC and published for use at the regional level.

The training courses and process of data collection, analysis and documentation provided an opportunity for the participants to learn from each other's experiences and, equally significant, it provided a forum for them to build a network to strengthen natural resource management in Cambodia. More importantly, the result of the case studies will be used as major references for researchers and CBNRM practitioners to learn from experiences and the lessons learned. Together, these case studies create a body of information so that others can replicate the lessons learned and continue to improve various models of natural resource management.

The views expressed in the following case study are those of the authors and are not necessarily reflective of the CBNRM Initiative or supporting partners.



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## **COMMUNITY BASED PROTECTED AREA MANAGEMENT AND SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS**

### ***Establishing of Community Protected Area Contributes to Upgrading the Livelihood of the Local Community***

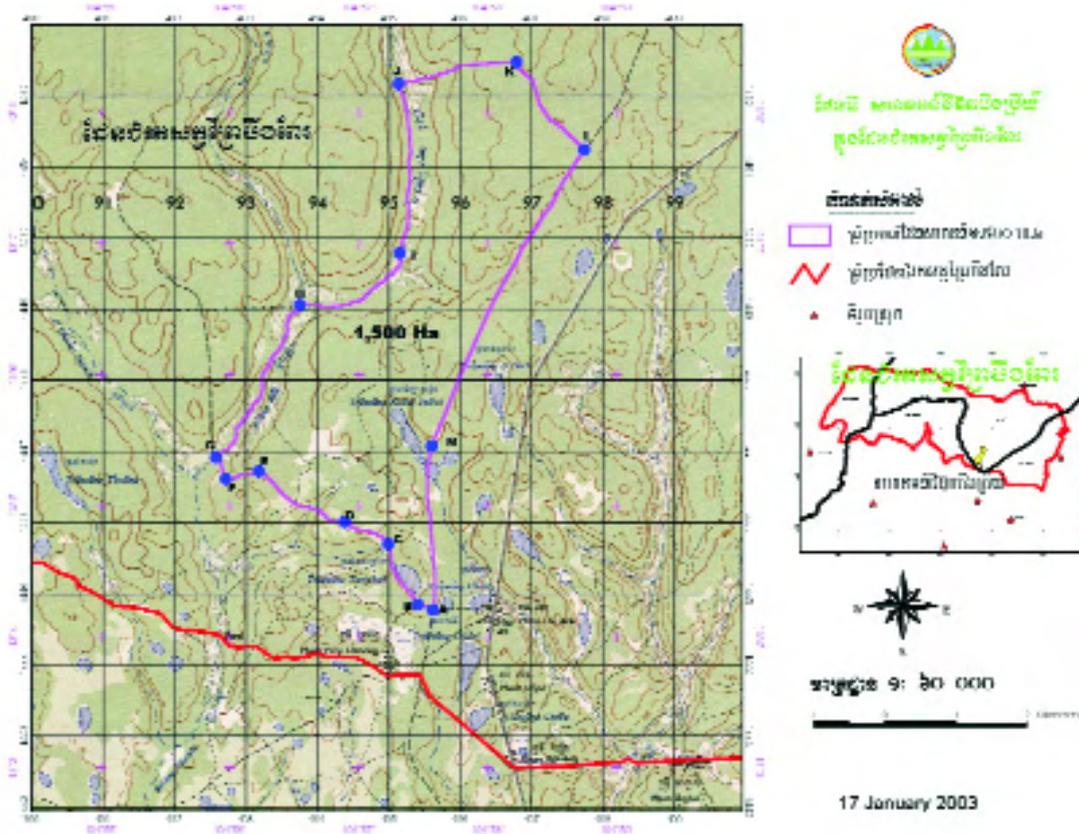
#### **I. Introduction**

This case study examines *"whether the development of community protected areas really contributes to upgrading the livelihood of local communities."*

The Kingdom of Cambodia created the protected area system by Royal Decree, in 1<sup>st</sup> November 1993, and established 23 protected areas. 7 national parks, 10 wildlife sanctuaries, 3 landscape protection areas and 3 multiple-purpose areas make up this system. People live within or near almost all of these protected areas and are using forest resources for their livelihoods. Although these protected areas are under the management and jurisdiction of the Department of Nature Protection and Conservation of the Ministry of Environment, the involvement of local communities through the development of community protected areas has also contributed to effective management. Specifically, this also responds to the decentralization and poverty reduction policy of the royal government.

The Boeung Per wildlife sanctuary has a total area of 242,500 ha and extends over three provinces including Preah Vihear, Kampong Thom and Siem Reap. It is abundant with natural resources such as forests and wild animals. Many people live in the area, and are almost completely dependent on forest resources to top up low outputs from rice cultivation and shifting cultivation (*chamcars*). The decrease of forest resources within the area has caused serious impact on the livelihoods of local communities. In response to this problem the Department of Nature Protection and Conservation has cooperated with the Community Forestry Research Project in Cambodia since 2002 to facilitate and develop a Community Protected Area in Chi Ouk village (CFRP) in order to sustain the balance of forest resources in the area.

## Map of Community Forest, Chi Ork-Boeung Prey



### 2. Background

Chi Ork Village is located along National Route 64 in Romney commune, in Rar Veng district of Preah Vihear province. Route 64 serves as the provincial boundary of Preah Vihear and Kampong Thom provinces. Chi Ork village is located in Boeung Per wildlife sanctuary, approximately 43 kilometers from Kampong Thom provincial town. It is an old village, and was established during the Sankum Reas Neyum. The majority of the population are Kouy minority people. At present, there are 140 households including 27 households of newcomers. People live along the national route which has an administrative boundary with O Por Village in the north (at Trapheang Preah), Andas village in the south (Preah Vihear-Kampong Thom boundary), Choarb Perk Village in the east and Chorm Real Village in the west.

The decrease of forest resources, particularly the loss of resin trees, which are the most important traditional income generation source of the villagers, has caused great concern amongs local communities about their

*Chan Phoon's family has 9 members and 9 ha of rice field with 20 thangs of yield per year, which is enough for only 4 to 5 months. His family also owns 60 resin trees where he can earn 90,000 riels per month. In addition, his family is also involved in vine-rattan collection and he can earn between 10 000 riels to 15,000 riels per season.*

livelihoods and the future of the younger generation. This factor stimulated the local communities to come up with an agreement to set up a Community Protected

Area in their village. The catalyst to act came when they learned about the concepts of community forestry through the dissemination activities of CFRP's working group. The Community Protected Area was set up in February 2002, following completion of a survey to understand the relationship between local community and forest resources within the area.

### 3. Results from the Case Study

In response to the question "Does the establishment of the Community Protected Area really contribute to upgrading the livelihood of local communities?" the case study has revealed the following:

People living in the area are mostly from the Kuoy ethnic minority. They depend on the collection of non-timber forest products as their main livelihood activity, and practice resin tapping, Krak and vine-rattan collection. These forest products, rice cultivation, and *chamcar* plantation outputs are low and cannot sufficiently meet their daily family needs. According to members of community committee, the typical household yield from rice cultivation here is sufficient for 2-6 months, but many consume their entire rice crop within 2-3 months. Resin tapping provides communities with resources to obtain additional rice. They can sell one kilogram of resin for 300 riels (over one sack of resin can be exchanged for a sack of rice).

Before 1990, all families in the village owned their own resin trees. But at present, due to illegal cutting, not everyone in the village has trees, although some still have between 50 to 130 resin trees. People who do not have resin trees exchange labor with the resin tree owners or sometimes ask for free tapping. Some families produce torches to sell which bring additional income. Beside NTFP collection and rice cultivation, some families raise livestock including cattle, buffalo, pigs and chickens. A few families have planted fruit trees in homegardens such as coconut, jackfruit, orange, etc.



*Woman in Village produce torch for selling*

In general, it can be observed that the main sources of income supporting the community's living are from NTFP collection, particularly resin tapping, pole, vine and rattan collection. Therefore, if the resin trees continue to be destroyed, it will strongly affect local livelihoods. So, conservation of the resin trees is very important to the stability of the community's living conditions. Establishing the Community Protected Area aimed to protect and conserve the resin trees and it has helped to improve the community's livelihood.

### 3.1 Rights to Manage and Use the Natural Resources

The legal rights of local people in using and managing natural resources are described in the forestry laws, draft laws on protected areas and in the Community Forestry Sub-Decree but the dissemination of those rights to local people is not yet actively implemented. People in the area do not yet understand their rights to participate in sustainable natural resources management.

Many people have actively participated in the process of establishing the community protected area. They took part in the selection of the community management committee, prepared community by-laws and organized the park ranger team. These acts of participation confirmed the legal rights of the local community to use the natural resources and to participate in managing them. The establishment of the Community Protected Area has helped them to understand their rights to use and manage their community forest. Through the extension of by-laws, the community people have become aware of their rights in preventing the destruction of their resources. They have even filed a lawsuit against violators in the community.

*“Many of my resin trees were illegally cut. Even though I found them cutting on the spot, I could not prevent them from cutting because I thought the resin trees were state property. I had no rights to prevent them even if I knew that their activities were illegal.” Mr. Pol, community member*

Thus, the establishment of the Community Protected Area has shown the local community that they have specific rights to participate in managing and using natural resources appropriately with the aim of contributing to upgrading the living condition of people and environment within the area. There are still a few who are not so clear about their rights and duties in using and managing natural resources.

### 3.2 Reducing Illegal Activities

NTFP collection has long been a tradition of people in the area. Their ancestors were mainly involved in cutting wood, tapping resin, and collecting vines and rattan. However, people from outside the village now also participate in the collection of NTFPs and used the village forest area for shifting cultivation. The villagers consider these activities as illegal and they recognize that if the village natural resources are not protected they will be completely destroyed.

Before the establishment of the Community Protected Area there was a lot of competition and struggle for benefits through the collection of forest products and by-products in the area. NTFP collection in the area was not done only by villagers but also outsiders (from neighboring villages). In addition, the forest in this area had been cleared for shifting cultivation. The collection of resin was particularly significant as it was one resource that could be consistently used to meet people's needs. In fact, the resin trees in the area were destroyed and cut by traders who sold the timber for profit. As confirmed by the park ranger, before establishing the Community Protected Areas, there were many cases of law violations in the area. Most of the offenders were people living near the area, including people from Salavisei commune, Kampong Thom provincial town and people living in Stung district. Outsiders came into the area because natural resources in the area were more abundant than the other closer areas (where they may have already cut the trees).

Since the Community Protected Area was established, these offences have gradually decreased because the community has deduced that those people who come into the area to collect forest products and by-products need to obey the community by-laws. In addition, the community regularly patrols and cooperates closely with environmental officials in an effort to prevent illegal activities. Due to these efforts, illegal activities have gradually decreased. More significantly, there is active and effective joint management between the community and park rangers to conserve resources for local communities.



*Timber (Beng) confiscated from the offenders by the community*

### **3.3 Awareness Promotion and Community Involvement**

Establishing the Community Protected Area followed a consultation process, and education and training courses to improve the understanding of the local community on participatory natural resources management. Following these activities, community people are able to think of appropriate use and jointly conserve and manage the resources for common use within the community. In addition to providing labor and spiritual support, community members have contributed 100 riels per family per month for managing the community protected area.

According to Svay Keun, a community member, some budgets are set aside for dealing with community management related issues. These funds are contributed by community people who are happy to contribute and support the Community Protected Area because they expect to benefit from the community forest in the future. Although the forest is not mature for harvest now, they hope their children will benefit a lot in the future. Additionally, the establishment of the Community Protected Area provides the opportunity for the committee to participate in Community Forestry Network Meetings and share experiences related to community management and development.

*Chan Phuon, a community member, said " I am happy to support the establishment of community forest because this will conserve my resin trees and keep the balance of natural resources in the area".*

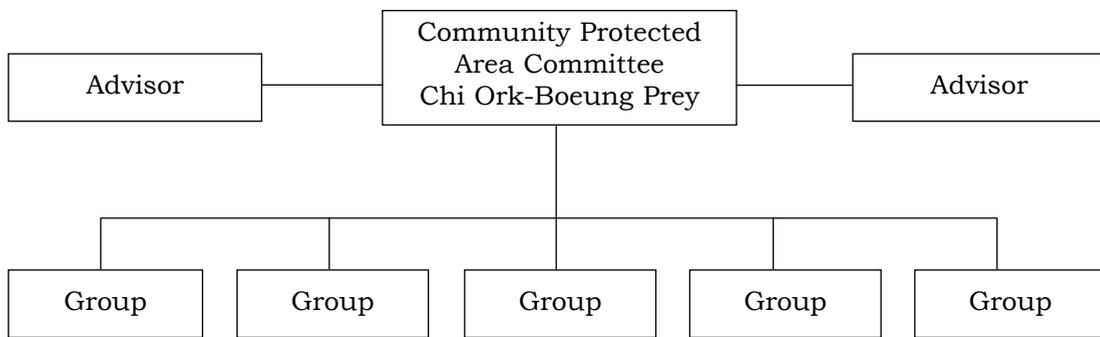
If the community has the capacity they will be able to better manage their family's living condition and development in the community.

### 3.4 Support by Competent Institutions and Local Authorities

As mentioned by the park rangers and the community committee, the community patrolling activity is mostly performed by the park rangers with some support from community members. The local authorities including, the Governor and Deputy Governors of Rarveang district and the Chief of Romny commune council, are also involved in the Community Protected Area activities. Most significantly, the Community Protected Area was announced by H.E. Mok Mareth, the Minister of Environment on 8 March 2003. These acts reflect the strong attention and support from competent institutions and local authorities for all activities of the community in managing natural forest within the area.

### 3.5 The Community Protected Area Management Structure

The Community Protected Area has a management structure with a committee, advisors and team leaders.



The committee is in charge of leading and managing the whole community in compliance with the statutes prepared by the community, which aims to maintain the sustainability of forest resources within their area to ensure future use by the community. The Community Committee, Advisor and Group Leaders also facilitate, or resolve, any problems occurring within the community. More than this, the committee is responsible for communicating with outsiders to get both technical and financial support.

This community structure, with its organized roles and responsibilities, is important for leading the community and resolving community problems. It is also a bridge for communication between communities, as well as with the outside world, and is a means to get support from the local authorities in terms of community development.



*Interview with the Community Committee*

#### **4. Conclusions**

In this case study establishment of a Community Protected Area resulted in certain positive results including recognition of the legal rights of the community in managing natural resources, reducing illegal and anarchical activities, improved capacity, understanding and involvement of community, greater support by competent institutions, particularly the Ministry of Environment, local authorities and the improved community management structure. These factors contributed in improving natural resource management as well as upgrading the livelihoods of the community. Living conditions of the villagers would be difficult if these natural resources had continued to be destroyed.

Although the case study did not clearly identify indicators to provide evidence of the improvement of the livelihood of the community, it did help to recognize the positive starting point - which is the involvement of the local community in preventing anarchical activity in NTFP collection. Since the Community Protected Area has operated for only one year, it is too early to see more tangible results.

The results achieved so far has not brought immediate benefits to meet the needs of the community but it has contributed to protecting forest resources in the area through the reduction of anarchical forest activities. Furthermore, local people have become more aware of their rights and duties in managing and using these resources. Importantly, the support and involvement of the local authorities and competent institutions in the process is well recognized by all stakeholders.

#### **5. Recommendations**

The process of organizing and managing the Community Protected Area is still facing problems and obstacles, which interrupt the management and work of the community. Thus, in order to achieve effective and successful results, some important issues should be considered:

- . Provide more capacity building for community committee members;
- . Expand dissemination activities to all levels of community within the area;
- . Create appropriate business activities for the community people to make more income;
- . Find markets for selling the community's products; and
- . Communicate with national and international NGOs to help with community development.

## **Appendix 1: Community Forestry Research Project (CFRP)**

The main objectives of the Community Forestry Research Project (CFRP) are to build human resource and institutional capacity in community forestry in order to enhance security and livelihood opportunities of rural communities through more efficient, sustainable and equitable management of forest resources.

The main future plans and strategies of CFRP as well as potential areas for collaboration include the following:

### **a) Field based action research**

1. To broaden our understanding of local NRM governance structures, relationships and processes, and to build these as appropriate, and document that understanding;

2. To identify stakeholder groups at a village, commune and district level who are being excluded by new CF groups and processes, to research this issue, document conflicts and to work towards a strategy that may address this problem.

3. To develop and evaluate, using PM&E (Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation) methods, detailed CF management plans that allow for sustainable use and management of forest resources and simultaneously meet the needs of community forest users and the formal requirements of the FA (Forestry Administrative)

### **b) Use research results to enhance the policy and institutional environment for community forestry (and CBNRM)**

1. To build partnerships for sharing information and lessons learned through joining CF & CBNRM networking groups. To participate in meetings, workshops, conferences or trainings that contribution to policy consultation and formulation processes.

2. To engage in action research related to the interpretation and implementation of recent policy developments, such as the formulation and interpretation of CF parkas and the forest law, the land law and laws for protected areas management.

3. To collaborate and partner with different organizations supporting CF by helping to set a broader agenda for action research in other CF provinces and to also support NRM governance efforts that are decentralizing to commune councils and provincial levels

### **c) Strengthen inter-institutional learning**

1. To engage and strengthen the partnership roles of provincial and local line agencies in CF development in target communities, including that of the commune council, and to build understanding and practical capacities of CF approaches at these levels.

2. To build and generate knowledge at a local level related to CF concepts and methods by sharing between CF groups and neighboring villagers, by actively engaging local line ministries in our work and to begin scaling up processes, where possible.

3. To cooperate and support other CBNRM initiatives that are also strengthening the capacities of key implementing organisations and partners through inter-institutional learning approaches, such as Partnerships for Local Governance in Kratie province, IDRC's CBNRM Initiative, GTZ's Participatory Land Use Planning and Management Project, the Danida NRM project in Kampot and Koh Kong province and some NGO groups.

## Appendix 2



### Community Based Natural Resource Management Initiative (CBNRM Initiative) Organizational Profile

#### OVERALL GOAL

The overall goal of the CBNRM Initiative is to analyze and improve CBNRM as an integral component of the poverty alleviation, sustainable livelihoods and resource management, conservation, and decentralization policies and strategies of the Royal Government of Cambodia.

#### OBJECTIVES

1. Human Resources Development - To build conceptual, analytical, research, and documentation skills of facilitators, researchers and practitioners within relevant NGO and Government partners at national, provincial and local levels.
2. Knowledge Building and Sharing - To identify, analyze, and share lessons and experiences of various approaches to community based natural resource management across the country.
3. Partnership Building - To build networking linkages among organizations and institutions supporting community based resource management strategies at local, national and regional levels.
4. Institutional Arrangements and Policy Support - To improve institutional capacity and understanding of the policy context which influences community based natural resource management practices at the field level.

CBNRM Learning Initiative Program focuses on:

- Community Forestry
- Co-Management of Fisheries
- Participatory Land Use Planning
- Community-based Protected Area Management
- Participatory Water Resources Management.



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