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Project to Promote ILO Policy on Indigenous and Tribal
Peoples
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**Indigenous and tribal peoples' perceptions of poverty
and poverty reduction strategies in Cambodia**

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ADHOC	Cambodian Human Rights and Development Association
CAS	Center for Advanced Study
CBO	Community Based Organisation
CC	Commune Council
CIDSE	Coopération Internationale pour le Développement et la Solidarité
CLEC	Community Legal Education Center
DEMD	Department of Ethnic Minorities Development
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
IMC	Inter-Ministerial Committee
ILO	International Labour Organization
ITP	Indigenous and Tribal Peoples
MRD	Ministry of Rural Development
NFE	Non-Formal Education
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NPRS	National Poverty Reduction Strategy
NRM	Natural Resource Management
NTFP	Non-Timber Forest Products
PDRD	Provincial Department of Rural Development
PLG	Partnership for Local Governance (UN-Donor Support to the Royal Government of Cambodia's SEILA Programme)
PPA	Participatory Poverty Assessment
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
SEILA	Government Program to pilot decentralisation
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNTAC	United Nations Transitional Authority
VDC	Village Development Committee

LIST OF KHMER VOCABULARY

<i>chah tum</i>	elder
<i>chah srok</i>	tribe leader
<i>châmkar</i>	swidden farm
<i>chun cheat pheak tech</i>	ethnic minorities
<i>chun cheat daem pheak tech</i>	indigenous peoples
<i>kannakammathikar</i>	committee
<i>kappa</i>	traditional back strap basket
<i>kó-yun</i>	small agricultural tractor
<i>krom</i>	group
<i>mé kântreanh</i>	tribe leader
<i>mé phum</i>	village chief (not identical with tribe leader)
<i>proeutechár</i>	tribe leader (Phnong)
<i>sahakum</i>	community
<i>sahakum prey chhoeu</i>	forest [protection] community
<i>samakum</i>	association
<i>srè</i>	paddy rice field
<i>trâkol</i>	clan origin

Executive summary

In March-April 2005 a research team from the Center for Advanced Study (CAS) conducted research on indigenous and tribal peoples' (ITPs) participation in poverty reduction efforts in Cambodia. The study focuses on these peoples' own perceptions of poverty and poverty reduction strategies related to and embedded in the current context of national poverty reduction efforts. On this basis existing gaps, similarities and contradictions with the national poverty reduction efforts were analysed, resulting in recommendations for possible ways of integration of ITPs into development and poverty reduction efforts according to their specific needs.

The main methodology was to undertake participatory and culturally appropriate consultations in selected indigenous communities, to gather the views of indigenous people on poverty, poverty reduction strategies and how they are coping with current development trends. Over three weeks, the CAS team conducted Focus Group Discussions and key informant interviews in 12 indigenous villages in three provinces of North-east Cambodia.

The situation in each village was quite specific and sometimes differed considerably from that of other villages, even those inhabited by the same ethnic minority. However, common to all was that they have absorbed and adapted much more to outside influences than the team expected, even in quite remote areas. All villages showed evidence that the traditional system is increasingly threatened by the rapid development trends. If these trends continue, they will deepen existing (as yet limited) differences between poor and rich families within each village and create new large-scale poverty by undermining and destroying traditional livelihoods without providing timely alternatives.

Findings of the fieldwork

Most villages are increasingly integrated within the broader society and the market economy. The number of households in each village who participate in the buying and selling of goods indicates such integration. Indigenous peoples appreciated that the access to new technology, to markets, to wells and to health care makes agricultural and household work easier than ever before. At the same time, however, they complained that life today is harder than before. All discussion groups mentioned a steady decrease of natural resources that increasingly affects their ability to pursue their traditional livelihood strategies.

One of the most important changes for indigenous peoples in the areas studied is the loss of land caused by large-scale concessions and increasing land alienation. The trend is that the large and numerous land transactions, land grabbing and sales of land rights do not only diminish the natural resource base that sustains the livelihoods of indigenous peoples but also debilitate the cultural and social resources they need to deal with the challenges of change itself.

Traditional leadership is slowly declining in the context of formal administrative and new development structures. Village chiefs and commune level leaders are increasingly involved in conflict resolution within the village or between neighbouring villages. Development interventions undoubtedly alter the dynamics of community as decision-making within villages has started to change hands to those with higher Khmer literacy. An increasing spirit of individualism amongst the younger generation with more experience from outside the communities may be an additional factor in decreased respect for elders and traditional leaders.

Greater access to the market, increasing in-migration and changes in agricultural activities have led to new desires and challenges in indigenous communities. Most traditional values related to wealth and poverty seem to have been overtaken or even replaced by new ones. Steady consumption of outside produced entertainment presented only in the Khmer language affects the whole system of indigenous values more than people realise. There are no other alternatives available, particularly as the oral tradition may no longer be able to compete with modern mass media arriving in every village. There is a divergent process taking place, between traditional life typified by the elders and the demands of current development manifested in the younger generation.

Indigenous peoples were aware of development activities in their village but could not clearly distinguish if they were initiated or carried out by governmental or non-governmental organisations. Hardly any villages seemed to think that the development committee was the place for joint discussion to plan and manage the village's development issues. Such discussions have mostly happened independently and rather informally in traditional structures with the results being given to the village chief for forwarding to higher levels in expectation of a reply. Even where the position of the village chief was strong, it has remained difficult to get people together for meetings and to involve them in such kinds of activities. The timeframe for fieldwork was too short to find out what the real reasons of the villagers' reluctance were. Here more in-depth research is needed.

Apart from a gendered division of labour, there is also a division in the decision-making powers of between men and women at household and village level. Generally women have the final say on financial and agricultural matters in their families, but beyond household level they participate less in decision-making. Women usually take part in village meetings and it was not difficult to invite women to the discussion groups, neither from the men's point of view nor on the part of the women. Women mostly have had appropriate space to express their views but the main problem seemed that many of them felt self-conscious in presence of outsiders to talk about village matters they perceived as unpleasant.

Alterations in the agriculture systems and restricted access to forests lead to changes in the traditional division of tasks and responsibilities between men and women. The general impression

was that villages have increasingly to cope with problems of domestic violence as a result of the growing number of families and conflicts caused by new economic challenges.

Understanding the poverty concerns of indigenous and tribal peoples

The focus group discussions and separate interviews reflected clear shifts in perception and rating of poverty amongst indigenous peoples, as compared to the past. The same phenomenon of change is to be observed in their stated reasons for poverty and wealth. These changes have necessarily resulted in a slow alteration of strategies and efforts to handle poverty.

In addition, indigenous peoples who are worst affected by ongoing land encroachment and land alienation also have begun to perceive difficulties in handling land issues in the traditional way. Traditional patterns of dispute resolution mostly still work but things have been become more complex as many disputes over land and other natural resources have started to go beyond the traditional community level. Discussions indicated that younger people have absorbed the ideas of formal conflict resolution more than their elders, relying much more on assistance from non-governmental organisations and having attended training in land law.

Development aspirations and priorities

Land for cultivation, land security and having enough food for the whole year were the most quoted priorities indigenous peoples in Cambodia have for their lives and what they consider most important to secure appropriate living conditions. Many of the different statements reflected the wish for good conditions for agricultural cultivation not only for upland rice cultivation (*châmkar*) but also for a broad spectrum of new agricultural activities. They also included the wish for easy and fair access to the market, to formal education and health care. Amongst indigenous women, land, formal education, health care and animal raising are equally important.

All indigenous groups expressed a common wish for reasonable and fair dispute resolution according to their traditional custom of joint discussion under guidance of the elders and decisions made by themselves. Preservation of solidarity and a sense of cohesion for the village was very often a subliminal element in the discussions and interviews even if they were not explicitly quoted by many as one of their priorities.

Participation of indigenous and tribal peoples in the PRSP process

Indigenous peoples in Cambodia have a rich tradition of collective decision-making reflected in strong social cohesion in the communal group and often, communal meeting places in the centre of the village where all affairs related to the village are discussed and decided. However, the absence of broader organisational structures that would comprise all communities of an indigenous group in a certain area or even nationwide, limits indigenous participation to the village level.

On the other hand, new administrative structures such as village chief, commune, district and provincial authorities impose different ways of decision-making by transferring instructions and

orders from the top down. Indigenous communities often feel this is an unacceptable counter-concept to their own customs. They especially miss the fact that they are not consulted before government decisions that affect their community are made.

Interventions by administrative and development structures seem to be carried out without the effective participation of indigenous communities adapted to their needs and customs, both at local level and nationally.

There are several reasons for this. There is no tradition in Cambodia of subordinate levels of administration being involved in policy and decision-making. In addition, until now, the Cambodian Government has not yet been able to approve any ethnic minority or indigenous peoples development policy although a draft was submitted to the Council of Ministers in 1997. On the other hand, indigenous peoples themselves do not have sufficient means and experience of active participation beyond the village level.

The current Cambodian PRSP reflects that the government is increasingly aware of the social exclusion and political marginalisation of ethnic minorities in Cambodia but does not have any specific policy or even systematic efforts to address specific concerns of indigenous peoples in overcoming poverty and inappropriate involvements in the development process.

Although the PRSP states that ethnic minorities' development is highly considered by the government in the implementation of the poverty reduction policy it makes no specific reference to indigenous peoples' concerns nor does it consider their specific needs in poverty reduction efforts. It also does not draw on any poverty diagnostics that highlight disparities in socio-economic indicators along ethnic lines, as there is no specific socio-economic data available on ethnic minorities.

Indigenous peoples in Cambodia have not been involved in consultations leading to the production of the PRSP. The main reasons for this are the absence of representative indigenous peoples' organisations, the "invisibility" of indigenous issues in national development agendas and the lack of reliable and comprehensive data on the socio-economic situation of indigenous peoples, including specific poverty indicators.

Conclusion

Indigenous ways of life are still formed by significant special characteristics that need to be considered carefully in the context of current development and the accelerated socio-economic transformation processes that Cambodia has been undergoing since 1993. As many of these processes affect indigenous livelihoods to their core, they may contribute significantly to the rapid impoverishment of indigenous peoples, not only in economic terms but also in respect of their socio-cultural life.

The study has demonstrated that these economic transformation processes debilitate the entire system of traditional social organisation, religion and indigenous identity, as these elements are grounded in the universal access to local resources. Preserving traditions does not mean only to conserve customs such as playing gongs, singing and dancing. Indigenous culture and way of life cannot be abstracted from its socio-economic context. Thus, careful consideration is necessary to find appropriate ways for protecting and preserving them in a rapidly changing socio-economic environment particularly as this would enhance the richness of the multi-cultural society in Cambodia.

Effective socio-economic development and poverty reduction in Cambodia will happen not through large-scale concessions but also are possible and even more desirable through village based development. That requires of course that indigenous communities are given sufficient decision-making power and support to strengthen their self-potential beyond merely being asked for agreement to outside interventions.

One of the most important prerequisites for indigenous peoples' participation is the firm political will of the Cambodian government to recognise that Cambodia is a multi-cultural society in which all different cultures and ethnicities need to be considered of equal value. This recognition would include effective measures to protect special needs and cultural specificities of indigenous peoples already at the stage of policy and decision-making as well as their right to decide their own priorities for development. The recent creation of the Department of Ethnic Minorities Development (DEMD) in the Ministry of Rural Development is an important step in this direction.

It is important to link the efforts of developing a general policy for ethnic minorities' development closely with the process of developing the new Rectangular Strategy of the government for the years 2006-2008. The Department of Ethnic Minorities Development (DEMD) and other relevant Government ministries and Departments should be strengthened in its competence to carry out this work and encouraged to give significant input on indigenous issues into the government's action plan for poverty reduction.

Taking poverty reduction and sustainable development seriously means not only creating appropriate general conditions and framework policies but also taking responsibility for their consequent implementation. The government is responsible for providing resources for indigenous peoples' development and ensuring full compliance with any laws and special regulations, which protect their rights and integrity.

The ongoing decentralisation reforms in Cambodia offer important possibilities in promoting and supporting indigenous village based development and poverty reduction according to indigenous peoples' own priorities by including them in the commune councils' Commune Development Plans.

Recommendations

In order to secure the effective participation of indigenous peoples in decision-making beyond the level of their communities, it is necessary to strengthen respective capacities to represent indigenous concerns in public by indigenous groups themselves and for them to play a more active role in decision-making and development processes at different levels. The maintenance of broad organisational networks comprising all communities of an indigenous group in a certain area or even nationwide would enable them to exchange views and information systematically on their situation and to come to joint positions with regard to their common needs and interests so that they can contribute effectively to national policy and decision-making.

On the other hand, an important prerequisite for effective participation of indigenous peoples is considering and addressing the language barrier that hinders mutual understanding especially in decision-making bodies at local level. The acceptance and use of different languages in providing relevant information to each other would considerably ease the involvement of indigenous groups from the beginning to the end of any development initiative – be it policy-making, or implementing a project or programme.

A further necessity for indigenous peoples' participation from a more long-term perspective is in recognition of the right of indigenous peoples to express their interests, needs and concerns in their own languages, not only to improve access to general education but also to bi-lingual and culturally appropriate education. For this to be effective, indigenous peoples need to be involved directly in the development of relevant curricula and teaching methodologies.

In its PRSP, the Cambodian government stated that ethnic minorities' development is of high importance in the implementation of its poverty reduction policy. In this sense the government should complete the process of developing its general policy for ethnic minorities' development as soon as possible and make sure that the concerns and priorities of the indigenous peoples in Cambodia are sufficiently considered.

If the Cambodian Government recognises ILO's Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention (No. 169) as an appropriate framework for coordinated and systematic action to protect these peoples in Cambodia, there will be a need for a clarification as to which ethnic groups would be covered by its criteria for identification. Any such process should be in direct consultation with the peoples concerned. In addition, if the respective policy is not intended to remain limited to general principles but to offer an effective agenda of action it should be taken efforts to embed the policy into the current political context and socio-economic situation of indigenous peoples. Without describing the problem, objective or frame of action and expected outcome, it is hard to define an appropriate strategy, or the actions required.

The policy also should consider the most appropriate ways for the inclusion of indigenous peoples in the ongoing legislative and development processes, and poverty reduction efforts of the government. It should take into account that indigenous peoples in Cambodia are undergoing an accelerated socio-economic transformation process that is changing their whole system of traditional life with implications for indigenous culture and identity.

In order to secure indigenous peoples' participation in poverty reduction efforts and to prevent ongoing impoverishment both in economic terms as well as in its socio-cultural aspects, four basic areas have to be addressed. These are outlined below, and elaborated in Chapter 6:

1. Land and resource security

- Establishment of land security through: immediate comprehensive measures to stop land grabbing, illegal or forced land sales; and consultation with indigenous communities about planned concessions.
- Enhancement of livelihood security through sufficient support for traditional or new crops and methods; veterinary support; and market access support.

2. The role of government, and policy issues

- Clarification of terminology, and rights and issues attached to that terminology
- Finalization and adoption of the Indigenous Peoples Policy, with the following recommendations for its improvement:
 - Contextualise the Indigenous Peoples Policy and clarify its objectives;
 - Clarify the criteria for identifying to whom the policy applies;
 - Elaborate on mechanisms for implementation and indigenous inclusion; and
 - Recognize the role of key government ministries and departments.
- Capacity-building in policy formulation and implementation for concerned Government ministries, including the following:
 - Improvement of inter-ministerial coordination;
 - Improving methodologies for working with indigenous peoples;
 - Supporting mechanisms for indigenous inclusion at all levels;
 - Ensuring active implication in indigenous issues of provincial government structures; and
 - Integrating indigenous concerns into ongoing/emerging development work.
- Linking policy development and implementation to legal frameworks (implementing existing relevant laws)
- Inclusion of indigenous peoples in local governance structures (particularly at the commune level)

3. The role of civil society and NGOs

- Focus on indigenous peoples' empowerment and participation

- Addressing multiculturalism (accepting difference)
- Strengthening civil society's capacity
 - to understand more about indigenous concerns, perspectives, needs and development aspirations;
 - to adapt trainings and development projects to indigenous needs and specificities;
 - to develop indigenous capacity in taking self-responsibility for village based development;
 - in methodologies for working in partnership with indigenous and tribal peoples, and for ensuring their effective consultation and participation in processes affecting them; and
 - to coordinate approaches, strategies and activities.

4. The role of indigenous peoples

- Strengthening indigenous capacity in advocacy and networking
 - to determine and advocate own priorities in poverty reduction efforts through indigenous organizations and representative institutions (including public relations); and
 - to cope with socio-economic transformation processes by improving knowledge on new livelihood strategies and practicing them embedded into the context of community development
- Improving access to appropriate formal education
- Support to development and use of indigenous languages
- Strengthening of indigenous socio-cultural structures and identities

1. Introduction

Although there is a general lack of disaggregated data, it is broadly recognised that indigenous and tribal peoples live in more severe poverty situations than the general population of almost any given country. As a consequence of this, they are affected by poor health, have limited access to basic services, their communities are marked by social disintegration, conflict, massive out migration etc.

On the other hand, these peoples, representing distinct cultures, have their own perceptions and indicators of poverty and well-being as well as their own strategies for poverty reduction. Nonetheless, these diversified concepts of poverty are often not included in national poverty reduction strategies, thereby reflecting the general political and social marginalisation of indigenous and tribal peoples.

In short, the challenge to development in this context is twofold:

- On the one hand, indigenous peoples have the same rights to development, resources and services as other peoples.
- On the other, it must be recognised that their aspirations for development, resources and services may be fundamentally different from those of other peoples.

Recognising this double challenge, the International Labour Organisation's (ILO)¹ Programme to Promote the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (Declaration) undertook an Ethnic Audit of Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) in 14 countries early in 2005. This audit attempted to assess the extent to which PRSP processes have included the concern for ITPS.

To complement these efforts, the present study constitutes one of two case studies undertaken by the ILO's Project to Promote ILO Policy on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples (PRO-169)², in collaboration with the Center for Advanced Study, Phnom Penh. The objectives of this study are to:

- Document indigenous and tribal peoples' own perceptions of poverty and poverty reduction strategies;

¹ The ILO is the Specialised Agency of the United Nations that seeks the promotion of social justice and internationally recognised human and labour rights. It was founded in 1919 and became the first specialised agency of the UN in 1946. The ILO is well known by indigenous peoples throughout the world as being the UN agency that is responsible for the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (commonly referred to as Convention No. 169). The basic principles of this Convention provide the guiding principles for this study, and for its methodology.

² The other case study has been undertaken in Cameroon.

- Assess the gaps, similarities and contradictions between these perceptions, and national poverty reduction efforts;
- Provide appropriate recommendations for the consultation and participation of indigenous peoples in national poverty reduction efforts; and
- Identify capacity-building needs for indigenous participation in the PRSP (this may include capacity-building for indigenous peoples, government, NGOs or other relevant actors).

This study is not intended as a definitive account of the situation of indigenous peoples throughout Cambodia. Rather, based on the information gained from the communities consulted in 3 provinces, it is intended to feed into a national debate and national action to reduce poverty, and a broader project to promote the rights of indigenous and tribal peoples in Cambodia.

1.1 A note on terminology

There is no single, internationally recognised definition of the term ‘indigenous peoples’. ILO Convention No. 169 does not define these peoples, but provides criteria that can be used to identify them in their national contexts.

This approach looks at the social, cultural and political situation of the peoples concerned. These peoples may have a way of life, culture, or social structure that is different from that of the dominant population, or they may be politically or economically marginalised. Indigenous and tribal peoples do not need to be in a numerical minority to be covered, and often they are not. Nor does the Convention rely on historical precedence alone to identify who are indigenous and tribal peoples, though this is a factor. The ILO also considers it fundamental whether the people in question identify themselves as belonging to an indigenous or tribal people.

In view of this, the use of the terms indigenous and tribal peoples, indigenous peoples, Khmer Loeu, and highland peoples are used interchangeably in this study.

2. Indigenous and tribal peoples in Cambodia

Cambodia is a multi-ethnic society with a large majority of ethnic Khmer. The ethnic groups include the Vietnamese, Chinese, Lao, Cham, and indigenous peoples.

Non-Khmer ethnic groups constitute approximately ten percent of the population of Cambodia. The indigenous populations constitute close to one percent of the total population. Indigenous ethnic minorities in Cambodia are often called hill tribes or highlanders (Khmer Loeu) because most of these peoples live in the four northeastern provinces of Monduliri, Ratanakiri, Stung Treng and Kratie, which are considered upland areas.

The lack of population studies makes it difficult to quantify the population number of ethnic groups in Cambodia. The currently available statistics on ethnic minority groups are based on estimates from different government agencies and independent observers and researchers.

In 1995, the Ministry of Interior stated that there were 443,000 ethnic minority persons, or 3.8% of the total population of 9.7 million. The same source estimated the total number of the indigenous ethnic minority population at 70,000 representing 0.7% of the total population of Cambodia.

The National Population Census 1998 identified 17 indigenous groups in Cambodia based on their spoken language. According to this source, the total number of indigenous peoples was about 101,000 or 0.9% of the then total population of 11.4 million.³

2.1 Location of indigenous peoples

The predominant dwelling areas of the indigenous populations are in the remoter parts of sparsely populated areas of the north and northeast as well as the mountainous areas of Koh Kong, Pursat, Kompong Speu and Sihanoukville. These areas are mainly along the national borders of Vietnam, Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR), and Thailand. The central areas and the banks of the Mekong River are the domain of the Khmer.

The territories of some groups go beyond the Cambodian borders. The Jarai in Ratanakiri, and the Phnong in Monduliri may be found respectively in the provinces of Pleiku and Dalat in Vietnam. The Brao and Kravet are related to those in southern Lao PDR and the Kuy, present in Preah Vihear and in Kompong Thom are also in Thailand and in Lao PDR. The border, imposed by the

³ Later figures are not available. The recently created Department of Ethnic Minorities Development of the Ministry of Rural Development has started to update the statistics, and expects to present the new statistical survey at the end of this year. During our fieldwork CAS received some statistical material from different agencies working on indigenous issues but these can only be used with caution because of different times of compiling and sometimes different figures.

French in 1903, artificially divided these groups and restricted their movements to an area that was previously free of administrative control.

The highest number of indigenous peoples is to be found in the northeastern provinces of Monduliri (19,229) and Ratanakiri (64,037) where they represent 71% and 68% respectively, of the total populations of these provinces. In the provinces of Stung Treng (3,270) and Kratie (9,845) they represent 7% and 8% respectively, of the populations. In other provinces like Preah Vihear, Pursat, Kompong Thom and Sihanoukville, indigenous peoples represent only about 0.04% of the total population.⁴

2.2 Recent history

Historically, indigenous and tribal peoples in Cambodia have not been included in any policy, decision-making or development process. The Khmer majority considered indigenous peoples as “underdeveloped” and “less civilised” resulting in a patronising mixture of pity and condescension towards the highlanders. After Cambodian independence from their French colonial masters in 1953 (Sangkum period), the region became the most important area for settlement of Khmer “pioneers” from other provinces who brought development and education according to the Khmer understanding of what it means to be a modern civilised society.

With the outbreak of civil war in 1970 hill tribes have been used by the Khmer Rouge who had taken refuge in the mountains. Although highlanders did not suffer persecution during the Khmer Rouge rule (1975-1979) to the extent of other minorities they were subject to harsh cultural and economic assimilation. Under the successor regime (1979-1993) most indigenous peoples have fared a little better, not because of overtly benign policies but because of the lack of any coordinated minority policy. However, some indigenous groups were relocated to other areas after 1979 upon the accusation that they collaborated with Khmer Rouge units that offered armed resistance to the authorities at that time⁵. Those who lived not far from the border fled to Vietnam or Lao PDR.⁶

In areas of former Khmer Rouge activities, over time, and especially in the 1990s, villagers returned to their ancestral land and tried to rebuild their lives. However, the government requested people to remain close to the rivers and roads, not only to avoid the Khmer Rouge but also to bring indigenous peoples into the mainstream of society. At the same time, lowland people were encouraged to migrate to less populated highland areas, especially in Ratanakiri. The trend of immigration by lowland Khmers to the highlands has increased and continues.

⁴ National Institute of Statistics, National Population Census 1998.

⁵ Suoy people in Oral district, Kompong Speu (Interviews in Kordauntey village, 24 February 2005)

⁶ Phnong fled during the Khmer Rouge time to Vietnam returned in 1980 to Monduliri but had to wait in the provincial capital until 1986 before they could resettle their native area in O Reang district.

After the first national election, held under administration of the United Nations Transitional Authority (UNTAC) in 1993, lowland Khmer began commercial farming of kapok trees and crops such as coffee and cashew nuts in Ratanikiri and Mondulkiri. This caused land conflicts with resident Phnong, Kreung, and Tampuan ethnic groups. As the highland areas of Northeastern Cambodia hold potential for agricultural development and extensive forest resources, the commercial exploitation of the upland area and the immigration of lowland Khmer have rapidly increased over the last years. This trend puts more and more pressure on indigenous peoples to change their traditional practices and way of life and endangers the basics of their livelihood.

2.3 Traditional livelihoods of indigenous peoples

The livelihood strategy of indigenous peoples is based on agricultural production: shifting (swidden) cultivation, wetland rice cultivation, pig and chicken raising, gathering food from the forest, hunting and fishing. In to traditional upland rice cultivation, forest areas are cleared by family groups and burnt to establish plots of land which are farmed for several years. Clearing of new plots of land every year allows previously farmed plots to remain fallow and regain their fertility until they are fit to be reused.⁷ Although some indigenous peoples began lowland rice farming in the 1960s, they still keep swidden fields where they farm upland rice and other crops including vegetables, root crops, gourds, fruits and nonfood crops like tobacco and cotton.⁸

During the Khmer Rouge time, indigenous peoples learned that the lowland rice farming technique of their neighbouring lowland Khmer provided higher yields and required less work than their highland technique. However, after 1979 some of them reverted back to swidden agriculture because of technical problems, lack of seed and equipment, poor soil fertility or long distance from the village to lowland rice fields.⁹

The forest has always played a crucial role providing forest fruits, wildlife, fish, traditional medicines, and construction material complementing their crop production. Forest vegetables, leaves and tubers are very important in the diet of indigenous communities especially in years of poor rice harvest, lack of draught animals or poor soil fertility. Bamboo, rattan and small trees are used for housing construction and crafts material. Wildlife is hunted for food and is an important source of protein.¹⁰

2.4 Social organisation and ethnic identity of indigenous peoples

Village structure varies from group to group. Some upland communities like the Kreung, partly Tampuan (bordering the Kreung communities) or Stieng traditionally arranged their housing in a

⁷ White, J. (1996), "The indigenous highlanders of the northeast: an uncertain future." In: *Interdisciplinary research on ethnic groups in Cambodia*. Final draft reports. (Center for Advanced Study, Phnom Penh) pp.337-339.

⁸ ADB (2002), *Cambodia – Indigenous Peoples / Ethnic Minorities and Poverty Reduction*, p.23.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid. More details see also White, J (1996), pp. 337-339.

circular formation around a central meeting place where village gatherings, communal feasts and ceremonies are held. This layout allows for close contacts, easy access to community meetings, and quick spreading of information and calls for assistance in cases of illness or the occurrence of something unusual. The Jarai and partly Tampuan (bordering the Jarai communities) construct big longhouses for extended families but these houses also constitute villages that centre around a communal meeting place where the villagers come together for meetings and cultural ceremonies.¹¹

Phnong were traditionally semi-nomadic, shifting their villages frequently over short distances within a traditional village area, as a response to death, disease or disaster or perceived threat. They typically have two residences, one in the village and one at their *châmkar* (swidden farms).¹²

Many ethnic groups like the Jarai, Kreung, Tampuan, Phnong, and Stieng have a matrilineal clan system and matrilocal residence. Wealth is traditionally controlled by the wife's family. Women are not only responsible for the home and family but also for the *châmkar*. They typically decide when to burn the fields, what seed to use, where to plant and when to harvest the vegetable. They are responsible for clearing the underbrush, planting and weeding. Men choose the location of the *châmkar* and decide when to harvest the rice. They help women in clearing the fields by cutting larger trees and lifting heavy items.¹³

Traditionally, all families shared equal access to the common resources of the forest. According to traditional law, families hold the right over the land they farms. When they leave the old field to clear new land, it reverts to the community. In agreement with the village elders the villagers determine what land to use for *châmkar*, burial forest, building houses, cattle and buffalo grazing or to reserve for the community.

The relative autonomy of indigenous groups required strong internal leadership, appropriate to their situation and the rules that govern their particular society. The village elders (*chah tum*) and the traditional leader (*mé kântreanh* or *chah srok* or *preutechár*) who are responsible for and take care of the village spirit play a significant role in decision-making. The *mé kântreanh* facilitates and oversees traditional ceremonies, resolves conflicts in the village and mediates when there are problems within or between families. He handles land issues and inter-village disputes that affect the entire village. In some places the traditional leader is selected from the familial line of the previous *mé kântreanh* (*trâkol*), with a ceremony to call up an *arak* to ask which of the possible candidates should be selected. In other places all the villagers select the new *mé kântreanh* with the agreement of the village elders based on who has the required knowledge and skills. The

¹¹ White, J. (1996), pp. 335-336.

¹² ICC (2004), *A Livelihood and Gender Study of Three Bunong Kroms*, Monduliri Province, pp. 2-3.

¹³ White, J. (1996), p. 337; ICC (2004), p.4

village elders provide advice and help so that tasks get done. They also have a strong educational role in terms of transmitting traditions and beliefs to the younger generation.¹⁴

The kinship groups of Cambodia's highlanders have organised themselves into self-governing villages. The strong social cohesion of this communal group is not only based on the extensive kinship networks but is further enhanced by the villagers' sense of sharing a relationship with the tutelary spirits of their particular village. According to the local belief system, the entire natural environment, the sky, earth, forest, water sources, hills, stones and rice fields are populated by a vast array of spiritual forces. These beliefs inspire both respect and fear as these spirits are believed to have the power to influence the health, well-being and prosperity of villagers. In addition to the spirits of the natural world, spirits of the ancestors are also believed to have the power to protect or conversely (if angered) wreak havoc on the human world. There is an extensive realm of customary law, which governs social behaviour. This is related to the power of ancestors, who, if angered, may punish through misfortune, sickness and even death.¹⁵

Every indigenous group has a store of myths, which have been passed down through generations. This oral heritage reflects in manifold ways the group's sense of itself in the world. The language of mythology appears as a dynamic process that reflects changes over the time and external influences, e.g. incorporating transient contacts with outsiders into existing patterns of understanding.¹⁶

All groups have a strong sense of identity based on their home village and place they were born. In the past, many villagers were named after the forest sites and streams near the village, or after the ancestors who were its first inhabitants. Beyond membership of a particular village, indigenous people have a sense of membership with their own ethnic group.¹⁷ However, during recent decades this has been affected by the pressures of deprecatory and "Khmer-centric" attitudes towards indigenous cultures. Outside interpretation of having "less knowledge" and being "less civilised" inevitably influenced the highlanders' perception of themselves and, consequently their behaviour.

2.5 A changing environment

Although the village groups of indigenous peoples can be considered as autonomous, self-governing units, they are not immune to external influences. Innovations such as the cultivation of paddy rice in some areas or the use of the krom system to organise kinship groups in Phnong

¹⁴ White, J. (1996), p.337; ICC (2004), p.5; Final Report of the National Forum on Indigenous Peoples and Land Issues, Kompong Speu Province 9-12 September 2004, p.10-11.

¹⁵ White, J. (1996), pp.335-336 and 350-358.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid. p.334 and pp.356-359.

villages¹⁸ have been introduced and absorbed into the village system. The tumultuous historical events of the last decades and the efforts of the various political regimes to assimilate indigenous groups into the mainstream of society have resulted in a steady but variable process of socio-economic transformation among all indigenous groups.

This trend has greatly accelerated over the last ten years. After the end of civil war in Cambodia in 1991 and the first national elections in 1993, the new government declared a free-market economy and opened the country to international private enterprise. In the ambitious effort to boost economic development, the rich natural resources, particularly in the sparsely populated areas of the Cambodian northeast, began to be exploited on a large-scale by national and international entrepreneurs. The resulting deforestation and land alienation seriously affect the livelihoods of the original inhabitants. Increasing immigration of lowland Khmer and other ethnic groups (like Cham to eastern Kratie) aggravate the pressures on indigenous peoples to cope with the rapid changes in their socio-economic environment.

Generous granting of land concessions by national and provincial levels to speculators and entrepreneurs and the growing population make it more and more difficult for indigenous communities to operate their well-developed land allocation and land management system which relies on communal decision-making through traditional structures. In addition, the process of expanding farmland by non-indigenous individuals weakens the integrity of traditional practices as villagers are being enticed or pressured to sell land to outsiders on a private basis bypassing consultation with the village elders and tribal leaders. The fact that they are often unaware of the legal status or the market value of the land they farm leaves them prone to exploitation and reduces the security of their traditional livelihood.

Immigration and expansion of the market economy do not only have consequences for the livelihood of indigenous communities. They also have effects on cultural practices and traditions such as style of clothing, preferred types of food and housing, taboos and other beliefs, and respect for elders. Significant improvements of physical infrastructure during the last decade, repair or construction of roads and bridges, have made district and provincial markets more accessible to indigenous villages and increased the visits of small traders bringing modern consumer goods directly in the village.

¹⁸ Villagers are divided into several groups (krom), which occupy slightly separate areas of the village and which are in fact large groups of families organised according to kinship affiliation. This appears to be the legacy of an organisational policy of the government of the People's Republic of Kampuchea (PRK) which the Phnong have retained. White, J. (1996), p.336.

3. Understanding the poverty concerns of indigenous and tribal peoples: Trends, causes and perceptions

Poverty is still a serious problem in Cambodia. According to the official figures¹⁹, 36% of the Cambodian population lives below the poverty line. The majority of the poor (79%) are those with household heads employed in the agricultural sector.

In the period 1993-1999 several socio-economic surveys have been conducted resulting in a variety of poverty profiles. One has to be careful with comparisons over time because quantitative surveys have inherent limitations, and these surveys used different methodologies. All in all, expert assessment concludes that between 40 % and 45 % of the Cambodian population subsists below the poverty line and that there is no evidence that this situation is improving.²⁰

Another problem is that the economic situation of indigenous peoples cannot easily be compared with that of the Khmer majority when only measured in terms of consumer prices, income and expenditures. Their traditional way of life offers substantial food security and entails wealth stored in the form of prestige goods such as elephants, livestock, antique gongs, and rice wine jars. As in any society, there are distinctions between rich and poor but they may be revealed in different ways.

The first Cambodian Participatory Poverty Assessment (PPA), conducted in 24 provinces and municipalities at the end of 2000, provided a definition of poverty by the poor: Hunger is their primary concern. The second major aspect is that the poorest people have few, if any, assets (e.g. land, draught animals, housing). Other characteristics of poverty include too many children, ill health, lack of kinship support, living far from markets and services, lack of income sources, lack of potable drinking water, lack of irrigation systems, and lack of confidence in local and provincial administration.

The Cambodian government defines poverty as a multidimensional problem, consisting of lack of food, uncertainties about access to natural resources, powerlessness and hopelessness, social exclusion, and lack of education. It recognises that poverty should be seen in a broader context than merely in terms of low level of consumption and income. Poverty means lack of decent work and inadequate subsistence, ill health and malnutrition, and vulnerability to climatic and environmental risks. The current level of poverty in Cambodia is largely the result of high

¹⁹ NPRS 2003-2005, p.iii based on data from Ministry of Planning 2000. There are no updated data available.

²⁰ Cambodia Human Development Report. Societal Aspects of the HIV/AIDS Epidemic in Cambodia. Progress Report 2001, Ministry of Planning, p.27-32.

population growth, inadequate opportunities, low capabilities, insecurity, exclusion, and vulnerability.²¹

In the last five years, impoverishment has taken a new form. Reduced access to livelihood resources (e.g. land, forest, fishery) became a major concern as privatisation of the commons became an issue. Land grabbing and encroachment (and consequently land/fishing lot-related disputes), concessions on fishery and forest resources, illegal logging and fishing practices, as well as flooding and drought created a new context for the poverty issue.

With their progressive integration into the mainstream of society, most of the above-mentioned criteria have become relevant and noticeable to indigenous peoples. Accelerated changes in their traditional way of life erode more and more of their own cultural perceptions of wealth and poverty, which are increasingly being overlapped or replaced by new social values.



Indigenous women in Ratanakiri (Photo, PRO 169)

3.1 Indigenous perceptions of poverty in the Cambodian context

From their very first contacts with lowland settlers, highlanders have been made conscious of the material differences between themselves and their new neighbours. The highlanders spend much of their time in or around the forest. They are renowned for their knowledge of this environment and for centuries have been sought out by neighbouring lowlanders wanting to exchange consumer goods for rare and lucrative products of the forest.

Their religion and whole mode of existence is founded on their relationship with this environment. Traditional wealth was invariably stored in the form of cows and buffalo, and in the case of Jarai,

²¹ National Poverty Reduction Strategy 2003-2005. Council for Social Development (CSD), Kingdom of Cambodia, p.5 and 15

Tampuon and Phnong, elephants and ivory ear studs. Livestock and elephants, rice, exotic forest goods such as elephant ivory, animal hides and teeth, wood, feathers, wild spices and herbs were exchanged with outside traders for goods such as ceremonial gongs, pottery jars for storing rice wine (both important elements of religious ceremonies), beads, jewellery, salt and iron. For highlanders, trading and monetary income always complemented their primary farming occupation. They were not geared towards exploiting evident economic opportunities such as selling their cattle or cultivating cash crops to ensure greater income. Their way of life assured them substantial food security because various vegetables and fruits were cultivated on hill rice plots, and other dietary supplements could be obtained from the forest (leaves, plants, wild fruits, game and fish).

However, market forces have now placed a very different value on these surplus possessions. Livestock, for example, is now perceived as valuable in strictly monetary terms. Although it seems that most villagers still aspire to owning as much livestock as possible the trend is quite evident that selling of products has not only become an important source of income, compensating for rice shortages, but also and increasingly to satisfy the wish for modern consumer goods. Items like wine jars and gongs no longer have the value they once did. Instead, new technology is being introduced and with it, control is slowly shifting from the traditional leadership towards newcomers in the village who are better connected to the outside world. Traditionally rich and highly respected elders in the village are experiencing an impoverishment process, whereas younger people gain individual influence through their ability to use new opportunities even if these contradict traditional practice.

Highlanders still feel a crucial distinction between themselves as subsistence farmers vis-a-vis the outsiders who are perceived as shrewd traders only following monetary principles. But, they are gradually moving towards what they identify as this “Khmer way”. The monetary economy and desire for cash is penetrating even the most remote areas. This ongoing process differs in extent depending on the stability of the existing traditional social structure. However, in the longer-term, this cultural adaptation in combination with further decreasing natural resources and growing population pressures is bound to erode the traditional economic basis of indigenous societies and lead to new levels of poverty.

3.2 Findings of fieldwork in three provinces

For three weeks in March 2005 the CAS research team conducted Focus Group Discussions and key informant interviews in 12 indigenous villages²² in three provinces (see table 1). The informants were invited to discuss their living conditions, their views on poverty, poverty reduction efforts and how they cope with current development trends. Thus, this part reflects the opinions, views and statements of the indigenous peoples themselves.

²² For an overview of all key informant interviews, including those in Phnom Penh, see Annex 2 and 3; for an overview of all FGD, see Annex 4. For the interview guidelines used, see Annex 1.

Table 1 Villages²³ visited 18-31 March 2005

Province	District	Commune	Number of Families*	Number of Persons*	Indigenous group
Ratanakiri	O Yadao	Som Thom (2 villages)	220	1031	Jarai
			approx. 70	788	Jarai
	Bokeo	Ting Chak (2 villages)	135	624	Tampuon
			78	630	Tampuon
Kratie	Sâmbor	Roluos (2 villages)	370	1709	Mel
			188	827	Mel
	Snoul	Pir Thnu (2 villages)	57**	256	Stieng
			110	359	Stieng
Mondulkiri	Picheda	Bou Sra (2 villages)	117	489	Phnong
			152	***	Phnong
	O Reang	Sen Monorom (2 villages)	262	***	Phnong
			72	***	Phnong

* These figures are from different sources and are usually only estimates

** This figure refers only to the inner-core of the village exclusively consisting of Stieng. The village chief said that the outlying area of the village has an additional 60 families of other ethnicities, mostly Khmer.

*** Information lacking

The situation of each village is quite specific and sometimes differs considerably from that of other villages, even those inhabited by the same ethnic group. However, common to all was that they have absorbed and adapted greatly to outside influences, even in quite remote areas such as O Yadao district in Ratanakiri province (Jarai), or Picheda district in Mondulkiri province (Phnong).

All villages have reasonable access to the district and provincial markets through roads and bridges (mostly) repaired or constructed during the last few years. Most villages are affected by serious land conflicts. These conflicts are caused by allocation at the national level of large concessions to entrepreneurs for commercial exploitation, without any consultation at the local level and by ongoing in-migration (Jarai and Tampuon in Ratanakiri, Phnong in Mondulkiri, Stieng in Kratie).

Two villages of the Mel people in Kratie province are an exception. Although these Mel villages are deep in the forest, separated by a little stream without a bridge and far from densely populated centres, they are still undergoing a transformation process that started in the French time when they converted to Buddhism. Even the elders could not clearly remember their former customs and way of life anymore. Their current way of life is characterised by the typical Khmer pattern. The sole visible remains of Mel identity is the Mel language that is primarily spoken by elders while children, although they understand it, mostly answer in Khmer.

The transformation process that indigenous peoples undergo commenced at the latest during the *Sangkum* period in the 1960s. In Jarai and Tampuon villages, the traditional structure and the

²³ The names of the villages have been deliberately omitted from the text

authority of the natural leader are still strongly present. But all villages show evidence that the traditional system is increasingly threatened by rapid development trends.

3.2.1 General assessment of the present socio-economic situation

All villages reported they have begun to practice alternatives to the traditional upland rice cultivation, such as growing fruit trees and other high-demand cash crops like coffee, cashew nuts, green beans, jackfruit, and durian. That enables them to compensate for rice shortages by earning cash. This fact was perceived as an improvement in living conditions as it meant diversification of agricultural activities, which contributes to food security and generates additional income. However, swidden cultivation remains the predominant source of livelihood.

The Jarai and Tampuan in Ratanakiri confirmed that they have relatively good opportunities to sell their products such as cashew nuts and mangos through middlemen who come from the provincial capital. On the other hand, two Phnong villages in Mondulkiri that had invested in coffee for several years reported that the low market price does not compensate their investment. In 2003, some families decided to replace the coffee by cashew. Families without such investment resources just abandoned the coffee fields.

Not all families are able to expand fields and cultivate crops other than *châmkâr* rice, something evident across villages. Small or female-headed families often lack the necessary labour force.

Access to markets has become much easier than before but not all villages benefit from it, as some have hardly any agricultural products to sell or avoid the market because they feel discriminated against. One village in Snoul district, Kratie, is an example. The inner-core of the village, inhabited exclusively by the Stieng minority, is located in the forest, while the outlying area of the same village is several kilometres away along the main road to Vietnam and houses only (a growing number of) Khmer and Cham, who dominate the area's economy. Although the village chief (Stieng minority) is responsible for the whole village he refuses to say anything about this outlying area, and refers all questions to the deputy village chief who is Khmer. The focus group discussion as well as the separate interviews with village elders hinted at the fact that the Stieng in this village feel pushed aside, cut off from development, and deprived of their traditional livelihood. Several years ago, they had an assured income by collecting and selling resin but now all the resin trees have been cut down.

Most villagers feel that they are at the buyers' mercy and depend on the price that the middlemen dictate. Jarai complain of being cheated because the buyers of cashew tamper with their scales to the sellers' disadvantage.

Nevertheless, most villages are increasingly integrated within the broader society and the market economy. The number of households in each village who participate in the buying and selling of

goods indicates such integration. In some villages, almost all families possess a motorbike, which is an important means to connect the villagers to the market and to other services like health care. Every village reported having access to formal education for their children (at least 1-2 grade) mostly near the village. Among Phnong and Mel minorities parents are highly interested in sending their children to school hoping for better economic opportunities for the younger generation. Nevertheless, it seems that this issue is fraught with far-reaching problems, which will be further explored below.

All villages appreciate that the access to new technology such as threshing or rice hulling machines, *kó-yun* (a small agricultural tractor), and motorbikes, and access to the market, to wells and to health care make agricultural and household work easier as ever before. At the same time, some villagers complained that life today is harder than before. The increasing number of families and family members in the village imply an increasing need for food and housing while the available resources are limited or even decreasing. Natural resources like forest, wild animals, fish, and water have decreased significantly during recent years, and access to them is being restricted by regulations and prohibitions. Loss of land aggravates this situation.

3.2.2 Dwindling of natural resources / increasingly affected environment

All villages mentioned a steady decrease of natural resources that affects their ability to pursue their traditional livelihood strategies. Not only wildlife and fish, but also timber are in high demand and are being exploited primarily by outsiders. The consequence is that villagers have more and more difficulty in collecting forest products. In the case of one village in Kratie province, large-scale logging 10 years ago deprived villagers of any possible forest use. Now the forest is regenerating but the trees are still small and non-timber forest products (NTFP) are not nearly as abundant as before. Also, many new settlers have arrived, and villagers said that for the last 3-4 years more and more Cham from neighbouring Vietnam come to their forest for charcoal production. And they feel helpless to take any action against it.

The Phnong in one village consulted complain that the fish stock has been systematically destroyed by illegal fishing methods (using electricity or explosives) by soldiers and other outsiders who have access to such means. One of the participants of the focus group discussion pointed out that sometimes villagers themselves followed this bad example to earn quick and easy money. Both villages consulted in O Reang district are now badly affected by the spraying of pesticide by the Chinese enterprise Wuzishan LS Group on pine plantations. This land actually belongs to the Phnong people and was used for cattle grazing. Villagers are angry because they were not informed and lost cows through poisoning. Furthermore, they fear that pesticides will seep into the groundwater and pollute their wells and rice fields.

In one commune visited, Tampuon villages are very concerned about a gem-mining operator who encroached on their ancestral lands and contaminated local water sources. Villagers are

convinced that the industrial effluent pollutes their water as they experience more illnesses like headaches, diarrhoea and skin problems than before.

All villages consulted, in all three provinces, were similarly affected by an increasing water shortage during the dry season that causes poor rice harvest and also affects other crops such as cashew nuts. Lack of water also causes livestock losses, especially cows and buffalos. Two villages in Mondulkiri have not been able to plant rice for two years already. The collection and sale of resin can still compensate them, enabling them to earn enough money to buy rice from the market but they are uncertain how long this will last. Some families sent younger family members to work with the Chinese enterprise (Wuzhishan), where they can earn 180.000 Riel per month (US \$ 45). However, income generation through wage labour for big companies is still an exception. People from some other villages strictly refuse to do so because they consider wage labour as a loss of much valued independence. In several discussion groups, villagers mentioned that belonging to the poorest means to have to work for others. This can also be interpreted in the light of the past when wealthy Phnong families owned servants from very poor families who complied with their required communal obligations with this form of bonded labour. However, younger people highlighted the differences between then and now as they are paid in cash for their wage labour and are able to go home after work. This issue is one of several indicators of an emerging generational conflict (see below).

3.2.3 Issues related to land security

One of the most important changes for indigenous peoples in the northeast is the loss of land. Traditionally indigenous communities have managed and used a wide range of natural resources including forest lands, agricultural land and water resources. Today most villages complained about the decreasing access to land that they had farmed for generations.

In Ratanakiri, several communities are worried by the large concessions granted to enterprises or powerful persons whom villagers could not clearly identify. The Jarai in two villages visited resolutely expressed their intention to prevent the Men Sarun Company from encroaching onto their land and forest. They said that they are not against development *per se*, but want to be consulted and involved in any decision-making regarding issues affecting their community. In one village, inhabitants reported that after their protests they were told that the company wants to determine the commune-borders and determine which land is not in use. Although the company claims only the unused land people do not trust this stated intention and fear that bit by bit all their land will be taken because no land is unused. The number of families in the villages is constantly growing because of high population growth and the increasing number of newly married couples that need land of their own. This means that the problem of landlessness is going to increase and the first indications of this are becoming visible. More and more families are forced to divide their holding into smaller plots and reach the lower limits of sufficiently large yields. Village elders are also worried as land shortages create disputes between families and between neighbouring villages. In one village, the elders reported that in the past when the number of families increased

it was decided to split the village and to seek a new settlement area. Today this strategy cannot work anymore because boundaries are clearly defined and no unoccupied land is available.

The same problem was mentioned by the Stieng people in one village. This village experienced massive logging in 1993/94 and villagers obstructed access to their ancestral land. But later, more and more powerful outsiders came and occupied land without any consultation while local authorities forbade the Stieng to expand their village by house construction and/or allocating new plots of land to newly married couples. The villagers are angry that outsiders may exploit land and natural resources while the long time residents are being marginalised.

This is not the only case revealing that commercial forest exploitation and road construction go hand in hand with in-migration to formerly sparsely populated areas and land grabbing. Tampuon also reported that powerful people have started to deal in and occupy land along the road disregarding traditional user rights. In Mondulkiri, new settlers have burned massive forest plots along the road under construction to a commune in Picheda district. The two villages that we visited in this commune felt increasingly under pressure as disputes over land are increasing. Some families of one village want to sell land but the community does not allow them to do so. Other communities in Ratanakiri are not managing to deal effectively with the exigencies of the land market. Open conflicts over land sold by some families without informing the village elders and in spite of the stated disagreement of other villagers threaten to undermine the traditional leadership and cohesion of the community.

In one village the situation was unclear, with some village elders claiming that the commune chief is involved in selling land to powerful outsiders. It was alleged that he ignored consultation with the village and pressurised some families to sell land. The *mé kântreanh* is highly worried by the fact that some people do not respect communal decisions anymore, for example not selling land to outsiders. Families are enticed into exchanging land for a motorbike or other consumer goods but afterwards are unable to produce sufficient food for their family. Then they feel forced to do wrong things like logging trees.

In another village, the traditional leader complained that disputes over land within the village have increased dramatically. The villagers are in agreement not to sell land but feel increasing pressure from a conflict with a gem-mining operator who encroaches on village land. People are disillusioned that district and provincial authorities do not respond to the complaints of the village. They think it is possible that more demonstrations will take place or even that violence will occur.

In short, the trend is that the large and numerous land transactions, occurrences of land grabbing and sales of land or land titles do not only diminish the natural resource base that sustains the livelihoods of indigenous peoples but also debilitate the cultural and social resources they need to deal with the challenges of change itself.

3.2.4 Restrictions by administrative instructions, regulations and prohibitions

All villages felt constrained by the many restrictions and prohibitions that prevent them from following their traditional livelihood activities. The main complaint (except for the Mel group) is limited or no access to land and forest to clear for new fields (*châmkar*) because the current fields have been cultivated for several years and lost their fertility. Sometimes local authorities and the environment network prohibit even the re-cultivation of fallow plots by reference to the general prohibition of cutting forest.

One village is particularly affected as it lost land by irregular land sales and has not been able to change *châmkar* sites since 1998. Also the Jarai in O Yadao district and Stieng in Snoul district reported that they have great difficulty finding plots fertile enough to provide sufficient yields. They do not understand why they have been restricted while outsiders are allowed to exploit resources just as they like. In O Yadao the situation recently became very tense when the Men Sarun company tried to resume development activities on 20,000 ha of disputed land. In Jarai villages the disagreement with their marginalisation through administrative restrictions and prohibitions was always clearly expressed. They announced action if the conflict is not going to be resolved in a fair way acceptable to both parties. Their main objective is to manage the land by themselves because they see living in the forest and cultivating upland rice as part of their identity and the basis for cohesion among community members.

Other restrictions relate to the use of the forest, hunting wild animals, house construction and village management.

The Stieng in one village visited feel discriminated against by authorities because of the hurdles they have to overcome before being allowed to build a new house for a newly married couple (if they get permission at all). Khmer families on the other hand are seen to have the right to settle wherever they want without any problem. In the past, if villagers wanted to build a new house, they went to the forest, cut the necessary wood and constructed the house in a communal effort. Today they feel their hands are tied and they are at the authorities' mercy.

In one Phnong village, inhabitants reported that they have to pay 70,000 Riel (US \$ 17.50) in order to get permission to construct a house; a substantial amount for the majority of villagers. In all four Phnong villages consulted, annoyance over restrictions regarding clearing forest and cutting small trees for house construction was voiced. They find all these restrictions and prohibitions difficult to accept while outsiders and powerful people can ignore them without any disciplinary consequences.

In those villages that have the most serious natural resource problems and where the traditional decision-making processes are undermined by those problems, one also encounters understanding for certain restrictions and prohibitions. The *mé kântreanh* from two villages welcomed measures against cutting forest or hunting wild animals. They were very worried that the

forest and game are going to disappear very soon. But the disregard of regulations and instructions by powerful outsiders divides villagers and creates social anarchy.

One elder (*chah tum*) in Kratie province reported intimidation against villagers who criticise violations against natural resource management restrictions by other villagers (fishing with illegal methods, cutting trees). He and some others fear powerful people in the village with connections to higher administrative levels. They were told that it is better for them not to know too much, or their lives could be in danger. The elder said that the traditional leadership in the village feels helpless as the village chief has a broad network of collaborators who violate restrictions and regulations but are backed at higher levels. This drastically undermines the traditional cohesion of the community.

However, in most cases, even the village chief, always a member of the same people/ethnic group as the other villagers, feels sandwiched between the requirements of the traditional way of life and those of his administrative function. Higher levels rarely respond to the concerns of the village that he brings to their attention while on the other hand he is expected to comply with orders regardless of the actual situation of the village. Village and commune chiefs both reported that they never receive relevant information about plans of commercial investments in their commune in advance and are normally as surprised as other villagers. Most feel helpless to protect villagers' concerns against harmful outside activities because of the powerful people who back such plans or act with impunity.

3.2.5 Traditional leadership in the context of formal administrative and new development structures

By and large, respect for the elders was fundamental in all the indigenous communities visited. The present role of the village elders in dispute resolution and appeasement within and between families as well as in decision-making and managing of spiritual affairs, however, varies considerably. In the villages of Jarai and Tampuon, Ratanakiri, the *mé kântreanh* and *chah tum* were still highly regarded by the villagers while the village chief seemed to be in a more difficult position. Nevertheless, all interviewees confirmed that both sides strive for mutual agreement on every matter relevant to the village. In one Tampuon village the village chief confirmed that his instructions from to the higher authorities are only implemented by the village if he has the agreement of the village elders. If they do not agree he is powerless as the villagers will not follow him.

Another Tampuon village, on the other hand, appears to be going through a period of upheaval. As already described above, irregular land sales and pressing economic constraints have undermined village cohesion. The high-handed transactions of the commune chief, making use of his official position and in disregard of the village's needs is seen as having a damaging effect on the community, as people feel encouraged to ignore common decisions in favour of presumed personal advantage.

The situation in one Stieng village in Snoul district seems to be similar. Village elders feel disrespected by local authorities and fear for loss of traditional cohesion. In their view, the village chief could become an influential rival, based on his access to decision-making beyond the village level. Villagers belonging to his network are granted economic or social advantages (getting permission, exceptions, assistance etc.) while other people end up with nothing and feel discriminated against. It is difficult for the elders to act as they do not want to get into open confrontation with the higher authorities.

However, despite such frictions and rivalry, village chiefs and commune leaders are increasingly involved in conflict resolution in all the villages visited. They are not only more and more involved in settling disputes within the village or between neighbouring villages, but also have had to handle outside interests, such as the Chinese enterprise Wuzishan, as they are also the executive bodies of the official administration.

The slow decline of traditional authority can also to be seen in other ways. Elders in the villages are no longer the real centre of the village as too many influences from outside and accelerated development trends are passing elders by. Some *mé kântreanh* and *chah tum* themselves admitted that they have increasing difficulty in accepting the processes affecting their village. As the *mé kântreanh* of Bu Teut village, Bou Sra commune, said:

“The elders care for dispute resolution and spiritual life but development is the affair of the village chief.”

All villages where development agencies have been working for several years have some form of development committee. Some have more than one, comprising primarily younger people selected on the basis of high literacy and levels of education. These new structures undoubtedly alter the dynamics of the community. Decision-making within villages has changed hands, as those with higher Khmer literacy are given the responsibility for decisions regarding the development of the village, while traditional elders who are illiterate may become sidelined. The *mé kântreanh* of Kâb village confirmed this trend:

“Today not the elders but people of the forest protection community (*sahakum prey chhoeu*) decide on access to forest and prohibit cutting trees.”

Many villages are aware of the changing role of the elders in the community as younger people have assumed control of many of the high value resources (technical equipment, modern transport means or video equipment) that put them in a strong position in decision-making. A growing spirit of individualism among the younger generation with more experience from outside the community may be an additional factor in decreasing respect for elders and traditional leaders.

Not all villages are equally able to handle this time of upheaval. Especially if the cohesion of the village is seriously threatened by outside influences that are perceived to be negative, elders and *mé kântreanh* can often feel themselves in rival positions to the new structures. In other cases, they are aware of changes in behaviour and aspirations of their younger people but still express confidence in keeping these initiatives under control and preserving their own traditions in the face of new trends.

However, the progress of integration into the market economy and continued development activities will engender further the creeping erosion of indigenous traditional life and culture. An important question is if, and if so to what extent, it will go hand in hand with economic and socio-cultural impoverishment.

3.2.6 Changing values in the context of indigenous identity

Greater access to the market, increasing in-migration and changes in agricultural practices have led to new desires and challenges in indigenous communities. Confronted with consumer goods and modern equipment that can make life easier, villagers are keen to possess these things. In all discussions, it was evident that most traditional values related to wealth and poverty were being challenged or even replaced by new ones.

Jarai reported that they had sold most ancient gongs, ceremonial tools, traditional body decoration and jewelry to Khmer traders coming from the US as they had felt that these objects no longer represented real property assets for them. Today they want to have motorbikes, video equipment and comfortable housing. Money has become an important equivalent as it is needed for buying gasoline, additional food and rice, medical treatment, clothes and entertainment equipment. A few families have started to invest their surplus income from selling agricultural or forest products in gold and jewelry.

However, the majority of villagers (not only in the Jarai villages) still view the possession of cows and buffalo as important indicators of wealth or poverty, although often in terms of their sale potential.

While land had no specific role or importance in the past as it was always available for the community as a whole, it has now become an important criterion for adequate subsistence for each family. Every discussion group referred to this difference, rating lack of land as a decisive reason for impoverishment and reduction in basic living standards. As it has become a commodity very much in demand by outsiders, indigenous communities have painfully learnt what it means to be excluded from ancestral land or to have lost land by ill-considered sales. The land issue has also started to alter the dynamics of traditional decision processes in the village by fostering individualism and splitting communities. The communities have all noted these changes and traditional leadership is committed (with varying degrees of success) to keep them under control.

In contrast to observations ten years ago, it is now common in every village to wear non-traditional clothing bought at the market and only very few elders reported that they have kept some traditional clothes such as loincloths at home. Tampuon and Phnong have revived the tradition of weaving traditional dress on a small scale but only to sell to outsiders.

Although Khmer video films, Khmer pop songs and karaoke have high entertainment value especially amongst the younger generation, discussion groups stated that they could not imagine a future where their grandchildren could no longer speak their indigenous language. It seems that the language is still an important element of indigenous identity. However, with increasing integration into the market and other spheres of society, it may weaken as children are growing up in an environment with Khmer as the main language of communication. In separate interviews, elders in particular expressed concern about the tendency to mix the languages and replace local words with Khmer vocabulary. In the villages of the Mel minority, it was noted that children understood the indigenous language but mostly answered in Khmer.²⁴

However, steady consumption of Khmer language entertainment may contribute to the depreciation of the whole system of indigenous values more than is realised. There are no other alternatives available, particularly as the oral tradition may no longer be able to compete with modern mass media arriving in every village.

Feelings are mixed, as indigenous parents want their children to be literate in Khmer in order to have the best opportunities in the modern world. Above all, they want to avoid being looked down on by outsiders, as the Stieng minority in one village explicitly expressed. In contacts with outsiders, indigenous groups have felt under great pressure to suppress their cultural identity. There are risks of being absorbed by the mainstream culture in the long-term if there is no mutual understanding and tolerance of difference. This will involve not only respect for different cultures but also the active preservation of different cultural identities.

At school, not only is the language of study Khmer but the content is exclusively orientated to Khmer values. That means that indigenous children are put at a distinct disadvantage when they start school. It may also explain that in some groups such as the Jarai or Stieng there is a reluctance to send children to school at all. Other groups like the Mel or Phnong have accepted and absorbed many of the mainstream values, and school attendance is therefore higher. In one village in Kratie, not one child of the Stieng minority has been to school for several years as they have felt completely dominated by children of in-migrants from Trâpeang Srè Krau. The two villages of the Jarai minority in Ratanakiri had similar experiences. Although the school is near the villages, lessons are irregular because children do not want to go and teachers coming to the province often stay away, frustrated by the lack of interest. A further problem is that when children

²⁴ In other indigenous groups living in mixed ethnic villages alongside a majority Khmer population like the Kuy or Suy the erosion process is at a more advanced stage. Even in the family it is mainly Khmer that is spoken.

go to school they are not available to help parents with farming²⁵ and elders fear that they will then lack the necessary agricultural knowledge for working the *châmkar* in the future. In Bu Heam village, one elder Phnong highlighted the internal conflict, typical for other indigenous groups too, as follows:

“Learning at school is not worth much as going away to work brings only a little money that does not adequately compensate us. But my children continue to want to work far away and not farm the *châmkar* anymore.”

All these questions appear to reflect a divergent process between traditional life typified by the elders and the demands of current development manifested in the desires of the younger generation.

3.2.7 Implications of development efforts at village level

In all the villages visited, the local people reported benefits from development projects in recent years that have improved their living conditions. Most appreciated were the installation of wells in the villages and health care initiatives accessible to villagers. Several indigenous groups, however, complained that it is difficult for them to maintain the wells and if the pump is broken, and nobody takes responsibility for its repair. Getting medical treatment for serious illness also remains difficult despite the availability of a health clinic as the service is expensive due to informal fees. It seems that in Ratanakiri access to health services is more restricted than in the other two provinces. The villages of Jarai and Tampuan were the furthest from any health facility (one village was 12 km from the nearest health post), and villagers often lack transportation. Families of seriously ill people are increasingly forced to borrow money for treatment which is then paid back in kind after harvest. In all discussions it was clear that traditional patterns of help within communities have become more and more dominated by financial matters. However, all groups said that they were convinced that modern medicine was more effective than traditional treatment. Even elders accepted that if they are sick, younger people want to go immediately to formal health centres without spending time on local traditional healing methods first. Several villages also highlighted their success in improving local hygiene and sanitation helped by some NGOs or government agencies, although they found it difficult to identify which groups they were.

This was generally the case with development activities in the village. Local people could not clearly distinguish if they were initiated and carried out by governmental or non-governmental organisations. However, this may not be so important as villagers judged the direct benefit and impact of such activities on the community as a whole, rather than who carried them out. The type and extent of long term development efforts has varied from village to village and in each of the

²⁵ According to a survey among the hilltribe population of Mondulakiri between December 2002 and January 2003 33% of children ages 5-17 who did not attend school the entire year gave as a reason that they were too busy helping parents with farming. Being too busy helping parents farm was again the predominant factor identified as the reason for stopping school attendance (45%) “An Assessment of Khmer Language Skills and Literacy Levels within the Adult Hilltribe Population of Mondulakiri Province”, ICC June 2003, p. 16.

three provinces. In most villages, the discussion groups reported that the village had a development committee, initiated by outsiders using the village chief as the link. The role of the latter was primarily perceived as the calling of meetings to pass on information to villagers from higher government level. Elders and *mé kântreanh* also stated that development issues were the responsibility of the village chief. Hardly any village appeared to view the committee as the place for joint discussion of planning and managing the village's development issues. Among Jarai and Tampuan groups it seemed that such discussions still happened independently and within informal traditional structures, with *mé kântreanh* and elders submitting the results to the village chief for forwarding to higher levels.

Even where the position of the village chief was much stronger, it has remained difficult to get people together for meetings and to involve them in such activities. Several village chiefs explained that villagers would prefer to receive development provided by outsiders such as wells, school buildings or roads and bridges. When the village chief tries to collect financial contributions for organising the village's own participation in development processes, hardly anyone is willing to join. The timeframe of fieldwork however was too short to find out what the real reasons for the villagers' reluctance were, and that although some villages had up to five committees (mainly village development committee, forest protection committee, sometimes water using committee, health issues committee, Cambodian Red Cross committee) the members were usually the same. Interviews with elders have indicated that in some cases, committee members, mainly selected by outsiders on the basis of high literacy, are not accepted by the entire community as they are too young or lack necessary leadership skills. It could also be that some committee members lack self-confidence as the tasks are very new for them. In other cases, when capacity building and training has been provided to the few persons in charge, benefits appear to be channelled primarily to individuals instead of to the community. This holds great potential for resentment amongst other community members. On the other hand, the Stieng group in one village expressed both in discussions and interviews feelings of unease in handling matters with outsiders and higher levels of authority. This is also a hurdle for active participation in development efforts. In the neighbouring village similar dissatisfaction was expressed by elders who accused the village chief of channelling development benefits primarily to people belonging to his personal network.

However, these problems need to be explored in more detail and in each community in order to be better able to address them.

3.2.8 Gender issues

Traditionally, women and men have had complementary roles in indigenous communities, reflected in a distinct gendered division of labour. In agricultural and other productive work such as collecting forest products, they each have their own tasks. Together they plant and harvest the crops on their farms.

As in most societies, Highland women and girls are responsible for household related activities. They also have to fetch water, by carrying it in gourds in a *kappa* (traditional back strap basket) to

their homes. Some productive work such as weaving baskets, making kitchen and hunting utensils or repairing houses are men's affairs. However, even if women spend slightly less time on productive tasks than men, they spend longer hours doing household work. In all discussion groups and interviews both women and men equally agreed and esteemed the position of women. Everybody confirmed that to have daughters in the family is more important than sons as they stay at home, ensuring care for their aging parents and younger siblings even after they have married. Men usually move to the family of their wives, although amongst Jarai and Tampuan it is also possible to move back to the man's family after several years, until finally settling in the wife's village.

Apart from a gendered division of labour, there is also a division in decision-making power between men and women at the household and village levels. Generally, women have the final say on financial and agricultural matters in their families, but beyond household level they participate very little in decision-making. Female elders in one Tampuan, and one Phnong village, stated that they rarely become involved in dispute resolution as men consider this domain as exclusively theirs. Sometimes older and respected women are consulted and included in dispute resolution meetings as advisors and witnesses, but they never participate in the final decision.

Women usually take part in village meetings and it was not difficult to invite women to the discussion groups, neither from the men's point of view nor on the part of the women. Some discussions were dominated by single men, but mostly women have appropriate space to express their views. The main problem however seemed that many of them felt self-conscious in the presence of outsiders to talk about village matters they perceived as unpleasant. Interestingly, with the exception of Jarai and Phnong women, all the women in the focus group discussions communicated in Khmer. This appears to reflect the increasing integration of some indigenous peoples into the market economy and their involvement in development projects at village level.

The distribution of traditional skills along gender lines was more or less equal and of a complementary nature, based on the division of labour and experience. However, the discussion of women's and men's roles reflected that in the last two decades, a gap in knowledge and shift in control is emerging.

Alterations in agricultural systems, and restriction of access to forests, has led to changes in the traditional division of tasks and responsibilities. With traditional crops women have an important role in selection of seeds, but now men select the seeds for cash crops. In addition, men tend to choose the type of cash crops they will grow as they have more contact with middlemen who provide the villagers with information about what kind of products the market is interested in.

Compared to their traditional roles, women seem to be losing influence in the community as men have increasingly assumed control of many of the decisions relating to high value resources. On the other hand, the extent of the workload of women arising from the combination of productive

and reproductive work is still the same, mostly keeping women from attending training or sending girls for formal education²⁶.

Although in some villages, women reported that due to activities of some NGOs, the understanding of men about the difficult situation of their wives has improved, leading some to give more help in managing the household and children care, the general impression was that villages have instead had to cope with increasing problems of domestic violence. Tampuon women in Ratanakiri expressed their dissatisfaction with men's tendency to spend too much time consuming alcohol and wasting the families' resources with this tradition. In a drunken state they often argue with each other, taking their anger out on their wives and children. The discussion groups and interviews with elders in Jarai and Tampuon villages, confirmed this trend mentioning the efforts of the *mé kântreanh* or the village chief in handling increasing disputes within and between families. These have tended to flare up in connection with land issues, market activities and income generation. Some elders attributed it to the increase of the number of families within the village that makes it more difficult to manage and to mediate in the traditional way. In one village where all Phnong families have converted to Christianity, the discussion group highlighted their collective dislike of the consumption of alcohol and reported that they stopped this tradition in favour of good relationships with each other.

Another gender related problem refers to a group that does not get an equal share in the benefit of natural resources. In particular, female headed households without sufficient access to male labour have a hard time making a living. The size of the *châmkar* of widows is usually about half that of other families. In one Phnong village one woman whose husband was killed by an incident several years ago reported that their livelihood is very limited as field work and raising animals take a lot of time particularly as she has also to care for four children and her 80 year old mother. She mentioned however that she did not feel excluded by the community. Other interviewees, like one elder in a Tampuon village, indicated that belonging to the poorest means either having to borrow money to provide a share in the communal feasts or, if this is not possible, they prefer to stay away.

However, households without an adequate male labour force mostly choose to use land plots recently abandoned by other people because no trees have to be cut. Growing rice and vegetables on such *châmkar*s will obviously not lead to good harvests as these fields are been abandoned because of decreasing soil fertility, increasing weeds and a declining yield. Thus, it remains difficult for these families to attain food security let alone to make any surplus for health care or other services.

3.3 Perceived Reasons for Poverty and Indigenous Poverty Reduction Strategies

²⁶ A survey in Mondulakiri about school attendance of children between 6 and 17 years old showed that the percentage of boys and girls aged between 7-11 years who go to school is almost equal (51,3% boys and 49,7% girls). In the age group of 12-14 years the gap is bigger (80% of boys and 70% of girls) further increasing to 14% in the age group of 15-17 years (64% of boys and 50% of girls). "An Assessment of Khmer Language Skills and Literacy Levels within the Adult Hilltribe Population of Mondulakiri Province", ICC June 2003, p. 17.

3.3.1. Indigenous criteria for poverty and some perceived reasons for poverty

The focus group discussions and individual interviews reflected clear shifts in perception of poverty and poverty ratings amongst indigenous peoples compared with the past.

In the past the following were indicators of wealth:

- number of elephants (Jarai, Tampuan and Phnong)
- number of serfs (Phnong, 1 serf cost 4-5 buffalo)
- number of cows and buffalos (1st priority amongst Mel)
- number and quality of bronze gongs
- number and quality of wine jars (amongst Stieng also extent and quality of decoration)
- number and size of copper kettles
- quantity of rice harvested
- extent and quality of traditional body decoration, especially size of ivory ear studs
- number and quality of self-woven clothes
- number and quality of self-woven blankets (Phnong)
- number and quality of modern clothes (only Mel)

Now the criteria are:

- area of land available for farming
- quality (fertility) of farming land
- number of cows and buffalos (rich 25-30 animals, better off 10-15, poor 2-3, poorest 0)
- enough food for the whole year
- number of planted cashew trees and income from sale (Jarai and Tampuan)
- possession of agricultural equipment (threshing / hulling machine, small tractor)
- possession of modern means of transport (motorbike, car)
- extent of investment in agricultural projects
- state of health and access to health care
- possession of consumer goods
- possession of entertainment equipment
- possession of gold jewellery, watches
- modern housing (material and extent) (not in case of Jarai and Tampuan, whereas of special importance amongst Mel, Stieng and Phnong)

The same phenomenon of change is to be observed in the reasons given for poverty and wealth:

Poverty in the past was caused by:	Wealth in the past was caused by:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ laziness▪ haphazard behaviour▪ bad harvests▪ illness and death of animals▪ misfortune	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ rich family background (inheritance)▪ hard-work▪ good fortune (based on proper traditional behaviour)▪ special knowledge important for the community

Poverty is now caused by:	Wealth is now caused by:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Laziness / haphazard behaviour ▪ dwindling forest / no access ▪ lack of land ▪ bad harvests ▪ illness and death of animals ▪ lack of knowledge ▪ lack of information ▪ lack of labour force ▪ too many children ▪ social problems in family ▪ sudden change in market demand 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ rich family background (inheritance) ▪ hard-work ▪ having ideas / more knowledge ▪ enough capital for new investment ▪ access to fertile soil ▪ access to health care ▪ more contacts outside ▪ ability to trade ▪ sale of ancient items to outsiders

These changes have necessarily resulted in the slow alteration of strategies and efforts to handle poverty.

Interestingly, while indigenous people have seen the reasons for poverty in the past on their own failure, they have now begun to place the emphasis more on outside influences. Although laziness and haphazardness are still popular explanations, villagers acknowledge that they increasingly suffer from effects they cannot influence or that are new for them. On the other hand, they believe that the opportunities for getting rich have now become many times better as long as one has the right connections with the outside world.

However, attitudes toward these new possibilities and standards of modern wealth vary and do not prevail amongst all villagers. The difficulty often consists of linking objects perceived as high value to a particular set of living conditions. To possess a motorbike, classified as an indicator of wealth, does not automatically mean that the family is indeed wealthy. In the contrary, to afford a motorbike may have an impoverishing effect, as the family gets into debt paying for the bike by instalments, sometimes over several years. Future bad harvests or the illness of key family members may aggravate their economic situation, as the advantages of modern transport cannot compensate for the loss of a stable livelihood. The risk of poverty is even higher if the family has given land away or has been deprived of farmland through ongoing disputes with powerful outsiders.

3.3.2. Food security

In almost all villages, enough food for the whole year was one of the key criteria in distinguishing poor families from the rich. Villagers all detailed their difficulties in attaining food security due to increasing restrictions on access to land and forest as well as natural disasters such as long term drought. This requires the purchase of rice and other food in the market, but only the rich have enough money to do so. Jarai and Tampuon elders remembered that in previous times they always had enough food, even if the harvest of upland rice was bad, as the forest gave them sufficient alternatives. Today families have more problems as they are dependent on the sale of cashew nuts to compensate for restrictions on their traditional livelihood and because life becomes

more and more money-based. Mutual help is diminishing to the close circle of relatives, while poor families have instead to buy or borrow from others.

In one Stieng and several Phnong villages, elders believed that rich families in the past were more conciliatory and much more willing to contribute to the well-being of the community by supplying communal feasts, providing food and supporting poor families. Today they are primarily interested in selling their surplus to outsiders to benefit only their closest family members. In one village one elder felt that as he came from a poor family he could still express his opinion at village meetings but richer people do not care about them anymore.

However, the discussions revealed that only some villages are able to compensate rice shortages by selling cash crops, forest products such as resin or animals. In cases where conditions for agricultural cultivation or use of forest are seriously affected by outside interventions or drought without no adequate alternatives, the number of families who suffer food shortages is increasing. Here again female headed households are particularly badly hit as investments in new cultivation methods require a sufficient male labour force, access to information and to the market.

3.3.3. Increasing population

Another complex problem being faced by indigenous peoples is the increase in village populations, with many children per family and in some cases an overwhelming influx of outsiders, in combination with decreasing resources.

Most discussion groups mentioned that in spite of some innovations and technical improvements in their living conditions the increase of people has made them feel uncomfortable or worried, as living together has become crowded, burdened with many restrictions and difficult to manage. It is increasingly difficult, sometimes impossible, to make new farmland accessible but pressure is high to produce more food for the larger families. One participant in the discussion group in Bu Luk village reflected these concerns by saying:

“The more people have to share the same area of land the fewer possibilities for sufficient livelihood exist for them. Plots become too small to have enough yields.”

Bad weather conditions aggravate the situation. In several groups women stated that they have started to think about having fewer children, if they could. Almost all village interviewees explicitly stated the wish to keep to the tradition of not allowing outsiders (those not belonging to the ethnic minority) to settle in the village as a separate family. This leads to the disintegration of community cohesion as outsiders have other traditions and values. Some discussions also reflected the fear of being disregarded or treated as inferior by the new people. In one village in Snoul district (Kratie province) there is an unusual situation in which the inner-core of the village in the forest consists exclusively of Stieng, while the outlying area of the same village (which is several kilometres down the road) consists of Khmer or other ethnic families who have moved in since 2000. The Stieng have difficulty in coping with this situation as they feel overrun and not respected.

3.3.4 Land as decisive marker of ethnic identity

All villages, no matter if they have land disputes or not, expressed their closest bond to the land they have traditionally farmed. They cannot imagine leaving agricultural cultivation, as it is their traditional livelihood and the literal groundbase of their community. Loss of land, restricted access to land and insecurity over land issues is eroding a once sustainable livelihood to its foundations, while the indigenous groups feel that they have not sufficient alternatives to compensate. Fear is huge amongst them that the expulsion from their land will lead them to economic impoverishment at an unknown level. One Phnong elder described the importance of land to them with the following metaphor:

“Not cultivating the *châmkar* is like a car without gasoline.”

All were in agreement that even if in the future indigenous peoples are not allowed to plant upland rice or practice traditional swidden cultivation, they would nevertheless need their land for cash crops, fruit trees or vegetables as well as raising animals to be able to feed their families.

In addition, indigenous peoples who are worst affected by ongoing encroachment and land grabbing also have begun to perceive difficulties in handling land issues in the traditional way. In one village people recognised that their system of land distribution in the community does not work well anymore since a Malaysian Company has taken land from their commune in 1995 and its Khmer successor company that has since taken over is demanding still more. The situation in other villages is similar.

Elders notice more disputes within and between families, caused by land shortages and disputes, and economic problems arising therefrom, the spread of bad or disrespectful behaviour amongst the young and an eroding commitment to each other. This is often perceived as socio-cultural impoverishment as traditions become slowly overtaken by new behaviour patterns among younger people, which elders observe with mixed feelings. Traditional patterns of dispute resolution can still work, but things have become more complex as many disputes over land and other natural resources have started to go beyond the traditional community level. Even if indigenous groups hesitate to involve higher levels like the commune chief in dispute resolution, the extent and nature of conflicts increasingly require more formal methods. All groups confirmed that going to court is not unknown to them but up to now, they have avoided doing so. This inexperience places them in a vulnerable position particularly as their basic livelihoods are often at stake.

With the assistance of some NGOs, several indigenous communities have used the formal way of involving all levels of authority to clarify land disputes with outsiders, but their hopes that this would bring a just decision have been dashed. They have not yet received any response from higher authorities and, believe that there are powerful people at these levels whom they cannot overcome.

Among the Phnong, hope is stronger that higher levels of authority will care for the affairs of villagers while equally wanting to avoid presenting their case before the court but preferring instead to solve it by mutual agreement at village or commune level. One participant of the focus group discussions explained that the word “court” is associated with prison and the possibility of detention in prison frightens them. On the other hand, a younger participant explained that he would accept going to court if the resolution of a land dispute requires it. These discussions indicate that younger people appear to have absorbed the idea of resolving conflict by using more formal means than their elders, relying much more on assistance from non-governmental organisations and attending training relating to land law.

3.3.5. Education and health aspects

For an increasing number of villagers, in particular for younger people, combating poverty is closely connected to access to information and specific knowledge that indigenous people did not have in the past.

Parents particularly amongst Phnong expressed their belief that children have better chances in life if they go to school. On the other hand, they are uncertain if these expectations can be fulfilled. Of particular importance to them is to become literate in Khmer and to be able to calculate figures in order to survive in the market economy. They also expressed an urgent need for skills in modern agricultural practices and animal raising as important prerequisites to manage the changes necessary for a sustainable livelihood. Some villages keep contact with relatives in Vietnam from where they can get some information about coffee or cashew nut growing or the use of agricultural equipment. Some villagers have adopted the writing system for the Phnong language developed in Vietnam founded on Latin letters in order to write texts in Phnong language. Stimulated by a textbook in the Kuy language, using the Khmer script, Stieng expressed a wish to have assistance in developing a writing system for the Stieng language.

The same tendency of slowly assimilating new ideas from outside is to be found in health seeking behaviour. All interviewed groups reported to have experience with using modern medicine and formal health care facilities. However, although there is an increasing demand for better access to it, the health status of indigenous peoples cannot be separated from their spiritual beliefs or social life. Many of them like the Tampuan, Jarai and Phnong understand illness often as a result of a lack of respect to the spirits, a hex from an enemy or irregular interactions with the natural environment and combine treatment, simultaneously or one after the other. The traditional healer continues to play an important role in indigenous society, as he is one of who has knowledge about the spirit world. He is also renowned and feared for his powers of sorcery.

On the other hand, interviewees complained to have too less information about modern drugs and its “strength” to cure sickness. Efficacy of treatment seems to be mostly associated with high cost. The purchase of drugs often happens on a basis of negotiating according to the money available rather than following a prescribed dosage or regime for the medication. Long distance to health facilities also may prevent people to seek treatment there particularly in the rainy season.

A more important fact for deciding to which treatment is to be pursued however, remains the nature of decision-making itself. Often not only the entire family group but other members of the community will also be involved, and their collective experience drawn upon.

3.3.6. Development Aspirations and Priorities

All indigenous groups were invited to describe what priorities they have for their lives and what they consider as the most important to secure appropriate living conditions for themselves. Although the answers sometimes differed considerably from village to village, even from interviewee to interviewee in the same village, many common interests emerged.

Land for cultivation, land security and enough food for the whole year were the most quoted factors in all villages. Land is seen as most important prerequisite for a stable livelihood.

Table 2: Priorities by frequency
(34 interviewees included joint view of FGD)

Item	Number quoting	Remarks
land/land security	25	seen as the most important condition for a stable livelihood
enough food	21	basic need connected to and dependant on many other factors quoted
animal raising (cows/buffalos)	18	sufficient number of animals provides a possible way of compensating for bad harvests or other shortages, assumes enough land for cattle grazing, access to veterinary care, etc
formal education	16	especially the need for Khmer literacy. Need for teaching in indigenous languages, wish for bi-lingual teaching, wish for education without fees.
health care	14	seen as important prerequisite for being able to work. Wish for health care without fees, wish for health care nearby.
enough water / water irrigation	13	some villages were not able to plant rice for 2 or 3 years as a result of long term drought, some need water irrigation in the dry season
infrastructure for good access to the market	10	roads, bridges, modern transport
enough money	8	to be able buying additional food and consumer goods or invest in agricultural expansion
appropriate house	7	modern style and big enough for the family, wooden house
peace / solidarity	7	reasonable dispute resolution according to tradition, keeping alive communal meeting place in the village
agricultural equipment	4	plough, rice threshing / hulling machine, kó yun (small tractor)
non-formal education (NFE)	4	basic skills in new farming methods (cashew nuts, fruits, vegetables), more knowledge of animal raising
forest	4	mentioned in Jarai, Tampuon and Stieng villages
tradition	2	Jarai and Tampuon villages
stable selling conditions	2	

Many of the statements reflected the wish for good conditions for agricultural cultivation not always orientated only to upland rice cultivation (*châmkar*). Many mentioned newer agricultural activities such as growing cash crops, fruit trees and vegetables. These statements included the wish for

enough water for cultivation, especially in the dry season, as all villages were equally affected by drought over several years, the need for sufficient knowledge on new farming methods, animal raising and use of agricultural equipment. They also included the need for easy and fair access to the market, referred to improved infrastructure as roads and bridges, no cheating by outside traders, appropriate selling conditions and treatment on an equal basis with other groups.

It seems to be surprising that forest was rarely named. This should not lead to the assumption that the forest no longer plays an essential role in the lives of villagers. For indigenous peoples land is synonymous with the forest and quoting land as the most important factor includes the forest too. The *mé kântreanh* in two villages in Ratanakiri placed a special emphasis on the forest, underlining the extreme importance of stopping forest destruction. Interestingly, these two villages were the only villages that also quoted keeping to traditions as one of the most important factors of indigenous livelihood. The focus group in Thmâ Hál Veal village on the other hand considered the forest as a source of income, as they were involved in charcoal production, a new craft they had learned from outsiders.

The successful raising of animals, especially cows and buffalos, was still of great importance to villagers. This may be a continuation of traditional ways. On the other hand, a sufficient number of cattle provides them with the possibility of earning money in case of need such as expensive health care costs, or investment in house construction or modern means of transport. Most focus groups expressed the need for more knowledge on the keeping of animals (NFE) and much more veterinary care as they have suffered many losses through illness and drought in recent years. The villages in O Reang district emphasised moreover that they fear for the loss of their customary pasture for their cattle due to the intervention of the Chinese enterprise Whushizan, and feel derided when others say that this outside investment will contribute to poverty reduction.

Although some elders are still sceptical about the benefit of formal education as they feel this will increase the split between old and young, most interviewees emphasised their wish for sufficient literacy in Khmer. They expect that this will put them in a better bargaining position in the market and help them to communicate with higher authorities in defending their own interests. Other elders would prefer teaching in the indigenous language or at least the compromise of bi-lingual teaching. Younger people especially amongst Phnong however attach great importance to sending their children to school regularly although they have difficulties in doing so during certain times such as harvest. Even in Ratanakiri where there has been much criticism of the inappropriateness of the formal education system, every village still stated that formal education, done in a culturally appropriate and non-discriminatory way, can provide important opportunities to escape poverty.

The same tendency has been observed with indigenous attitudes toward health care and the importance of good sanitation. All groups are convinced that good health care and modern medical treatment are decisive factors in maintaining sufficient fitness for work as well as for the physical

and mental development of their children. However, they mostly feel that they are still very limited in their ability to access these services as they are expensive.

Priorities given by indigenous women are little different from the main assessment. Amongst indigenous women, land, formal education, health care and animal raising have the highest priority.

Table 3 Priorities of Indigenous Women (9 female interviewees)

Item	Number of persons
land	6
formal education	5
health care	4
animal raising (cows/buffalo)	4
food	3
rice	3
roads	3
appropriate house	2
water	2
money	1
NFE	1
household utensils	1
electricity	1
appropriate dress	1

Although women often stated that it is difficult to achieve good education for their children they nevertheless are convinced that it is an important opportunity to help the family earn a livelihood in the future. It would also prevent their children from suffering stigma and discrimination from other ethnic groups as they would be able to communicate more easily and participate in development on an equal basis.

Looking at the priorities by indigenous group reveals only slight differences.

Table 4: Priorities by indigenous groups
(34 interviewees including joint view of FGD)

Indigenous group	most important conditions (frequency of quoting)
Jarai and Tampuan in Ratanakiri (11 interviewees, 4 FGD)	land (12), education (6), food (5), animal raising (4), health care (4), money (4), water (3), electricity (3), forest (3), household utensils (3), appropriate housing (2), sense of solidarity (2), tradition (2), NFE, agricultural equipment, roads, stable selling conditions, peace
Mel and Stieng in Kratie (7 interviewees, 4 FGD)	animal raising (9), food (7), water (6), health care (6), land (5), education (5), roads (3), rice (3), NFE (2), money (2), sense of solidarity (2), agricultural equipment, forest, peace, appropriate housing, cashew nut trees, appropriate dress, village chief coming from the group of elders
Phnong in Mondulakiri (5 interviewees, 4 FGD)	food (9), land (8), animal raising (5), education (5), water (4), appropriate housing (4), health care (4), money (2), roads (2), access to the market (2), NFE, modern transport, agricultural equipment, sense of solidarity, peace, communal meeting place

The urgency of regulating the land issue appears, in the province of Ratanakiri, the highest priority for almost all interviewees (Jarai and Tampuan). Appropriate formal education and food security constitute the next important priorities. Amongst the Jarai, money has started to play an important role as a strategy to alleviate poverty, probably as a result of their experience of selling cashew nuts in recent years. On the other hand, it was only here that keeping to the traditions was also seen as an important element in preventing the villages' impoverishment.

In Kratie province (Stieng and Mel) where land disputes have not yet reached this extreme, animal raising, food security, water for cultivation and health care are seen as the most important factors for poverty reduction, followed by land security and formal education. The Mel groups in particular think very highly of the number of cows or buffalos as representing wealth and prosperity particularly for paddy rice planting. In Mondulakiri (Phnong) food and land security were the most quoted priorities followed by animal raising and education.

All indigenous groups expressed the wish for reasonable and fair dispute resolution according to their traditional custom of joint discussion under guidance of the elders and decisions made by them. Preserving a sense of solidarity and village cohesion was very often a subliminal element in the discussions and interviews even if they were not explicitly quoted by many a priority. Stieng in Kratie explained that although they feel discriminated against, marginalised and at a disadvantage, they are always willing to live in mutual respect with other ethnic groups, provided they also are respected as Stieng and can participate equally in the economic and social development of the country. In Ratanakiri (the Jarai) and Mondulakiri (the Phnong) the wish for reasonable and fair dispute resolution was considered as an important prerequisite for development and prosperity. In this way interviewees appealed to all levels of the government to care much more than before about appropriate living conditions and their equitable participation in any decision-making that affected their community.

4. Participation of indigenous and tribal peoples in the PRSP process

4.1 Participation in poverty reduction efforts at local level

All indigenous and tribal peoples in Cambodia have a rich tradition of collective decision-making reflected in the strong social cohesion of the communal group and often, communal meeting places in the centre of the village where all affairs related to the village are discussed and decided. The traditional authority rests with the village elders with one person respected as the overall leader (*mé kântreanh* or *chah srok* or *proeutechar*). Anyone residing in a village is expected to conform to the traditional authority but has at the same time the unrestricted right to participate in discussion and decision-making.

However, according to the interviewees, there is no formal organisation of clans beyond the village level. Different clans have their own village clan elders who deal with strictly clan affairs. Sometimes indigenous groups maintain a network of contacts between villages based on in-laws, providing them with information and support in dealing with family affairs. The absence of broader organisational structures that comprise all communities of an indigenous group in a certain area or even nationwide, limits indigenous participation to the village level.

On the other hand, new administrative structures such as village chief, commune, district and provincial authorities impose different ways of decision-making by transferring instructions and orders from the top down. Indigenous communities often feel that this is an unacceptable counter-concept to their own customs. They especially resent the fact that they are not asked or consulted with before government decisions that affect their community are made. They feel overwhelmed without proper avenues to raise objections and to discuss matters, as commune authorities rarely respond to their claims, let alone at district or province level.

Nevertheless, many traditional village leaders have started to come to an arrangement with the government administration, to avoid open resistance. The degree or extent of such acceptance seems to depend on the remoteness of the indigenous villages and ongoing integration into the mainstream of society. While the villages of Mel and Stieng groups in Kratie did not have tribal leaders anymore and stated that they fully accept the village chief as the official authority, the traditional leadership in Jarai and Tampuon villages in Ratanakiri was still very strong.

All FGD mentioned that in the village, some committees exist that deal with specific issues related to the village's development. However, few discussion participants and interviewees could explain what the mandate and activities of these committees or communities (*sahakum*) were. The best known committee among them appears to be the forest protection network (*sahakum prey chhoeu*) as it operates with a strict prohibition on the cutting of trees, even though villages have demonstrated a clear need to clear forest for new fields or for house construction.

As highlighted in sections 3.2.5 and 3.2.7, above, interventions by administrative and development structures seem almost invariably to occur without the effective participation of indigenous communities adapted to their needs and customs, either at local level nor above all at national level.

On the other hand, indigenous peoples themselves are not sufficiently provided with the means and experience in active participation beyond the village level. During the last four decades they have experienced the suppression of their own cultural identity where they have tended to hide or even abandon indigenous ways in favour of a Khmer lifestyle. Only when highlanders behave in a way that Khmers can understand and relate to, are they recognised as having any level of knowledge at all.

Nevertheless, all discussions and interviews in the field revealed that there is still a high sense of indigenous identity even if the steady process of socio-economic transformation and stress of acculturation are overtaking or replacing their own values and socio-cultural practices. At the same time indigenous groups do acknowledge that this socio-economic transformation process and the move towards the mainstream of society have provided them with new opportunities for improving their living conditions that they appreciate and would not want to lose. They expressed a clear wish to continue to be involved in development and poverty reduction efforts but in a way that meets their need to preserve their own identity and that respects their culture as highly as others.

The problem is that besides of lack of any medium to be heard in public and to draw attention to their pressing needs, indigenous peoples in Cambodia also lack sufficient organisational structures and representative institutions at all levels beyond the village level.

First important steps to address this problem have been made, with the creation of a local organisation called the Highlanders Association in Ratanakiri. However this is the sole known organisation that has been founded by indigenous peoples themselves. There is undoubtedly a great need to strengthen the organisational extent and capacity of indigenous peoples not only to deal with indigenous issues at local level but also to be able to give concerted input into national policy and decision-making relating to any issue that has impact on indigenous integrity.

Considering the current uncontrolled situation of land alienation which often affects the livelihood of indigenous communities, some local non-governmental organisations as CLEC and ADHOC provide substantial support and training on land rights, including national resource management and environment care, as well as demanding human rights protection from the government side. However important it may be to support such initiatives, there is also the risk that outside views on dealing with indigenous concerns may be more influential than intended. More efforts need to be directed to strengthen indigenous capacities themselves.

4.2 Participation in the national poverty reduction strategy process

The process of developing a Poverty Reduction Strategy started in Cambodia in May 2000 with a draft Interim PRSP coordinated by the Ministry of Economy and Finance. Participation in this first stage was confined to consultation by circulating drafts for comments and several workshops held in Phnom Penh. At the same time, a comprehensive participatory poverty assessment (PPA) was conducted with the support of ADB.

The main obstacle for lively participation however was that all documents were prepared in English without timely translation into the national language Khmer, which meant that there was very little dialogue and contribution by concerned representatives of civil society organisations (CSO) or even by direct representatives of the poor, let alone of indigenous peoples.

Based on this experience the responsibility for the full PRSP was transferred in April 2001 to the Council for Social Development (CSD), an inter-ministerial body chaired by the Minister of Planning. In the first months of 2002, its General Secretariat prepared a "Participation Action Plan" to define broad participation activities at provincial and village level.

Several national workshops on the PRSP were held that also included representatives from Cambodian NGOs. The main representative speaking on behalf of Cambodian civil society in the PRSP process was the NGO Forum on Cambodia, a forum of more than 70 NGOs that seeks to discuss, debate and advocate the concerns of NGOs regarding Cambodia's development. It has given a comprehensive list of comments and criticisms to the first draft of the PRSP²⁷, but stated at the same time that the opportunity to provide comment does not equate to agreement. The fear that after making much effort to provide input, NGO concerns may be poorly incorporated into the full PRSP²⁸ has been confirmed more than one year later in the NGO statement on the first year of implementation of the NPRS.²⁹

Since there has been no national organisation that represents the exclusive interests of indigenous peoples in Cambodia so far, no specific medium exists to draw public attention to the particular circumstances and aspirations of these peoples. The Highlanders Association is limited in its activities to Ratanakiri province and still faces difficulties registering as an official NGO with the Ministry of the Interior.

The NGO Forum has recently started an Indigenous Rights Project (August 2004) that focuses on indigenous rights, land ownership and the protection of tradition. First steps are to strengthen networks in indigenous communities and to discuss with them questions related to land ownership, advocacy and community networking. The results of such workshops held in 15 provinces were submitted to several relevant ministries including the Ministry of Land Management, Urban Planning and Construction and the Ministry of Rural Development.

²⁷ NGO Forum on Cambodia (2002), *Cambodia's draft Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper – Has NGO Input Been Included?* Phnom Penh September 2002.

²⁸ Ibid., p.3.

²⁹ "The question of wider civil society involvement in the NPRS process is difficult, since there has been less progress in this area." NGO Forum on Cambodia (2004), *NGO Statement on the First Year of Implementation of the National Poverty Reduction Strategy (NPRS)*, March 2004, p.5.

At the beginning of 2005 the NGO Forum agreed to cooperate with the DEMD of MRD in giving assistance in updating the statistics relating to indigenous peoples and research on indigenous peoples' living conditions, cultures and land rights problems.

However, the NRPS recognises that the government currently lacks an effective strategy to support the rights and development of indigenous groups. Although the NRPS recommends research on ethnic minorities to identify their development needs, the Ministry of Rural Development is still waiting for donor support to commence this research.

4.3 The relevance of the Cambodian PRSP for indigenous and tribal peoples

The Cambodian PRSP acknowledges that the exclusion of ethnic minorities from almost all development and decision-making process due partly to their small numbers, ways of life and traditions, and remoteness of their societies has not much changed. Ethnic minorities are also disadvantaged and marginalised because of the language barrier.³⁰

Therefore ethnic minorities' development should be a high priority for the government in the implementation of its poverty reduction policy.³¹ However, the PRSP makes no specific reference to indigenous peoples' concerns nor does it consider their specific needs in poverty reduction efforts. It also does not draw on any poverty diagnostics that highlight disparities in socio-economic indicators along ethnic lines, as there is no specific socio-economic data available on ethnic minorities.

The priority poverty reduction actions of the Government focus on:

- improving access for the poor to land, common resources and to jobs;
- improving infrastructure serving the poor;
- measures for reduction of vulnerability;
- improving access of the poor to education and health care; and
- special measures against social exclusion (e.g. "appointment of ethnic minorities to key decision-making positions").³²

Agriculture and rural development are highlighted as being key priorities in reducing poverty. The emphasis on rural livelihoods places sharp focus on issues such as land and natural resources, seen by the government as the basis for economic development and poverty reduction. Therefore, an appropriate land policy is intended to improve the economic opportunities for the poor and to

³⁰ NRPS 2003-2005, p. 126 and p. 22 (This actually is only true for indigenous groups as ethnic minorities like the Vietnamese, Chinese or Cham in Cambodia usually speak the Khmer language and are to be found in densely populated areas.)

³¹ Ibid., p.126

³² Ibid. p.41

reduce their vulnerability.³³ However, the general tendency seems to be that in contrast to the declared pro-poor development of the NPRS the government rather appears focussed on providing large-scale agricultural concessions to private companies instead.

Furthermore, the specific needs of indigenous peoples in rural development are not addressed in any way. Although the new Land Law, approved in 2001, includes a special section on indigenous peoples' land rights in accessing their traditional land, the PRSP has taken no notice of it in its poverty reduction action plan³⁴. Against the trend of individualising land titles, the law allows indigenous communities to own land collectively and to manage it in the traditional way. Ongoing individual land titling, illegal land sales and the granting of large-scale concessions bypass this traditional system of collective land management and threaten the collective nature of indigenous communities, leading to resource loss and poverty.

The strategy of promoting agricultural development aims in general at empowering farmers, rural poor and "other vulnerable groups" to enhance their ability to participate in the growth process by centring on nine components³⁵. These do not consider or even mention the effects and consequences of the accelerated economic transformation process that indigenous peoples in Cambodia have been undergoing for at least ten years. The measures envisioned assume only one valid livelihood system for all, apparently without being aware of, or at least neglecting to consider that in some areas of the country other agricultural cultivation systems such as swidden cultivation of upland rice are most closely intertwined with the whole culture and way of life of those groups. Radical changes in their traditional livelihood by such kinds of development processes may instead contribute significantly to the rapid impoverishment of indigenous peoples if not properly addressed, risking the irretrievable disappearance of indigenous peoples' culture and specific way of life over time.

According to the PRSP, the effective management and sustainable exploitation of the country's water resources are vital tools in reducing poverty as about 75.6 % of the total cultivated area is completely dependent on rainwater. Crop production is often threatened by drought, so that the production of supplementary crops is not possible.³⁶ Although the lowland area is the major focus, the highland area will also be involved in the government's overall national water resources policy that is supposed to include among other things the development of small-scale irrigation through the creation of storage reservoirs. Although these areas are often inhabited by indigenous peoples and undoubtedly the plans will need careful consultation and management no further reference to this is to be found.

³³ Ibid., pp.53-54.

³⁴ The final draft of NPRS was discussed in November 2002, more than one year after the approval of the land law.

³⁵ See NPRS 2003-2005, pp.54-61.

³⁶ Ibid., p.61.

The PRSP recognises that lack of capabilities makes it almost impossible for the poor to escape poverty. Cambodia's indicators of capabilities, like health and educational attainment are generally poor by regional standards.³⁷ Therefore, the ending of poverty requires a long-term commitment of the government to improve health and education.

According to the educational policy of the Cambodian government, the PRSP focuses on providing basic education for all Cambodian children, especially the target populations of the poor and other disadvantaged groups. It does not specify any special needs of these "other disadvantaged groups" such as disabled people or ethnic minorities. The action program intends to expand education facilities in under-served districts and communes³⁸ but fails to address the problem that indigenous peoples wish not only for greater access to education but also education that recognises their distinct culture and language.

The same is true for health. The health status of indigenous villagers cannot be separated from their spiritual beliefs or social life. Although there is a slow change towards accepting formal health care and an increasing demand for better access to it, the spirit world still holds great importance for most indigenous peoples and influences most of their activities. The PRSP focuses in general on enhancing the health status of poor and socially disadvantaged Cambodians but do not address specific circumstances or vulnerability of indigenous peoples. In addition, traditional healers offer a wealth of assistance and indigenous experience that should be included in any health policy referring to these groups.

The PRSP also acknowledges that participation, transparency, accountability and predictability are crucial for all poverty reduction efforts. Although the government has attempted in the past to improve governance within the public system these elements are in fact still lacking in Cambodia. In its strategy, the government continues focusing on strengthening institutions and governance in four critical areas that are seen as becoming the basis of development and poverty reduction and to meet the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).³⁹ However, none of the envisioned reforms such as legal and judicial reform, administrative reform or decentralisation and local governance has dealt with questions relating to ethnic minorities. The PRSP states that ethnic minorities are in a disadvantaged position in the development process due to lack of representation at the management and legislative levels.⁴⁰ The only comment to address the social exclusion and non-representation of them in administration and decision-making though, is to be found in the summary approach to Cambodia's NPRS by suggesting appointment of ethnic minorities to key-decision-making positions⁴¹. There are no other references or explanations of how indigenous communities will be consulted or involved in decision-making processes linked to their own traditional governance system nor how to deal with the language barrier that prevents indigenous peoples from participating in relevant consultation.

³⁷ Ibid., p.17.

³⁸ Ibid., pp.96-97.

³⁹ Ibid., p.23 and p.99.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p.22.

⁴¹ Ibid., p.41

The current Cambodian PRSP clearly reflects that the government is increasingly aware of the social exclusion and political marginalization of ethnic minorities in Cambodia but does not outline any specific policy or even systematic efforts to address specific concerns of indigenous peoples in overcoming poverty and inappropriate involvements in the development process.

Indigenous peoples in Cambodia have not been involved in consultations leading to the production of the PRSP. The main reasons for this are the absence of representative indigenous peoples' organisations, the "invisibility" of indigenous issues in national development agendas and the lack of reliable and comprehensive data on the socio-economic situation of indigenous peoples including specific poverty indicators. The fact that the ethnic majority in Cambodia has little understanding of cultures and ways of life different from their own, taking rather an attitude of patronising depreciation of "less civilised" cultures has contributed to indigenous self-denial and renunciation of the right to exist as distinct peoples with their own priorities for development.

5. Conclusions

5.1 Indigenous peoples' concerns and priorities for development

Every ethnicity is different, villages of the same ethnic group are different and even within villages, not every family is organised in the same way. However, as described in detail in the chapters above, all interviewed indigenous groups have expressed in principle the same basic needs. Their primary concern is a stable livelihood based on sufficient access to land and forest, incidentally one of the most important criteria of the Cambodian government in its poverty reduction strategy too⁴². Indigenous priorities in poverty reduction are likewise similar to the mainstream. Apart from land/forest food security, formal education and health care are seen as the most important indicators of poverty and therefore need to be addressed. All these criteria the Cambodian government has addressed in its National Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper 2003-2005.

Nevertheless, it should be emphasised that all discussions with indigenous peoples have pointed out that these priorities have developed and adjusted in the context of steady socio-economic transformation processes indigenous peoples have already gone through for several decades of years. In this context they have equally expressed their wish to continue to be involved in the current development processes and poverty reduction efforts, on condition that their indigenous integrity is respected.

The indigenous way of life is still formed by significant special characteristics that need to be considered carefully in the context of current development and the accelerated socio-economic transformation processes that Cambodia has been undergoing since 1993. As many of these processes affect indigenous livelihood to its core, they may contribute significantly to the rapid impoverishment of indigenous peoples, not only in economic terms but also in respect of their socio-cultural life.

The problem of increasing population and decreasing access to natural resources in particular land, forest and water as well as lack of opportunities and social exclusion, have certainly hit the poor in Cambodia. However, indigenous peoples have had to cope with these relatively new factors in a very short time, and their whole traditional environment will be irretrievably destroyed if not properly addressed. In the upland areas the indigenous rotational swidden farming systems are breaking down particularly near urban centres and along main roads. Restricted access to land and forest as well as dramatically increased land alienation, aggravate the situation. On the other hand, the experience of failed coffee investments in Phnong villages, Monduliri, has emphasised the high risk of getting involved in new agricultural activities such as producing cash crops that rely

⁴² NRPS 2003-2005, pp.52-54.

on fluctuating international markets. The change from traditional production systems to perennial agricultural systems is not unproblematic and needs time.⁴³

As has equally been demonstrated these economic transformation processes debilitate the entire system of traditional social organisation, religion and indigenous identity, as these elements are grounded in the universal access to local resources. Thus, careful consideration is necessary to find appropriate ways for protecting and preserving them in a rapidly changing socio-economic environment particularly as this would enhance the richness of the multi-cultural society in Cambodia.

The indigenous groups of Jarai, Tampuan, Mel, Stieng and Phnong have articulated following major concerns during the CAS team's fieldwork:

- fear of excessive shortage and loss of land for farming; fear of complete loss of forest and the use of the forest leaving them without sufficient alternatives for livelihood;
- unstable food situation / increasing lack of food because of restricted access to land and forest and because of no appropriate remedies for natural disasters such as the current long term drought;
- many restrictions and prohibitions related to access to natural resources significantly limiting their traditional livelihood and marginalizing them while others are exempted from complying;
- not enough information about the activities of outsiders / lack of transparency in the indigenous communities such as land encroachment by private investors leaving them helpless to take appropriate measures in time;
- no appropriate response by higher levels of authority, especially the commune chief as the next level, when the village has submitted complaints or suggestions for dispute resolution related to harmful interventions from outside;
- increasing disputes and conflicts in the village often brought about by outside connections which will undermine and finally destroy the indigenous community cohesion; and
- continuous disdain for and discrimination against indigenous culture as "less civilised" will feed the disavowal of indigenous identity and lead to the erosion of traditions and beliefs, loss of language and disrespect for traditional leadership.

These statements emphasise that preserving traditions does not mean only conserving outwardly visible customs such as playing gongs, singing and dancing. Such simplistic views abstract indigenous culture and way of life from its socio-economic context. Certainly, the judgement as to what traditional beliefs and behaviour (apart from those of "display" and ritualistic performance,

⁴³ For experience in this connection see for example the case study from O Yadoa district, Ratanakiri Province, presented by Jeremy Ironside and Sal Yuch at the International Conference on Strengthening Partnership in Community Natural Resource Management, Ratanakiri 6-8 March 2001, or the executive summary of a study on experience of two Tampuan villages in northeast Cambodia, presented by John P. McAndrew at the same conference.

such as playing the gongs) are “good” or “harmful” and thus need to be overcome as obstacles to development is culturally and politically subjective. Nevertheless the right to self-identification and free and fully informed choice in priorities for development is a fundamental criterion when dealing with decisions on what is to be preserved or not, and needs to be applied to indigenous peoples as much as anyone else.

It does not mean that indigenous peoples in Cambodia should refuse any development *per se* and remain unchanged in their traditional life, particularly as they do not appear to want this. As long as they have a real opportunity to be involved, *in a free and fully informed manner*, in any decisions regarding development plans that will have an impact on their community, they can determine their own development without being under pressure to hide or even deny indigenous identity. In every village, there was much interest and a great effort on the part of the indigenous communities, to incorporate new innovations into their traditional livelihoods. However, some examples show that this way may be very conflict-ridden and painful for indigenous groups as they feel deceived, discriminated against and disadvantaged by outsiders due to their different ethnicity. However, there are also examples where significant agricultural development is taking place as development activities are done through the community’s own social organisation (currently) without any oppressive intervention from outside.⁴⁴

Effective socio-economic development and poverty reduction in Cambodia will happen not through large-scale concessions but also is possible and even more desirable through village-based development. That requires of course that indigenous communities are given sufficient decision-making power and support to strengthen their self-potential beyond merely being asked for agreement to externally conceptualised, outside interventions that are not appropriate to their needs or their aspirations.

5.2 Political and social conditions for indigenous peoples’ participation in poverty reduction processes

Political marginalisation, social exclusion and non-involvement of indigenous peoples in consultation processes may have several causes.

First of all, there is no great tradition in Cambodia that subordinate levels of administration are involved in policy and decision-making. Although the government has begun to work on administrative reforms and promoting decentralisation, the existing mechanisms at different levels of administration are still highly centralised. With the exception of the 2002 election of commune councils, all other public administrators are still appointed by higher officials, with little motivation to encourage participation of local people or administrators in the decision-making process.

⁴⁴ Details see Case Study from O Yadao district (Ironsides, 2001)

Since its introduction, the performance of commune councils has improved over the last 2 years⁴⁵ and this would seem to suggest that local decision-making at commune level has become more democratic. However, commune councillors can act only within a very limited and mainstream framework dominated by structural constraints of a highly centralised administration beyond the commune level.⁴⁶ There is no space for special needs or room for self-determined action, least of all when it does not correspond with views or interventions coming from or backed by higher authorities.

Secondly, the Government of Cambodia has eloquently acknowledged that there is an urgent need to include all ethnic minorities in development and poverty reduction efforts according to their needs, culture and living conditions.⁴⁷ However, up to now it has not yet been able to approve any ethnic minority development policy, although a draft was submitted to the Council of Ministers in 1997. This fact reflects that on the part of mainstream society in Cambodia no real understanding for the special characteristics of ethnic minorities and in particular of indigenous peoples (to the extent that they are also considered as minorities in Cambodia) exists. The prevailing Khmer idea is that indigenous peoples need to change and become “modern” meaning Khmer style. This “Khmer-centric” attitude is inevitably reflected in policy making and development processes.

One of the most important prerequisites for indigenous peoples’ participation is the firm political will of the Cambodian government to recognise that Cambodia is a multi-cultural society in which all different cultures and ethnicities need to be considered of equal value. This recognition would include effective measures to protect special needs and cultural specifics of indigenous peoples already at the stage of policy and decision-making as well as their right to decide their own priorities for development.

The recent creation of the Department of Ethnic Minorities Development placed the Ministry of Rural Development is an important step in this direction. Moreover, consideration of different views, priorities and needs in policy and decision-making also requires sufficient and solidly based information that the DEMD needs to pioneer to provide for policy and decision makers. This information base needs to be combined with appropriate suggestions and reference points relating to the various spheres of society. It must be the powerhouse for policy formulation, taking the special needs and priorities articulated by indigenous peoples themselves and driving relevant legislation as well as monitoring competent implementation through the relevant ministries. Here again indigenous peoples have to be involved systematically in research and data collection as well as in providing suggestions and recommendations to the national decision-making level. In

⁴⁵ Public Opinion Poll on the Role and Performance of Commune Councils, especially regarding local Conflicts, February 2005, CAS/The Asia Foundation, (forthcoming)

⁴⁶ The same survey states that only 1% of the most important development projects of a commune were provided by commune councils. One major reason quoted by commune councillors is lack of funds and lack of knowledge/skills. Ibid., p.49, 56. Extremely low salaries for public officials far below the subsistence level has an additional devastating impact on the functioning of the public sector.

⁴⁷ PRSP 2003-2005, p.126

order to do this, they must be provided with all relevant information, in an appropriate language and format, and their intellectual property rights protected.

To further the discussion on indigenous poverty, development, and the rights that are inherent in this, there is also a need for stronger and more strategic coordination between the numerous government ministries and departments that have mandates in areas that are of relevance to indigenous and tribal peoples. This includes the Ministry of the Interior, the Council of Ministers, the Ministry of Culture, and Ministry of Education to name but a few.

Consideration of indigenous interests as well as acceptance of the participation of indigenous peoples in policy and decision-making also require understanding and awareness by the mainstream society that different traditions, cultures and ways of life equally worthy of respect and toleration, not only by words but also through information, partnership, action and behaviour.

6. Recommendations

The marginal political status of indigenous peoples, their social exclusion and the non-recognition of indigenous peoples' concerns in development processes in Cambodia partly stem from the fact that indigenous peoples themselves do not have sufficient means and organisational structures to formulate and express their own interests, needs and concerns in public. Until recently, they have lived for the most part in remote areas, secluded from mainstream society. When they have had contact with outsiders they have often felt under pressure to hide their ethnic identity. According to the concerns and priorities expressed by the indigenous peoples during the fieldwork, the issues outlined below need to be addressed. This chapter makes recommendations based on the findings of the study. It is divided into 4 sections.

6.1 Recommendations on land and resources

6.1.1. *Establishing land security*

- *Comprehensive measures to stop land grabbing.* It is urgent that the current unstable situation of indigenous peoples related to their access to lands (including forest) is remedied through fast and appropriate comprehensive measures on the part of the government to stop land grabbing, illegal land sales or land sales obtained by misinformation and other dubious means. There is strong need to launch information campaigns on land laws in areas where indigenous communities live that are promulgated in a culturally appropriate way. Indigenous peoples' lands should be demarcated, in consultation with these peoples, and officially recognized with urgency. The communal land registration and titling should be accelerated in order to protect indigenous communities from further land losses.
- *Consultation on concessions and projects.* Before any new concessions are granted, the government should consider whether these affect indigenous lands, and adequate safeguards should be put in place so that indigenous peoples are consulted fully at every level of decision making concerning proposed activities on their lands (including concessions, and development projects), and that they have the opportunity to object, or influence the decision making process significantly.

6.1.2. *Enhancing livelihood security*

Since indigenous peoples are subject to rapid socio-economic transformation processes in which, either because their traditional agricultural activities are not accepted as valid forms of livelihood, or due to lack of land and other challenges, they must adopt new agricultural activities for their livelihood.

- *Support to traditional or new livelihoods.* It is thus urgent to undertake activities provide them with sufficient support and assistance to either maintain or improve their traditional cultivation and subsistence activities, or if this is not possible, to develop new activities to sustain their livelihoods.

- This should be in form of *training and non-formal education* on appropriate cultivation methods and animal raising, and providing frequent practical advisory services, *veterinary care and assistance in the marketing of their produce*. There is a very urgent need to take action to respond to continuous water shortages due to long-term drought, which has meant that indigenous communities are not able to cultivate rice to a sufficient extent as well as suffering losses to livestock.

6.2 Recommendations on the role of the Government and policy formulation

In its Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, the Cambodian government states that ethnic minority development is of high importance in the implementation of its poverty reduction policy. The government's strategies and actions focusing on the main causes of poverty will be streamlined and sensitised to benefit the ethnic minorities, in particular in the Northeast.⁴⁸

6.2.1. Clarification of terminology and rights and issues attached

The wording in the NPRS (including avoidance of using the term indigenous or tribal peoples) suggests that there is a confusing conflation of the different concepts of "ethnic minorities" and "indigenous peoples" in Cambodia, resulting from a lack of awareness of the substantive content and implications inherent in these terms. Any process to clarify the implications of these terms, and their coverage, should be in direct consultation with the peoples concerned, and should recognize the principle of self-identification.

Recently, there has been a move away from conflating indigenous and minority issues. At the end of 2004, the DEMD initiated discussions with representatives of several ministries, local authorities and international as well as national non-governmental organisations on the 1997 draft Policy for Indigenous Peoples. The revised version explicitly uses the term 'Indigenous Peoples' (*chun cheat daem pheak tech*)⁴⁹.

6.2.2. Finalization and adoption of the Indigenous Peoples Policy

If the national poverty reduction policy and the draft indigenous peoples' policy are not intended to remain limited to general principles but to offer an effective agenda of action, efforts should be taken to embed these in the current political context and socio-economic situation of indigenous peoples. Without describing the problem, objective or frame of action and expected outcome, it is hard to define an appropriate strategy, or the actions required.

In this sense, Cambodia should complete the process of developing its general policy for indigenous and ethnic minority people development as soon as possible and make sure that the concerns and priorities of these peoples in Cambodia are sufficiently considered, as promised in the government's NPRS paper 2003-2005. In order to do this, the policy should:

⁴⁸ PRSP 2003-2005, p.126

⁴⁹ Ministry of Rural Development (2004), *Summary on Discussion about the General Policy for Indigenous Peoples*. (available only in Khmer)

- *Contextualise the issues in hand.* The current draft Policy jumps immediately into specific areas of possible action without any explanation of the background and the situation of indigenous peoples in Cambodia.
- *Define an overall objective for the policy, that recognises indigenous peoples' own needs and aspirations.* The current draft does not make any reference to an overall purpose and a vision of indigenous peoples' development (including their envisioned place within the Cambodian society and their own aspirations for development). Usually a policy is a politically accepted plan of action for addressing particular issues. It outlines a discrepancy between a benchmark (ideal, norm, or criterion) and a current or future situation and ways for a solution acceptable for all concerned parties. Without describing the problem, objective or frame of action and expected outcome, it is hard to define strategy, or the actions required. The draft remains limited to general principles, without offering an effective agenda of action. In many points, it is not clear why and which concrete measures are envisaged. The inclusion of objectives will be more conducive to effective implementation.
- *Clarify the criteria for identifying to whom the policy applies.* The current draft does not define in which sense the term 'indigenous peoples' is understood, and to which groups this term applies, or which groups identify themselves as indigenous peoples.
- *Elaborate on mechanisms for implementation and indigenous inclusion.* Since the current draft of a general Policy for indigenous peoples is constructed rather like a list of principles, it does not offer any operational approach by linking necessary measures to the actual political and socio-economic situation of indigenous peoples. The draft also does not consider the most appropriate ways for the inclusion of indigenous peoples in the ongoing development processes and poverty reduction efforts of the government. It does not take into account that indigenous peoples in Cambodia are undergoing an accelerated socio-economic transformation process that is changing their whole system of traditional life with implications for indigenous cultures and identities.
- *Recognize the role of key government ministries and departments.* The latest draft version of 2004 does not take account of relevant government development documents like SEDP II (2001-2005) and NPRS (2003-2005) that aim to deal with serious development problems such as the maintenance of macroeconomic stability, improving rural livelihoods, expanding job opportunities, improving education, health and nutrition, strengthening institutions and improving governance, and reducing vulnerability and social exclusion. Nor does it take into account the role of government ministries addressing issues of justice and the rule of law, decentralisation land management, and forest and natural resource management, which are essential components of any effective efforts at development. The implementation of this multidimensional approach has its inevitable implications for the traditional livelihood strategies of indigenous peoples that must be addressed in any policy dealing with indigenous issues.

6.2.3. Capacity building in policy formulation and implementation for concerned government ministries

Given the considerations relating to the draft policy for indigenous and ethnic minority people development, outlined above, it is strongly recommended that the policy formulation and implementation capacities of the Department for Ethnic Minority Development⁵⁰ (DEMD), as the department that has primary responsibility for the policy, as well as other key government departments and ministries, are strengthened. Such capacity-building would be aimed at:

- *Improvement of inter-ministerial coordination.* Inter-ministerial cooperation would significantly smooth the way for policy formulation as it would bring together the various points of view of all relevant ministries. To this end, lessons learned from the successes and failures of the former Inter-Ministerial Committee (IMC) in its attempts at coordination, should be taken into account. Given that many government ministries are working on issues that are of direct relevance for indigenous peoples, there is considerable and quite urgent need to improve coordination between ministries to ensure that their policies and programmes apply a consistent approach and methodology to indigenous issues. This is not currently the case.
- *Improving methodologies for working in partnership indigenous peoples.* The improvement of methodologies for working with indigenous peoples would aim to ensure that sufficient capacity exists to ensure that indigenous peoples are fully consulted, through their representative institutions, and through culturally appropriate procedures, so that relevant policy development and implementation is based on these peoples' own needs and priorities, and not on external perceptions of what is best for indigenous peoples.
- *Training for government ministries on indigenous rights, issues, and on policy development processes with specific reference to indigenous peoples.*
- *Supporting mechanisms for indigenous inclusion at all levels.* This implies the development of institutionalised mechanisms and defined procedures for consultation with indigenous peoples, in a manner, form, language, and within a timeframe that is appropriate and understandable to them.
- *Ensuring the government structures at provincial and local levels are active in the implementation of the policy.* Again, it is essential that the DEMD in its subordinated provincial structures systematically and carefully observes, evaluates and reports the situation, and consults indigenous peoples on a regular basis, as well as feeding relevant facts, concerns, obstacles, self-reflections, suggestions and demands into decision-making at the national level.
- *Linking indigenous peoples policy issues with, and integrating indigenous concerns into ongoing and emerging development work.* It is important to link these efforts closely with, *inter alia*, the ongoing implementation of the NPRS, national action to achieve the MDGs,

⁵⁰ As the Department for Ethnic Minorities Development is relatively new and comprises mostly young people inexperienced in practical research, policy-making and implementation of activities there is a great need to develop their capacities and potential.

and the process of developing the new Rectangular Strategy of the government for the years 2006-2008.

6.2.4. *Linking policy development and implementation to legal frameworks (implementing existing laws)*

Taking poverty reduction and sustainable development seriously means not only creating appropriate general conditions and framework policies but also taking responsibility for their consequent implementation. The government is responsible for providing resources for indigenous peoples' development and ensuring full compliance with any laws and special regulations that protect their rights and integrity. Pressing need for action is on the agenda. For example, in the case of land security, although the land law approved by the government in 2001 contains special articles that secure indigenous community rights for control, management and utilisation of local resources, the majority of land alienation appears to be contrary to the intent and language of this law, with devastating consequences for indigenous communities. As long as there is no official action to undertake comprehensive measures to stop the ongoing serious problems of land grabbing and illegal or forced land sales and involve indigenous communities affected by large-scale concessions in the planning and decision-making processes, laws and regulations are meaningless.⁵¹

6.2.5. *Including indigenous peoples in local governance structures.*

The ongoing decentralisation reforms in Cambodia offer important possibilities in promoting and supporting indigenous village based development and poverty reduction according to indigenous peoples' own priorities by including them in the commune councils' Commune Development Plans. The DEMD should make all efforts to raise awareness on these specific issues amongst the different implementation bodies, in particular the National Council for Support to the Communes (NCSC) and the Council for Administrative Reforms (CAR), especially as the Ministry of Rural Development within which the DEMD is placed is a member of both. From this position, the DEMD is able to provide facts on indigenous concerns related to local administration and to sensitise local authorities such as the Commune Councils by providing special training to them or informing decentralisation capacity building measures with their specialised knowledge.

6.3 Recommendations on the role of civil society/NGOs

Since many development activities including or targeting indigenous peoples are carried out through programmes and projects of NGOs/IOs, the contribution of civil society to indigenous peoples' development is of great significance. Any support to improve official coordination and to build the capacity of the DEMD and other official bodies in the area of indigenous issues also necessarily involves building the capacities not only of these official bodies, but of civil society, NGOs, the donor community, and indigenous peoples themselves, with a view to ensuring that sufficient capacity exists to ensure that indigenous peoples are fully consulted, through their representative institutions, in good faith, and that relevant policy development and implementation

⁵¹ This is part of a wider problem being also the situation of other vulnerable people throughout Cambodia.

is based on these peoples' own needs and priorities, and not on external perceptions of what is best for indigenous peoples. There is a very varied spectrum of development interventions stretching from complex local planning commune development, integrated community based natural resource management including non-formal education (NFE), agriculture, animal production, community forests, small-scale infrastructure and agro-forestry, to working on health and health education initiatives and providing functional literacy skills amongst indigenous peoples. Some local NGOs also support indigenous communities in protecting their rights over land and providing necessary knowledge in this connection, a substantial contribution to strengthen indigenous capacities in coping with the challenge of a rapid socio-economic transformation process. However, despite some progress in improving livelihood and capacity building of indigenous peoples, these efforts are still selective and limited in their outcomes to certain places, or have sometimes not fully responded to indigenous needs.

The risk of imposing too many outsiders' views and to misjudge the dynamics and priorities of an indigenous community is high, as participation of indigenous peoples in project planning has been limited.

6.3.1. More focus on indigenous peoples' empowerment and participation

Of most importance therefore is the focus on the empowerment of indigenous peoples' representatives themselves to act as catalysts for suggesting and deciding what kinds of projects are needed, and best for their own communities, to play the role of project managers and to use the communities' own social organisation for implementation. This requires much more mutual understanding and discussion before and during the project design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Here the development of indigenous organisational structures beyond the village level, such as the Highlanders Association in Ratanakiri, would be a first significant milestone in a process of the strengthening indigenous capacity to articulate and defend their own interests, and for indigenous peoples, as experts in their own area, to be consulted as experts and not to be seen as passive subjects of intervention. It equally creates a place for the exchange of information and experience in dealing with specific issues within a changing environment.

6.3.2. Addressing multiculturalism.

A second important role for Cambodian civil society is to tackle the challenges of a multi-cultural society that includes mutual tolerance and understanding in the acceptance of different cultures and way of life. Print, visual and electronic media may play an important role in paving the way for making indigenous issues known to the majority and raising awareness of the marginalisation of minorities. Representative indigenous organisations as well as supporting NGOs and relevant government departments should consider publicity as an important tool, and integrate such public relations components at the planning stage of each project.

6.3.3. Strengthening civil society's capacity

Although the type of autonomous civil society discussed in democratic theory may be lacking in Cambodia because of strong hierarchical traditions in its society and the dominant role of a still-

centralised state, public participation in Cambodia occurs significantly through a broad spectrum of non-governmental organisations. In the long-term those programs and projects may influence the social-cultural norms of society and contribute to an increase in civic action independent from government. NGOs could play a significant role in mainstreaming indigenous issues by creating links with indigenous groups and considering their special needs in their own development interventions. On the other hand should NGOs' projects directly target indigenous peoples' development, the focus must be more on the empowerment of indigenous communities themselves and to use the community's own social organisation for implementation. That requires of course more mutual understanding and discussion before and during the project design as well as courage on behalf of respective NGOs to accept that the target group may give the project a direction and prioritisation different from the original intention and timetable. Thus, the main priorities in terms of strengthening the capacity of NGOs to deal with the particular challenges of working on indigenous issues, and with indigenous communities, are as follows:

- *Understanding the indigenous perspective.* More interactive dialogue, and training to understand more about indigenous concerns, needs and development aspirations, and eliminate negative stereotypes about indigenous peoples and their cultures and ways of life.
- *Adaptation of training and development projects to indigenous needs and requirements*
- *Training for NGO staff on methodologies* for working with indigenous peoples
- *Development of indigenous capacity to take responsibility* for village based development and to train NGO members on integration of indigenous perspectives into their work
- NGOs/IOs and government may have different approaches, strategies and resources that need to be coordinated at the stage of design and planning in order to ensure more cohesion, complementarity and good timing in implementing such capacity-building measures.
- In order to give effect to the recommendations outlined above, a detailed strategy, and concrete steps for action should be discussed and defined with all relevant stakeholders in a further series of culturally appropriate workshops.

6.4 Recommendations on the role of indigenous peoples

In many, if not most cases of development, legislative administrative or other processes in Cambodia, indigenous peoples' voices are silent. This is due to a number of reasons, including conflicting interests, and prejudice and misunderstanding. It is also due to the knowledge gap that often exists between indigenous communities and those responsible for the external processes that affect them, and the unequal power relations that are inherent in the validation of these different forms of knowledge.

6.4.1 Strengthen indigenous capacity in advocacy and networking

Support should focus on the long-term development of indigenous peoples' awareness of laws, policies, processes and structures affecting them, and capacity to act on their own initiative. Capacity building should be aimed strengthening indigenous peoples' ability to:

- determine and advocate their own priorities in poverty reduction efforts through indigenous organisations and representative institutions (including public relations); and
- cope with socio-economic transformation processes by improving knowledge on new livelihood strategies (NFE) and practicing them within the context of community development.

In order to secure the effective participation of indigenous peoples in decision-making beyond the level of their own communities, it is necessary to strengthen respective capacities to represent indigenous concerns in public by indigenous groups themselves and for them to play a more active role in decision-making and development processes at different levels. The maintenance of broad organisational networks comprising all communities of an indigenous group in a certain area or even nationwide would enable them to exchange views and information systematically on their situation and to come to joint positions with regard to their common needs and interests so that they can contribute effectively to national policy and decision-making. This would include, for example, development of their aspirations, self-confidence and capacity for discussion amongst themselves about possible structures for such indigenous networks. A first important objective of these discussions has to be to define clearly the purpose, objectives, mandate, action, etc. of these representative indigenous organisations by the groups themselves. Only with such clarity and self-confidence will self-managed structures take root and lead to participation on an equal basis with others. It ensures a sense of ownership from the beginning and minimises the risk of being overwhelmed by incomprehensible outside influences, which lead to a state of unsure passivity and dependence on outside interventions.

6.4.2 Access to appropriate formal education

Although the ability to speak the Khmer language has improved, including amongst indigenous peoples in remote areas such as the Northeast, the language is still a barrier as many indigenous children are not fluent when they come from an environment where the indigenous language is still the main means for communication. In addition, official teaching materials and curricula do not reflect the world in which indigenous children grow up and teachers who have mostly been sent from provincial level often encounter difficulties coping with this different world. To ensure equitable levels of education, indigenous groups expressed the wish to receive bilingual teaching with teaching materials adapted to their life and customs. They also appreciate teachers from their own community, implying that indigenous students should be supported in reaching the necessary educational qualifications.

In order for any education curricula that are bilingual, or incorporate indigenous perspectives to be effectively implemented, it is essential that teachers are sensitised and trained in this regard, or actually recruited from indigenous communities. This would serve to mitigate many of the prejudices that indigenous peoples face within the education system, and that prevent them from

benefiting fully from that system. The Ministry of Education, and other concerned governmental and non-governmental organizations could play an important role in the promotion of indigenous, bilingual and culturally appropriate education, and such action would help to ensure that they reach the same level of education as other citizens while being able to maintain own cultural values, histories and traditions.

6.4.3. *Support to development and use of indigenous languages*

An important prerequisite for effective participation of indigenous peoples is considering and addressing the language barrier that hinders mutual understanding especially in decision-making bodies at local level. The acceptance and use of different languages in providing relevant information to each other would considerably ease the involvement of indigenous groups from the beginning to the end of any development initiative – be it policy-making, or implementing a project or program. Every development intervention should carefully reflect whether it is indeed sufficient to select local development volunteers primarily on the basis of high Khmer literacy, risking the participation potential of the community. It is here that participation begins. This is a question not only for government but also NGOs. If they operate bilingually throughout their projects rather than only providing occasional translations, this will help to integrate indigenous people effectively at the project design stage.

Seen from this angle, the recent process of decentralisation and devolution of power to local government may be an opportunity for levelling political imbalances between indigenous and non-indigenous populations as well. The current requirement of having sufficient knowledge of the majority language excludes *de facto* a large proportion of indigenous peoples from running for local elections and being elected as representatives on commune councils.

Within a longer-term perspective, indigenous peoples' participation must recognize their right to express their interests, needs and concerns in their own languages. Such recognition could be brought about through furtherance of existing efforts to develop written letter systems for non-written indigenous languages, through the development of education tools, applicable in formal and non-formal education, in these languages. Such language development could not only contribute to the strengthening of indigenous self-confidence through language recognition, but also to increasing awareness/recognition of indigenous values by the non-indigenous majority. This would provide an excellent basis for the development of bi-lingual education curricula that recognize the cultures and perspectives of indigenous peoples.

6.4.4. *Strengthening indigenous socio-cultural structures and identities*

As has been demonstrated in detail, indigenous communities are constantly struggling to maintain their traditional structures and community cohesion in the face of outside influences. That has had a creeping effect of undermining the traditional system in general. Indigenous peoples are more or less aware that the ongoing economic transformation processes have far-reaching implications on their socio-cultural life and are trying to cope with it. However, it cannot be denied that the way of doing so has increased the gap between elders and the younger generation in terms of ethnic

identity and culture. The extent of socio-cultural changes also varies from one ethnic group to another, making it increasingly difficult for them to hold onto their own distinctive features of ethnic identity. One important step would be to create indigenous organisations that focus on these issues. Such organisations are also needed to bring indigenous concerns, needs and demands into the public arena and to give support to their communities in protecting their rights.

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Annexe 1: Guidelines for focus group discussions and semi-structures interviews

Generic guidelines for semi-structured interviews with Tribal Leader, elders, indigenous women

Respondent No	:		Date:	
Village	:		Age:	
Commune	:		Male:_____	Female:_____
District	:			

INSTRUCTION TO THE INTERVIEWER: ADJUST THE GENERIC LIST OF QUESTIONS TO THE PARTICULAR TYPE OF RESPONDENT

Introduction of CAS researchers and purpose of the visit

Asking and talking in a way of no influencing or interpreting from outside (only deepen the question if answer unclear or difficult to understand)

Introductory conversation

(first personal questions possible? e.g. age of the interview partner, family background, questions related to position and function in community)

1. How many families live in the village? How many peoples live in the village?
2. To which ethnic groups do they belong? Are there also other ethnic groups in the village? If yes, how is the portion between these groups (who is the majority)?
3. How long have they lived here?
4. Was it necessary in the past to leave the ancestral area and to move to other places outside from it?
If yes, when the families had to leave and when they came back to the ancestral villages? (*year if possible*)
Why they had to leave? Why they came back?
5. Did the number of families of the own ethnic group change over the last years? (*increasing / decreasing/ how much*)
Why the number of families has remarkably changed? (migration, influx by other ethnic groups, health, more or less marriages)
6. If the number of families of the own ethnic group has remarkably changed, has this had any impact to the life of the own community? If yes, please describe the impact (*negative/positive*)
 impact on food security / living conditions
 material possession (house, animals, household articles, jewellery, other things)
 social life (relationship to each other, relationship to other villages, disputes, respect to leaders and elders, solidarity, commune sense, regular meetings and decision-making etc.)
 cultural life (language, beliefs, cultural events, old story telling, dancing, singing etc.)
7. How many children does the average family have? What is the ideal number of children (as much as possible?) or is the number not relevant?
Does the sex of the children have any importance in a family?
If so, why male/female is preferred?
8. How do the families earn their livelihood? Are there any priorities/ main activities?
9. What is the best way to earn livelihood? Why?

10. Are there differences in earning livelihood in the past and now?
If yes, what differences? (more or fewer possibilities of earning livelihood, different kind of earning livelihood, more or less difficult)

11. Have these differences of past and present any impact to the quality of life now? Is life now easier or more difficult? What is easier and what is more difficult compared to the past?

related to food security / living conditions
material possession (house, animals, household articles, jewelry)
social life (relationship to each other, relationship to other communities, disputes, respect to leaders, elders, solidarity, commune sense, ethnic identity, regular meetings and decision-making etc.)
cultural life (language, believes, cultural events, old story telling, dancing, singing etc.)

12. Why life is now easier or more difficult? (reasons of changes from internal view)

13. What is important for you to have in order to be satisfied in life? What do you need for a satisfied life?

(still wait for answer first and only if there is need to go more into detail then ask according to the following topics: food security, large forest, big house, many children, good neighborhood, peaceful community, regular cultural events, respect of traditions, speaking in own language, good health, education ...)

14. What is most important for being satisfied in life? (ranking of material and immaterial values according to the previous question)

15. What makes you unsatisfied in life?

Perception of poverty, reasons of poverty, poverty reduction efforts

(Specifications related to the initial questions)

Natural resources in general

16. How important are natural resources like forest, agricultural land, water for the village?

related to food security / living conditions
material possession (house, animals, household articles, jewelry)
social life (relationship to each other, relationship to other communities, disputes, respect to leaders, elders, solidarity, commune sense, ethnic identity, regular meetings and decision-making etc.)
cultural life (believes, cultural events, old story telling, etc.)

17. Has the village access to much or few natural resources?

How does the village decide over the use of the natural resources? Who is most responsible for decision?

Are there significant changes in access to these natural resources compared between today and the past? If yes, what is different? What are the reasons of changes?

18. Have had the village problems with access to natural resources in the past? (*disputes between families of the village, with other villages, other ethnic groups*)

If yes, how were the problems resolved? Who was involved in resolving, and who was most responsible for decision-making on access to disputed areas of land, forest or water sources?

Could be find a solution acceptable for all involved families/ villages?

What was the best solution?

Land issue

19. Have people today more, less or equal access to land than in the past?

If access has changed, why? What are the reasons of more or less access?

20. How do they feel about security over their land

Is this feeling different from the past?

Has this feeling impact on the quality of life? (*grading no little much heavy*)
If so, which impact has the different feeling about land security? (*negative/positive, life-threatening*)?

affecting food security / living conditions
 material possession (house, animals, household articles, jewelry)
 social life (relationship to each other, relationship to other villages, disputes, respect to leaders, elders, solidarity, commune sense, ethnic identity, regular meetings and decision-making etc.)
 cultural life (believes, cultural events, old story telling, etc.)

21. Have people lost land to outsiders?

If yes, how have they lost it? (bought, exchanged for something, confiscated, abandoned)

To whom have they lost it? (private business man, local authority, powerful people, military)

How has this land loss affected their livelihood? Is there remarkable difference to before? (now life more difficult than before, less food security, less possibilities for livelihood, forced to seek for different kind of livelihood)

What does land loss of families mean to the community? (affecting the relationship to each other?)

22. Have people land disputes today? Who with whom? (between each other, between neighbours villages, with outsiders)

If yes, what is the reason? Why have they land disputes?

How do people define their land boundaries? How does the village determine land use?

23. Have families/villages/communities also had land disputes between each other in the past?

How has the village resolved these disputes? Who was involved in solving the dispute?

Was it successful / acceptable for the involved parties?

Were there ceremonies held in order to confirm officially the settlement of conflict?

24. Can the current land dispute be resolved according to the traditional way?

Do people know any land law regulations of the government? Are they aware that there also are specific paragraphs related to the rights of indigenous peoples? If yes, from where have they received the information? (*NGOs, local authorities*)

Would they go to the court in order to defend their rights? If yes, who should go? (*the concerned family, the tribe leader on behalf of them, elders*)

25. Which consequences do the unresolved land disputes have for the livelihoods of the concerned families and villages?

Are there other alternatives for livelihood in order to compensate loss of land? (small business, handicraft, work for other people)

26. Would concerned families be interested to change kind of livelihood? If so, under which conditions? What could they do instead of earning livelihood from land?

If not, why they are not interested?

Forest

27. Do the village have access to forest? Which importance/role has access to the forest for earning livelihood? How big is the portion of earning livelihood from forest compared to land use?

28. Who decide the purpose or way of forest use? (collecting forest products, spirit forest, burial forest)

29. Have people today more, less or equal access to forest than in the past?

If access has change, why? What are the reasons of more or less access?

(*Has the local authority placed restrictions on access to forest? If yes, what explanation is given?*)

30. Has changed access to forest affected the live of the village? If yes, what are the consequences?

related to food security
 health
 household / utilities

cultural events / beliefs

31. How does the village feel about security over access to forest areas today? Is this feeling different from the past? If yes, what is different to before?
32. Has the village any problem in accessing water resources? If yes, which problems and why?
33. Compared with the past, have you the feeling that the families today have better, worse, or the same economic living conditions?
34. Are there differences between the families of the village in having access to natural resources like forest, agricultural land, water? Have some families more or less access than other families in the villages?
If so, why do they have different access? What are reasons of different access?
35. Have men and women different or same access to natural resources? If yes, why?
Have women to avoid some places?

Social aspects

36. Are there other differences between the families? If so, which differences?
related to food security / living conditions
 material possession (house, animals, household articles, jewellery)
 social life (less or more respect by others, less or more degree of involving in decision-making)
 cultural life (less or more participation in cultural events)
37. What are the main differences between families?
 different food security / living conditions
 different material possession (house, animals, household articles, jewellery)
 different involvement into social life / decision-making
 different participation in cultural events
38. Are there families who have much bigger problems in livelihood than others? (insufficient food, not enough access to land or forest, no house, only very few household articles, etc.)
If so, which problems have they? What are the reasons of these problems? (not enough labour force in the family, family members sick, female headed household, disregard by others, not complying traditions)
39. Do the families help each other when somebody is in need? How do they do it? (food, house, materials, labour force, in case of sickness)
40. Do the families discuss about problems caused by poverty? Who speaks with whom? Who takes the initiative to address problems related to poverty? Ask the poorer families the richer or have the poorer to wait for help? (differences between now and in the past?)
41. When would you say that a family is poor?
42. What is necessary to have to be able saying my family is a rich family?
related to food security / living conditions
 material possession (house, animals, household articles, jewelry)
 social life (more respect by others, more degree of involving in decision-making, more influence than others, better communication to others, better relationship to other villages, strong living according to the traditions)
 cultural life (more participation in cultural events, more knowledge of old stories, more knowledge of own language, more knowledge on traditions)
43. Are there differences between being considered as a rich family today and a rich family in the past? If so, which differences?

44. If there is any lack of these necessary things for being considered as a rich family then would the family be excluded from any village activity? (decision-making, participation in cultural events, talking to each other)

45. Are there more rich families or more poor families in your village? How is the portion of rich families compared to poor families?

46. Do you think the village is poor or rich? Why this village is poor or rich?
Is there any difference to the past? Was the village richer or poorer in the past compared to now?

47. Is the neighbor village richer or poorer than your village? Or have both village the same level?
If richer or poorer what is the difference? Why do you think is the neighbor village richer or poorer?

Over-village relationship / information-flow / networking

48. Do you know which problems other villages have? If yes, how do you have received this information?

49. Are there discussion about poverty and livelihood problems between the neighbouring villages?

If yes, who initiate these discussions/meetings? In which way do these discussions happen?
(meeting of tribal leaders, meeting of all elders, meeting of all villagers, discussion between several families)

Are these meetings regular?

50. If such discussions do not happen, why there is no exchange of information? (villages too far from each other, busy with own livelihood, no good relationship with other villages)

51. Do indigenous people have any broader authority system beyond the village level? If yes, how is the structure? Are there differences between now and in the past?

52. Do you know any organization created by indigenous peoples themselves at a level higher than village? If so, what are they doing? Have you regular contact with them? Are you a member of it?

53. Do you think that such an organization could help to resolve the problems of the village?
Have you already received any help from such organization? Was this help according to your need?

54. What information/messages related to problems and needs of the village would you give to the outside?

55. In which way could the village transport the information about their problems and needs of the village to the provincial or national level? (NGO, indigenous organization, regular meeting of all tribal leaders, by demonstration, violent action)

56. In which way the contact should be happened? What ought outsiders consider when they visit your village? What is allowed to do and what not?

Integration into development

57. Which changes in the village caused by contact with other ethnic groups like Khmer make you satisfied? (related to economic, social, cultural changes)

Have you the feeling that you could benefit from these contacts? Or feel you threaten?

What do you like by having contacts with outsiders? (selling goods, receiving and spending money, getting modern consumer goods, new ideas, more information, education, health care)

What do you not like when having contacts? (outsiders do not speak your language, their behaviour is impolite, they disdain you, they steal your land, you feel to be inferior in communicating with them)

58. How do you feel under the new structure of the village with a village chief under subordination of commune authorities and district authorities? Is it difficult or easy for you to accept the new

structure? Are there now many important things you cannot decide by your own as it was in the past? Have you problems with the village chief? What do you do when the village chief asked for things to do you don't want to do? What do you do if you want to do things the village chief doesn't allow you to do?

59. Have the villagers participated in the election of the Commune Council in 2002 and/or national election 2003? If no, why they have not participated? (no information, not allowed to register because of lacking of ID card, no transportation means, no interest, intentionally refusal)
If yes, why they have participated? (village chief told them to do so, interest by hoping to have a competent local authority for resolving the problems, political party representatives came with gifts)
Who has organized the participation of the villagers in the election?

60. What do you wish to your village for the coming years related to the ongoing changes of traditional life? Should the contacts stop so that you can return to your previous life as before? Or want you to continue having contacts and changes according to outside influences but in a more slowly and respectful way?
Which changes you like and which changes you don't like? (economic changes, other kinds of livelihood, more education, health care, culture, language, beliefs, new values from outside adding to or replacing older ones)

61. Do you know that the government is trying to reduce poverty in the country and to improve the living conditions for the poor people? Do you know that there is a Department of Ethnic Minorities Development of the Ministry of Rural Development? If yes, from where did you get the information? (local authority, representative of political party, NGOs, media, other village)

62. What should the government do in order to reduce poverty and insufficient living conditions in your village, and that you can participate in improving of living standard?
How the government should support you in improving your life?

related to livelihood / economic standards
 social life (traditional structure of decision-making, collective character of life, education, health care)
 political life (access to decisions at provincial and national level, recognition of specific needs of IP reflected in the body of law,
 cultural life (language, traditions, believes)

Annexe 2: List of key informants

Institution / Organization	Partner / Position	Meeting Day
Department of Ethnic Minority Development of Ministry of Rural Development	Mr. Yim Chung / Director Mr. Bouy Kim Sreang / Deputy Director	01/03/05
NGO Forum Cambodia	Mr. Russell Peterson / Representative Mr. Ek Yothin / Project Officer	04/03/05
CLEC	Mrs. Seng Maly / Project Officer	07/03/05
ICC	Mr. Eric Pawley, Acting Director Mrs. Julie Barr Mrs. CheChe Magaspag	07/03/05
Ministry of Land Management, Urban Planning and Construction	Mrs. Katrin Seidel / Technical Advisor Mr. Todd Segaty / Technical Advisor	09/03/05
Network Ratanakiri	Mr. Graeme Brown / Advisor	17/03/05
Provincial Department of Rural Development Ratanakiri	Mr. Phan Phirin / Director	17/03/05
Province Ratanakiri	Mr. Kham Khoeun / Gouvernor	17/03/05
CIDSE Ratanakiri	Mr. Samit / Project Officer	17/03/05
Health Unlimited Ratanakiri	Mrs. Carolyn	17/03/05
SEILA / PLG	Mr. Touch Tonet / Seniour Provincial Program Advisor	17/03/05
Highlanders Association Ratanakiri	Mrs. Chanthy / President Mrs. Pong Meas Mr. Gordon Paterson / Advisor	17/03/05
Department of Rural Development Kratie	Mr. Thorn Sary / Deputy Director Mrs. Tuon Saophoan / in charge of ethnic minorities	23/03/05
SSP network Kratie	Mrs. Kim Nary	–
Department of Rural Development Mondulkiri	Mr. Yun Saraom / Director Mr. Srey Sreang / in charge of ethnic minorities	28/03/05

Annexe 3: Overview of interviews with tribe leaders and elders

Province	District	Commune	Village	Day	Tribe Leader (Age)	Elders male (Age)	Elders female (Age)
Ratanakiri	O Yadao	Som Thom	2 villages	18/03/05	1 (55)	1 (65)	1 (55)
	O Yadao	Som Thom		19/03/05	1 (70)	1 (60)	1 (70)
	Bokeo	Ting Chak	2 villages	20/03/05	1 (85)	1 (66)	1 (80)
	Bokeo	Ting Chak		21/03/05	1 (60)	1 (70)	1 (60)
Kratie	Sâmbor	Roluos	2 villages	23/03/05	*	1 (82)	1 (64)
	Sâmbor	Roluos		24/03/05	*	1 (67)	1 (60)
	Snoul	Pir Thnu	2 villages	25/03/05	*	1 (67)	1 (84)
	Snoul	Pir Thnu		26/03/05	*	1 (80)	1 (64)
Monduliri	Picheda	Bou Sra	2 villages	28/03/05	1 (75)	1 (80)	1 (59)
	Picheda	Bou Sra		29/03/05	**	1 (97)	1 (80)
	O Reang	Sen Monorom	2 villages	30/03/05	1(68)	***	1 (67)
	O Reang	Sen Monorom		31/03/05	1 (55)	***	1 (80)

* no tribe leader anymore, only group of elders

** no agreement for interview

*** were at field too far from village

Annexe 4: Overview of focus groups and their participants

Focus Group Discussions

Province	District	Commune	Day	No. of Participants	Of which female	Age
Ratanakiri	O Yadao	Som Thom	18/03/05	11	6	female: 18,30,32,40,43,49 male: 35,42,55,58,70
	O Yadao	Som Thom	19/03/05	10	5	female: 22,25,40,40,65 male: 30,32,32,35,37
	Bokeo	Ting Chak	20/03/05	10	5	female: 43,45,46,49,52 male: 20,25,30,42,47
	Bokeo	Ting Chak	21/03/05	10	5	female: 30,30,31,33,35 male: 27,28,32,45,55
Kratie	Sâmbor	Roluos	23/03/05	9	4	female: 55,56,57,79 male: 55,57,58,59,70
	Sâmbor	Roluos	24/03/05	14	6	female: 25,29,36,36,42,49 male: 26,27,41,50,52,57,62,62
	Snoul	Pir Thnu	25/03/05	10	5	female: 33,37,38,45,56 male: 31,32,39,40,65
	Snoul	Pir Thnu	26/03/05	10	6	female: 38,39,45,51,52,64 male: 32,41,50,54
Monduliri	Picheda	Bou Sra	28/03/05	10	6	female: 18,19,36,36,50,52 male: 52,60,72,75
	Picheda	Bou Sra	29/03/05	11	7	female: 23,34,44,55,58,58,59 male: 46,58,62,70
	O Reang	Sen Monorom	30/03/05	10	5	female: 26,32,35,39,42 male: 32,38,51,56,60
	O Reang	Sen Monorom	31/03/05	8	5	female: 26,35,37,38,48 male: 30,32,60

Annexe 5: Overview of interviews with local authorities

Province	District	Commune	Day	Position
Ratanakiri	O Yadao	Som Thom	18/03/05	village chief (since 1979)
	O Yadao	Som Thom	19/03/05	village chief (since 1979)
	Bokeo	Ting Chak	20/03/05	deputy village chief
	Bokeo	Ting Chak	21/03/05	village chief (since 1997)
Kratie	Sâmbor	Roluos	23/03/05	1 st chomtup
	Sâmbor	Roluos	24/03/05	village chief (since 1985)
	Snoul	Pir Thnu	25/03/05	village chief (since 1994)
	Snoul	Pir Thnu	26/03/05	village chief
Mondulkiri	Picheda	Bou Sra	28/03/05	village chief
	Picheda	Bou Sra	29/03/05	village chief (since 2002)
	O Reang	Sen Monorom	30/03/05	commune chief (CPP), 1 st chomtup (CPP)
	O Reang	Sen Monorom	30/03/05	village chief
	O Reang	Sen Monorom	31/03/05	village chief