

# **CHAN SAR COMMUNITY FOREST**

## **Siem Reap Province**

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### **1. Introduction**

The inception of community forestry in Cambodia in the 1990's was a result of a concern for forest loss in Cambodia at a rapid pace in the recent years. Lack of local community participation in forest management is a factor in forest resource decline. A local community's demand for forest gradually increase. In order to manage the existing forests, to use them in a sustainable way, to reforest in degraded areas, and to involve local communities in forest management, NGOs and other international organizations are working with local communities and the Royal government of Cambodia at all levels to establish community forestry projects. This is a solution to the local community's demand for the present time and for the future, in some areas of Cambodia. The current practice of community forestry project in some areas increases interest of other communities.

The understanding of community forestry by local communities help us to plan, carry out, and get support from them in the future. A community forestry team is established to support and to share information, to get cooperation among all interested groups at a national level, and to facilitate understanding and help among communities to support the ongoing project.

It is important that a community forestry team conduct a study of Cambodian community forestry best practices to understand the practices of community forestry, and to establish a based information. The community forestry team studied five provinces. They are Siem Reap, Ratanakiri, Kampong Chhnang, Svay Rieng and Koh Kong that these provinces are carrying out community forestry Programs.

The Sustainable Management of Resources Project in the Lower Mekong Basin (SMRP-MRC/GTZ) provided financial and technical support for the study.

### **2. Goal and Objectives**

The objectives of the study of Cambodia community forestry best practice are:

- To document the practices of community forestry by Royal government of Cambodia, Non government organization and monks in cooperation with local communities
- To identify problems and to look for the solution that is best to support and develop the programs in community forestry in Cambodia.
- To strengthen research capacity and to document information for staff of relevant government institutes that are involved in the community forestry projects.
- To build relationships among the national, provincial and grass root levels, in order to set up a management mechanism for Cambodia community forestry in the future.

### **3. Methodology**

In this study, the team was divided into two groups, the core and the field research groups. The core group was responsible for organizing the study, providing technical support and ideas. The field research group was responsible for conducting the field study, methodology, information gathering, analyzing, and reporting. The team was comprised of staff from the Department of Forestry and Wildlife, the Ministry of Environment and the Royal University of Agriculture, Phnom Penh.

In order to obtain positive results in the study of Cambodia community forestry practice, the team

organized a consulting group that consists of expatriate staff who are very experienced in community forestry. All groups discussed and set up methods for the study including making questionnaires, and providing interviewing techniques with local people. Provincial government and NGO staff were also included in the field research group to supply information and document areas, to support the study through cooperation, involvement in discussions, approaching study areas, scheduling for the study implementation and so forth.

After informing local people of the purposes of the study and the presence of the field research group, each group was split into smaller groups to conduct semi-structured interviews, semi-structured walks, and direct observation. The groups interviewed small groups of local people or individuals, within the time constraints given.

## **4. Results**

### **4.1. Geographic Location**

Chan Sar commune community forestry project is located in the north of Sot Nikoum district. It is about 45km from Seam Reap town. It shares with Phnum Kulen in the north, Khach commune in the south, Som Rong and People communes in the east and Khnarpur in the west.

Chan Sar commune possesses an area of 1,232ha. It is a watershed area of Phnum Kulen. The north of the study area is forested and the soil consists of loam in the main. The south of the area is a lowland area of paddy fields. The area stores water through the year in three places, that supplies water for rice production in the dry and wet seasons.

### **4.2. Socio-economics**

#### **4.2.1 Population**

Chan Sar commune is composed of 19 village, seven of which are members of the community forestry project. They have 513 families with a total of 2,313 people. Among these are 420 males, 758 females, and 30 handicapped. There was a small population in the 1970's. However, after 1979 up to present the population has grown rapidly. The average family size is five persons.

#### **4.2.2. Education**

Chan Sar commune is quite far from the provincial town. Communication in Chan Sar is poor due to a lack of transportation and poor roads. In addition, the area was still occupied by the Khmer Rouge up to 1997, which obstructed the Royal government's rehabilitation of all sectors, including education. In 1998, generous people donated a school with 30 classrooms. Three teachers work in the school. The school is located in Thal village. which is far way from other villages. This causes problems to other communities that are away from the school. Most pupils in the school are a liter bit old. They are not less than 13 years old. Even though Children can walk to the school, they do not go to school regularly because they need to help their parents. They take care of cattle, work in the rice fields, collect firewood and lianas, and other non-timber forest products in the forest, and go fishing.

#### **4.2.3.Customs, Traditions and Beliefs**

All members of the community forestry project are Khmer. They hold strong Buddhist beliefs and customs. They celebrate ceremonies such as Buddhist Praise Ceremony, Meak Bochea, Khmer New year, Plowing day, water Festival, and so on.

#### **4.2.4. Health and Sanitation**

The finding of the interview survey and direct observation indicate that the people in Chan Sar commune were not educated about the health care and sanitation. People living in the commune are not aware of health problems such as diarrhea, fever, malaria, colds that are caused by unclean water, unclean and inappropriate toilets and so on. Now, Thal commune has a health center that was built by CARERE. But the health center cannot provide all services to meet the demands of the people of Chan Sar commune due to a lack of health personnel and medicine. This results in most people in Chan Sar commune still employing traditional treatments.

#### **4.2.5. Livelihoods**

All members of community forestry project are farmers. Therefore, their main profession is rice production. Each family has a paddy field from 0.5 - 3ha. Besides farming, the people do some other profession to supplement the income that they make from rice production. Their additional professions are:

- Collecting non-timber forest products such as lianas, resin, rattan, bamboo, bamboo shoots, traditional medicine plants, mushroom, wild fruits, wild vegetables and so on.
- Doing Handicraft to make brooms for sale.
- They raise chicken, pigs, cattle, buffalo for meat and for working.
- Seasonal work, such as construction worker, rice harvester, and others.
- Growing fruit trees in their yards such as coconut trees, palm tree and so on.

### **4.3. Land Tenure Status**

#### **4.3.1. Private Lands**

##### **Settlement Lands**

This is a land that people use to build their house on. It is recognized by the local authorities. It is legal, but people do not have titles to the right to use of the lands to other people. Lands in the yards are utilized for home gardens, as well as fruit tree such as coconut, areca palm, jackfruit, orange and vegetables to supplement their livelihood.

##### **Swidden Farmlands**

This is degraded forestland that people have a right to clear for farmland. The land is not research for community forestry. People are allowed to clear the forest for farmland by the local authorities. Nevertheless, they are not issue licenses for tenure of the land.

##### **Paddy Fields**

This is a field that is in the nearby village. Each family is provided 0.5 – 3 ha. The people can grow rice only in the wet season, but not in the dry season as no water is available. Generally, the rice yield is between 1 and 1.5 tones per ha. The local authority districts the land, or it is inherited from their family. It is, however, recognized by the village head and the commune head. In addition, people have the right transfer the land to their descendants or relatives, or to sell.

#### **4.3.2. Public Lands**

##### **Land for school, community administration, and health centers**

This is land that villages use for public purposes. The lands are recognized by the people and the local authorities in the village and in the commune. No one right has over the lands, either for selling or private occupation.

##### **Water Source Lands**

This is land that is for community forestry in Chan Sar commune. This land possesses several types of species such as Pdeak (*Dipterocarpacee Anisoptera glabra*) , Trasaek (*Caesalpinees Ceriops*

roxburghiana), Trach (*Dipterocarpus intricatus*) Choeru Teal (*Dipterocarpus* sp), Lnieng (*Hypericaceae Cratoxylon prunifolium*), Tlorok (*Rosaceae Parinarium annamensis*). The non-timber forest products that are available in the community forest are lianas, rattan, bamboo, traditional medicine plants, mushroom, mongoose, snake and jungle fowl. In the community forest, land has a permanent water supply that is important for the communities to use for their farms as it allows them to grow vegetables. The forest loss in the area was due to illegal logging. Thus, it results in the lost water sources that are important for life of the communities. The local communities, the outsiders, village head, commune head, and the provincial department of forestry, fishery, and wildlife recognize this type of land.

### **Community Lands**

Chan Sar commune occupies 1,232ha of land for the community forest. This forest is used to support the community's needs. Forest in the area is mixed, with a similar variety as that of spring water land (see above).

In order to sustain the forest resources in the community forest, the people are only allowed to collect non-timber forest products for household consumption at present. People use timber only if they have approval from the community forestry committee. The community, outsiders, village head, commune head, and the Provincial Department of Forestry, Fishery, and Wildlife recognizes the land, the resources and by law about the use of the resources in the area.

## **4.4. Organization and Management of Community forest**

### **4.4.1. Community Institutions and other Institutions**

#### **Community Forestry Committee**

Historically, the community has tenured Chan Sar forest for a long time. Since 1979, the forests in the area have degraded quickly due to illegal logging for timber, clearing for farm land swidden agriculture. In addition, the loss of the forest in the area was also due to forest fires, and clearing for security. Because aware of forest loss in the area, the people agreed and requested the local authorities, relevant authorities, and the FAO to create a community forest in the commune in order to manage and use the forest resources in a sustainable way. The organizational structure of the community forestry project in Chan Sar commune is based on the volunteered support of FAO. The organizational structure comprises of a central committee and a sub-committee.

#### **Central Committee**

This committee has a chief, first deputy chief, second deputy chief, a secretary, an accountant, two other members, and a supervisor who is head of the commune. These members were chosen through elections. The candidates were the heads from seven villages in the commune.

#### **Sub-committee**

The sub-committee consists of a chief, a deputy chief, and a member. The Central Committee elected members of each sub-committee member with the approval of the head of the commune. Candidates to be elected are a village head and another four villages who are trusted by villages.

#### **Other Support**

Non governmental organizations, relevant institutions, and donor agencies were involved and supported the organization of the community forest in the commune.

#### **Direct Support**

FAO plays a role in providing financial and technical support, training in legal systems such as the by law, management plan, and action plan, in cooperation with the Office of Forestry and Wildlife and local authorities at a levels (province, district, commune and village).

#### **Indirect Support**

CARERE assist in health care and sanitation while WFP provides fertilizers and labor cost in rice for digging clean wells, building roads, and reforestation.

#### **4.4.2. Community Forestry by-law**

The by-law of the community forest was established in 1998 with participation of all stakeholders, including the forest committee and the commune head. FAO and other technical institutions assisted and facilitated in the establishment of the by-law. The forest committee, commune head, chief of district, and the Provincial Department of Forestry and Wildlife signed the by-law.

#### **4.4.3. Management Plan**

Chan Sar community forest has draft a management plan that was developed with assistance from FAO, other relevant institution, which provides the guidelines for the committee to implement the plan efficiently. They have determined the community forest boundary, demarcation of vegetation type, responsibilities of members, and a resources extraction plan.

#### **4.4.4. Implementation Plan**

Chan Sar community has undertaken several natural resources management and action plans in order to ensure the sustainability of the resources. The following are plans that the community plans to undertake:

##### **Community Forestry Extension**

After setting up the community forest, Chan Sar committee has extended the importance of the forest and community forestry to the local people and outside communities. The committee has also distributes seedlings to the people to plant on public lands, free lands and other lands nearby their house.

**Zoning:** Chan Sar community forestry is divided into three zones. Zone 1 has an area of 50ha, Zone 2 has an area of 932ha and Zone 3 has an area of 250ha. Zoning is agreed among all people.

##### **Zone 1**

Area: 50 ha

Soil: loam

Important species: Pdeak (Dipterocarpacee Anisoptera glabra), Trach (Dipterocarpus intricatus) Choeu Teal (Di perocarpus sp), and Chramas (Dipterocarpacee Vativa astrotrichia). Growth status: good

##### **Zone 2**

Area: 932ha

Soil: loam

Important species: Angkahaov (Ebenacees Diospyros bejaudi), Lnieng (Hypericacees Cratoxylon prunifolium), Tlork (Rosacees Parinarium annamensis), and Rom Doul Fofrest status : fare

Growth status: good

Responsibility: this zone is further divided into 7 sub-zone. Each stakeholder group in each village is responsible to manage their sub-zone as indicated below:

- Sub-zone 1 has an area of 50ha managed by north Chan Sar village
- Sub-zone 2 has an area of 150ha managed by south Chan Sar village
- Sub-zone 3 has an area of 30ha managed by Thnal village
- Sub-zone 4 has an area of 100ha managed by Chbar Leur village
- Sub-zone 5 has an area of 170ha managed by Choup village
- Sub-zone 6 has an area of 140ha managed by Chaom village
- Sub-zone 7 has an area of 222ha managed by Kork Toeng village

### **Zone 3**

Area: 250ha

This is further divided into 3 sub- zones based on forest distribution. Each-undertakes silviculture.

### **Demarcation of Community Forest**

For the demarcation of the community forest, the committee of Chan Sar commune clears forest to make rows by replacing palm tree setting postmarks to separate wsidden agricultural lands and the community forest lands. After demarcation, each village is responsible for its own zone.

#### **4.4.5. Benefit Distribution**

It is not clearly stated in the by-law about benefit sharing within communities, as the community forest is in a trial process and in progressing stages. However, benefit sharing is intended for household purposes only. Even so, the community forest is managed by Chan Sar villagers, as well as outsiders, who previously used the forest in Chan Sar, and who can still access the forest resources for non-timber forest products such as dead trees, traditional plants, wild fruits, mushroom, fish etc. They are not allowed to cut trees.

#### **4.4.6. Conflicts and Resolution**

At present, there are no problems or conflicts arising from using the non-timber forest products of the community forest, as the inception of the community forest came at the instigation. Besides, outsiders can still access to the non-timber forest products as long as they respect they respect the by-law of Chan Sar community.

## **5. Analysis of Community Forestry**

### **5.1. Impact on Household Economy**

Before the establishment of the community forest in Chan Sar, most households' income from extraction of forest resources and non-timber forest products solely from that are. Thus, community forestry in Chan Sar had a negative effect on some households who have no other alternative sources of revenue, such as farm lands. However, the problem of those families were alleviated and solved by FAO. FAO opened a small-scale rural credit that allowed people, who depended on timber and non-timber forest products, to borrow with low return interest. The loan is given for agricultural activities. Community forestry ameliorates the livelihood of the community and ensures the sustainability of forest resources, the life of the community at present and in the future.

### **5.2. Impact on Equal Access and user Rights to National Resources**

At present, the people in Chan Sar have rights to collect non-timber forest products in the community forest for household use, but only because the community doesn't have a plan for extraction of forest products yet. This does not affect the progress of the community forest project in Chan Sar. The local authorities, organizations, and other relevant institutions are trying to get the project recognized nationally.

Even though there are presently no community forestry laws, the efforts and results of Chan Sar community has aroused the interest of other local communities. Private companies also respect their rights to utilize the forest resources. Utilization and management of the forest and non-timber forest product of Chan Sar community forest are becoming more effective. Progress in the future will occur when there is law on the establishment of community forestry. Meanwhile, the by-law, management plan and the recognition of other communities make the community forest in Chan Sar possible.

### **5.3. Impact on national Resource Status and its Sustainability vis-à-vis Biodiversity and Productivity**

Forest and non-timber forest products are increasing through good management after community forestry began. In addition, the local authorities helped the community to stop illegal activities in the community forest by the outsiders or private logging companies. The increase of forest resources increases water sources and saplings in the area, that can meet the demands of the community. This is due to the establishment of community forestry, the by-law, management plan, and the support of others.

#### **5.4. Impact on Cooperation Between the Community and the Government**

After community forestry began, the community positively participated in forest production, which is consistent with the policy of the Royal government that encourages forest maintenance, but has banned illegal logging. The latter is highly threatening to the natural environment and resources in Cambodia. The community forestry project promotes cooperation between the community and the local authorities, relevant institutions, the Provincial Department of Forestry, Wildlife and Fishery, and FAO. The community work well for the production of natural resources, and participates in the formulation of the management plan, the action plan, with the facilitation of the Provincial department of Forestry, Wildlife and Fishery.

#### **5.5. Impact on the Status and Effectiveness of Local Institutions**

Chan Sar community forest was established due to the initiation of the community, and their participation with the facilitation of FAO. In this project, there was an election of the community forestry committee. The establishment of this project was recognized and supported by the local community, outsiders, organizations, relevant institutions, and the provincial authorities. The committee is planning to extract some resources in order to generate an income for supporting the community and for increasing understanding of community forestry through training, and seminars. All of these factors make the committee take more responsibilities to protect the community's advantages and to direct the community forestry project efficiently. Furthermore, the income will be used for ongoing of the community forestry activities, even when no financial support is available from organizations and other relevant institutions.

#### **5.6. Impact on General Community Development**

The community forestry project in Chan Sar has sparked the move from swidden agriculture to permanent agriculture. Animal husbandry and home garden crops improve the community's livelihood. The people are coming to trust modern head care rather than traditional health care or beliefs.

#### **5.7. Impact on Adjacent Communities**

Community forestry did not seem to affect other local community, as they are permitted access to the resources as long as they respect the by-law and regulations of the community forest. Community forestry not only develops its own members, but also allows the outsiders have opportunities to learn, listen, and observe the project, and thus see benefits of community forestry, such as the presence of increased forest rainfalls, improved soil quality, and thriving wildlife.

At present, the number of outsiders going to the forest is reduced and most local members can access non-timber forest products to supplement to their livelihood. Some people grow forest or fruit tree that are donated by FAO.

### **6. Conclusions**

The people have rights to select committee members for the community forest without intimidation from anybody in the election process. They have rights of utilization, management of the forest and benefits from the community forest. The establishment of the community forest is to ensure benefits for the community. The project ensures the trust to the community. The committee felt that the

community forestry project improves the community's understanding of legal systems and techniques. The project also developed infrastructure, health care, education, and agricultural production. These factors forest improvements in family economics. The community forestry committee cares for the improvement of agricultural products. The traditions, customs, and beliefs of the community are projected. Some have been changed due to development.

Community forestry and forest rehabilitation are activities that accord with the policy of the Royal government. This provides the committee and other relevant institutions with an opportunity to extend development programs and government information to local communities. In addition, it makes it easier for the committee to intervene efficiently. Community participation in the rehabilitation of infrastructure, health care, and education indicated the community's participation in the development of their community.

Implementation of the management plan, sustainable use of natural resources, understanding of the advantages of correct use of the forest, natural resource protection, forest rehabilitation, policy encouragement from the government in carrying out community forestry, and support of other people are important factors to ensure the beauty of the forest, landscape and environment in the area.

## **7. Recommendations**

To keep the community forestry running smoothly, NGOs, relevant institutions and local authorities should remedy the following gaps:

- The Royal government should adopt the sub-decree on community forestry as soon as possible.
- Provide professional training to the local community and the outsiders through seminars, and training courses on community forestry implementation and management, participatory concept, etc.
- Organize eco-tourism in the community forestry that has beautiful landscapes.
- The government should guarantee and find markets for community forestry products
- Health to build or reconstruct small-scale irrigation so that people can increase their products, especially in the dry season.
- Strengthen the capability of the community forestry committee and promote community participation in forest management through informing them that they have a right to participate in the process to manage their local natural resources.