Title: Community Forestry and the UN-REDD: Cambodia's 13 Community Forestry Groups in 1 UN-REDD+ Project

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There are two main interrelated objectives for this research paper. First, it is a literature review of the theory and practice of community forestry. And, second it is an endeavor to examine how 13 existing community forestry projects are integrated into a UN-REDD project in Cambodia. REDD stands for Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation in the developing countries. Thus the paper is organized into four major sections. The first section begins by stating the significance of forests as the source of livelihoods for approximately 20 percent of the world population. It then traces the history of how the practices of community forestry come into existence, followed by the challenges in terms of the reformation of forest ownership policies. Afterward, the paper attempts to define community forestry, while at the same time acknowledges that differing national political and economic contexts, forestry histories, local and social relations to forests make defining an all encompassing and categorical definition of community forestry an impossibility. The last part of this section is an exploration of how the hypotheses, outlined by Charnley and Poe (2007) as influencing the implementation of community forestry, are applied in various case studies. It will also incorporate the discussion of equal gender participation in these types of forest management practices.

In the second section, the paper starts with a brief history on the institutional arrangement and legal framework constructed to support the implementation of community forestry programs in Cambodia. It then introduces the United Nations Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation in developing countries projects, hereinafter referred to as REDD, as an essential mechanism to assist developing countries to overcome the obstacles in developing and implementing community forestry programs. It does so by first traces the evolution of the REDD projects, followed by the justifications of its existence. Next, using the first REDD project in Cambodia as a case study in the third section, the paper explores how the existing 13 community forestry groups are incorporated into this mechanism known as REDD. The full title of the project is Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Oddar Meanchey Province, Cambodia: A Community Forestry Initiative for Carbon and Biodiversity Conservation and Poverty Reduction, hereinafter referred to as the OM REDD project. It begins by describing the actors involved in the development of this project, followed by the description of the 13 communities located within the project area. Finally, using the Project Design Document, the legal document submitted for validation of the OM REDD project, the paper will demonstrate the benefits that could be delivered for both the communities and biodiversity within the project area through the establishment of this REDD initiative. In the final section, the paper concludes that while REDD could potentially be a powerful means for the communities to enhance their continuing efforts to protect their forests and livelihoods, it is essential that the theoretical concepts discussed in the first section needs to be incorporated in the development and implementation of the project to ensure that this

gigantic community forestry project will not lead to the demise of the 13 existing community forest management regimes.

The World Bank (2004) stated that forest resources directly support the livelihoods of 90 percent of the 1.2 billion people living in extreme poverty and are home to equally 90 percent of the world's terrestrial biodiversity. Not only do forests function as the source of fuel, food, medicines and shelter for the local communities (Parker et al. 2009), they also play an important role in determining peoples' socio-cultural systems and profoundly influence their sense of place, ideologies, and identities (Rocheleau et al. 1996, Rangan 2000, Charnley and Poe 2007). Furthermore it is unanimously agreed that deforestation and forest degradation have the potential to exacerbate poverty among people who depend on forest products and services to support their livelihoods (White and Martin 2002, Center for International Forestry Research 2006, Chomitz 2007). Although it comes with no surprise that for most of modern history, governments have legally owned most of the world's forests, this picture of government ownership is beginning to change (White and Martin 2002).

According to Charnley and Poe (2007), community forestry as a movement emerged in different places between the 1970s and 1990s as a response to different combinations of factors, but the key drivers have been deforestation and forest degradation occurring as a result of decades of overexploitation from industrial logging (Poffenberger 2006). The movement was also driven by five other factors. First, the collective action and protest by local communities that have challenged centralized, bureaucratic forest governance

structures and destructive resource extraction practices, often tied to broader national struggles for democratization and resource access (Bray 1991, Rangan 2000). Second, there is recognition that many state governments do not have the resources to enforce forest management laws and regulations and require assistance in carrying out forest management responsibilities (Wily and Mbaya 2001). The third factor is due to the pressure on national governments to address rural poverty and social inequality on the part of intergovernmental organizations such as the World Bank, United Nations Forum on Forests, and the Food and Agriculture Organization (Arnold 1992). Fourth, the resistance to the top-down approaches to development assistance, practiced in the 1960s and 1970s, that were seen by communities as unjust and irrelevant and a catalyst for more decentralized, bottom-up approaches to development (Chambers 1983). Finally, it is due to the limited availability of financial and technical assistance from international development agencies, foundations, banks, and nongovernmental organizations to support community forestry worldwide (Colfer and Capistrano 2005).

Since the late 1980s, several governments of major forested countries have begun to reconsider and reform forest ownership policies (White and Martin 2002). However, there has been limited progress on the transition from state to community ownership of forests in Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Myanmar, and Thailand (Rights and Resources 2009). Based on the analysis of 25 of the world's 30 most forested countries, six factors are identified as challenges in conducting forest tenure reform. They are limited government political will and momentum to recognize local and indigenous rights, inadequate implementation and enforcement of reforms, lack of progress on complementary rights, government preference

for industrial concessions and conservation over communities, competition within and among forest communities, and limited capacity in advancing reforms (Rights and Resources 2009).

Differing national political and economic contexts, forest and forestry histories, and local relations to forests have caused community forestry to manifest differently in different countries and cases. And although it varies by context, community forestry shares the common goals of improving ecological conditions in forests and encouraging ecologically sustainable forest use practices, increasing social and economic benefits from forests to local communities, and increasing forest communities' access to and control over nearby forests (Arnold 1992, Poffenberger 2006, Charnley and Poe 2007, Swiss-Ukrainian Forest Development Project in Transcarpathia FORZA 2010). In other words, community forestry signifies an important step for communities toward reclaiming access to and control over forests that were appropriated by colonial and postcolonial states and whose management has historically been dominated by central governments and the private industrial forestry sector, with little citizen input (Charnley and Poe 2007). On the other hand, it has been argued that community forestry is just another mechanism for increasing state control over forest communities and forests and for exploiting the cheap labor of forest peoples who are coerced into doing work that states do not have the finance or resources to do (Schroeder 1999, Sundar 2000). Therefore, what is community forestry? In the context of this paper, the definition of community forestry is based on Charnley and Poe's (2007) definition in that community forestry is referred to as forest management that has ecological

sustainability and local community benefits as central goals, with some degree of responsibility and authority for forest management formally vested in the community.

Based on the review of community forestry projects in the Americas, Charnley and Poe (2007) suggested five hypotheses that underlie the implementation of the concept. The first and most important hypothesis states that the key ingredient for the success of community forestry is the presence of an identifiable community to which forest management authority shall be devolved (Pardo 1995). Although, the "community" in community forestry is defined differently in different cases, it is important to examine how the community as a unit is generally understood by community forestry policy makers and practitioners. For example, in Nepal and Bhutan, it is defined as a group of people living in the same area but not necessarily in the same settlement and using the same forest area, whereas in Vietnam, Switzerland, Scotland, Slovakia, Bulgaria, Ukraine, it is referred to as a local administrative unit or a municipality that manages and/or owns a particular forest area (Swiss-Ukrainian Forest Development Project in Transcarpathia FORZA 2010).

In addition, Charnley and Poe (2007) argued that there are in general three central problems in how the word community has been represented in the wider literature on community-based natural resource management and conservation. First, the concept of community as a small or localized spatial unit can overlook important forest users such as semi-nomadic or migratory people who harvest seasonal non-timber forest products, newcomers or immigrants (McLain 2001). The second problem has to do with the assumption that the shared norms in the community means that community shares common interests in

resources support and conservation goals (Agrawal and Gibson 1999). The third problematic portrayal of community is that it is a homogenous social structure suggesting that the similarity within groups means that resources will be managed in egalitarian ways. Social scientists, in response, caution against overlooking the heterogeneity and extant power hierarchies that exist within rural communities, which may serve to marginalize the less powerful sectors of the community (Peluso et al. 1994, Rocheleau et al. 1996, Agrawal and Gibson 1999, Mohan and Stokke 2000). In addition, Rocheleau et al. (1996) stated that despite widespread celebration of its democratic principles, community forestry potentially runs the risk of asserting primacy to local power elites.

Here the discussion will expand on the issues of gender marginalization and integration in community forest management projects. According to Guijt and Shah (1998), the mythical notion of community cohesion continues to permeate much participatory work, concealing a bias that favors the priorities of those in power or have the means to voice themselves publicly. In other words, participation is only as inclusive as those who are driving the process decide it to be, or as those involved insist it to be (Guijt and Shah 1998). Consequently, Sarin (1998) argues that empowering the disempowered depends mainly on the project facilitators' intention to pursue a rigorous analysis of the dynamics of domination and subordination between different sub-groups. Sarin (1998) also added that it is imperative that the facilitators' clarity of perspective, which guides the analysis of the information generated through participatory methods, need to be a gender-sensitive perspective that entails an understanding of the multiple, socially-constructed constraints inhibiting women's participation in participatory decision-making. The example of the

research conducted by Rocheleau et al. (1998) in the Dominican Republic illustrated that there are different ways that research could be accomplished to explore how landscapes and livelihoods are influenced by the gendered and class-divided interests. In short, while it is important to carefully understand the social, political, and spatial relations in the communities, the intricacies of gender participation deserve equal significance as they significantly affect the practice of participatory community forestry projects.

Returning to Charnley and Poe's (2007) underlying hypotheses of community forestry implementation, the second hypothesis holds that the devolution and decentralization of rights, responsibilities, and authority from the state to forest communities must occur to some extent. Unfortunately, on-the-ground experiences with community forestry indicate that there are several challenges in realizing this new governance mechanism. According to White and Martin (2002), the policy mechanism for devolution is in place, but in reality it has only partially been realized. And the transfer of secure forest ownership from states to communities is extremely limited. Another challenge occurs when forest management is decentralized to local governments without adequate resources to perform their new responsibilities (Fisher 1999). While some researchers suggest that devolution and decentralization policies may simply represent a change in the way central governments control forest management and forest peoples (Larson 2004, Colfer and Capistrano 2005), other theorists advocate for a continued, if limited, role for central states in community forestry, with a shift from control to support functions (Ascher 1994, Shackleton et al. 2002).

The third hypothesis proposes that forest utilization may occur in an ecologically sustainable way and be compatible with biodiversity conservation (Charnley and Poe 2007). On the one hand, Terborgh (1999) and Oates (1999) argued that biodiversity could be maintained only in the absence of human use, Anderson (2005) along with Deur and Turner (2005) proved that biodiversity evolves in the context of human use and depends on it, evidenced by the fact that the world's most biodiverse regions are also the world's most culturally diverse regions. In addition, although in their review of the case-study literature on extractive reserves, Agrawal and Redford (2006) found that the evidence for the success of community forestry at conserving biodiversity is insufficient to be conclusive, positive conservation outcomes associated with extractive reserves have been documented (Ruiz-Perez et al. 2005).

Charnley and Poe's (2007) fourth hypothesis states that greater local control leads to healthier forests and more ecologically sustainable forest use. This hypothesis implies that greater local control over forest management will result in a more ecologically sustainable forest ecosystem. Based on the review of 69 case studies of community forestry, Pagdee et al. (2006) found that the success of those projects depend on well-defined property rights over forests, and strong community institutions for forest use and management. Additionally, common property theorists suggested that institutional arrangements, rather than specific forms of property rights, are the keys for sustainable forest use. That is according to Ostrom and Nagendra (2006), whatever the form, to be effective community forestry must have rules regarding who has access and use rights to forests, which forest

products are harvested and when, harvest technologies, and forest guardianship; sanctions for rule breaking; and enforcement mechanisms.

According to Colfer (2005), not only do writings on community forestry hypothesize that local control over forest use and management will result in better ecological outcomes for forests, they also suggest that local control will produce more social and economic benefits for forest dependent communities. Thus, Charnley and Poe's (2007) last hypothesis asserts that greater local control increases local community benefits associated with forests and forest management. The logic is that central governments are incline to prioritize national and private industry interests over local interests in forest management, whereas local communities are more likely to prioritize their own interests; local institutions could respond to local needs more efficiently and effectively than could central government institutions because they have more information about these needs, understand them better, and are accountable to local people; and local control creates more opportunity for marginalized groups to influence policy (Larson 2003, Ribot et al. 2006).

The paper now turns to the discussion on the institutional arrangement and legal frameworks established to support community forestry programs in Cambodia. According to the sub-decree on community forestry management of the Royal Government of Cambodia, community is a group of residents in one or more villages in the Kingdom of Cambodia who share a common social, cultural, traditional and economic interest and use the natural resources in an area, where they live in or near, in a sustainable way for subsistence and livelihood improvement purposes. Local community is defined as the

minority ethnic community or a group of local residents with original settlement in one or more villages, where they live in or near state forest with their tradition, custom, religious belief, culture and subsistence depending on the harvest of forest and non-forest products and the basic use of those forest resources. And community forestry is a community that voluntarily initiates to form a group under a Community Forest Agreement in order to conduct development activities and use forest resources in a sustainable manner within a community forest, state public property, in compliance with the provisions of the Forestry Law (Royal Government of Cambodia 2003).

According to Ty et al. (2006), the concept of community forestry was first introduced in Cambodia in 1994, and eventually a national level community forestry program was formulated in 2004. Support for community forestry in Cambodia comes from a government framework known as the Rectangular Strategy, instituted in 2004, which seeks to implement broad reforms throughout the country. Since then, a number of new laws, designed to regulate lands and forests, have been passed. The Forest Law sets up a process for the establishment of a Permanent Forest Estate subject to the jurisdiction of a Forest Administration, which also has oversight over timber plantations on private land and protected areas. The Forest Law includes provisions for traditional use and access and allows for community forestry in production forests (Colchester and Fay 2007). However, the weakness of government implementation capacity and competing interests in forestlands from the State and private sector have prevented effective application of these laws. Delimitation of indigenous lands is at an experimental stage; individual land titling has focused on urban areas and has yet to be applied to farmlands and forests, while

community rights over forests are being ignored by concessionaires leading to serious land conflicts (So et al. 2001, World Bank 2006). This situation is not unique to Cambodia because, according to Poffenberger (2009), despite the fact that huge areas of forests have been devolved to rural communities in Asia over the past twenty years, funding and policy frameworks to support sustainable forest management transitions are extremely limited.

This is where the REDD projects could serve as a useful framework for communities to overcome those financial and institutional constraints in initiating and sustaining the development and implementation of community forestry programs (Parker et al. 2009). REDD stands for Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation in developing countries. The REDD+ concept, the original appellation "compensated reductions", was first introduced at the ninth Conference Of the Parties (COP) to the United Nations Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) by a group of scientists who developed the mechanism as a national approach to reducing deforestation. Later, at COP-11 in Montreal, Costa Rica and Papua New Guinea on behalf of the Coalition of Rainforest Nations submitted an official proposal on RED, Reduced Emissions from Deforestation, which was endorsed by most Parties because of its new focus on a national accounting approaches and the growing awareness of the contribution of deforestation to overall carbon emissions. The concept was further elaborated, expanded and officially adopted during COP 13 in Indonesia in 2007 in the form of REDD. Following the debates during the 14th COP in Poland in 2008, it was decided that REDD should evolve to REDD+ to encompass all the initiatives that can increase the carbon absorption potential of forests

(Environmental Defense and the Instituto de Pesquisa Ambiental da Amazonia 2007, Cortez and Stephen 2009, United Nations Economic Commission for Africa 2010).

The insertion of '+' on the acronym REDD is aimed at broadening REDD's scope to include all operations associated with preservation, restoration and sustainable management of forest ecosystems (United Nations Economic Commission for Africa 2010). The official definition of REDD+ as set by UNFCCC Decision 2/CP.13-11 is "reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries, and the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks in developing countries. Following the clarification of its identity and mission, REDD+ won greater importance and since 2008 has become one of the key tools for tropical forest countries in the negotiations on climate change under the United Nations (United Nations Economic Commission for Africa 2010). The logic of REDD is that countries that are willing and able to reduce emissions from deforestation should be financially compensated for doing so (Scholz and Schmidt 2008). Some of the main observations and assertions for promoting REDD include (a) deforestation is the second largest source of anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions after fossil fuel combustion (Rogner and Zhou 2007), (b) REDD is a relatively low cost mitigation option that would lower the economic costs of achieving global emissions reductions and is thus a highly cost-effective way to reduce emissions (Stern 2007), and (c) the carbon mitigation benefits of REDD over the short term exceed the benefits from afforestation and reforestation (Rogner and Zhou 2007).

This section of the paper starts with the description of actors involved in the development of the first REDD project in Cambodia, the OM REDD project, followed by a brief description of the 13 communities located within the project area. Then, based on the Project Design Document of the OM REDD project, the paper outlines how the communities' interests would be elevated by this REDD initiative. According to the project document, the Royal Government of Cambodia and the Forestry Administration, along with Community Forestry International and Terra Global Capital have developed the first Cambodian avoided deforestation project. The project involves 13 Community Forestry Groups, comprised of 58 villages, which protect 67,853 hectares of forest land in the Northwestern province of Oddar Meanchey. The Forestry Administration is the implementing organization with the assistance from three implementing partners: PACT Cambodia, Children's Development Association, and the associations of local communities. Three technical partners will provide support on technical issues: Terra Global Capital, Clinton Climate Initiative, and the Technical Working Group Forest and Environment (Forestry Administration of the Royal Government of Cambodia 2009).

According to the Forestry Administration (2009), most of the families participating in the project are coming from a cultural tradition that is highly forest-dependent. The ethnicity of the communities of the project area is primarily Khmer with some indigenous people. These communities have formed groups with governance structures called Community Forestry Management Committees and are actively protecting local forests. The committees have received legal recognition from the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries under the Royal Government of Cambodia's Community Forestry Sub-Decree. Most

families in the project area control between two to five hectares of rain-fed agricultural land which provides subsistence food and generates some cash income. While many of these communities were recent migrants who had settled in the area over the past ten to fifteen years, they were motivated to retain their local forests, had substantial local knowledge of the forest ecosystems, and were economically dependent upon forest resources (Forestry Administration of the Royal Government of Cambodia 2009).

Due to their physical presence in and around the forests, they are well positioned to defend forest resources from illegal logging and further clearing by more recent migrants. However, they lacked the political leverage to address more powerful drivers such as economic land concessions and military encroachment (Poffenberger 2009). Interestingly, not only is the OM REDD project developed to mitigate the impact of a number of drivers of deforestation, it is also expected to be the alternative for the low-income rural populations that inhabit the project area to meet their socio-economic needs (Poffenberger 2009). That is because a key requirement of the project design is that the Royal Government of Cambodia would recognize the use rights of people dependent on the forest under the national community forestry program, providing them with a 15 year renewable lease and a minimum 50 percent share of revenues generated though carbon sales. The project intends to create a 30 year income stream that will enhance household livelihoods and build natural resource management capacity (Forestry Administration of the Royal Government of Cambodia 2009). The major consequence of this REDD project for the communities is that the communities are now associated with external support

organizations, especially the national agencies, to enhance their efforts to protect their community forests.

Furthermore, there are several reasons in support of the establishment of this OM REDD project for both the communities and biodiversity within the project area. First of all, without this project, there is a reasonable likelihood that a large proportion of the community forestry project areas would be leased to economic land concessions, cleared by land speculators, or claimed by soldiers, migrants, or local communities within the next five years (Poffenberger 2009). That is because while Cambodia has passed laws to protect forests, support biodiversity and conservation and enhance the livelihoods of rural peoples, it has also adopted policies to accelerate economic growth and encourage private sector investment (Oberndorf 2006). Therefore, in a scenario without REDD, with no carbon credits to act as a financial incentive, the latter forces will likely prevail, resulting in rapid deforestation, biodiversity loss, and social marginalization of rural peoples. Second, without a REDD project, it is highly unlikely that the community forestry committees responsible for protection will have the financial, technical, or political support required to ensure the conservation of the areas targeted for the project (Poffenberger 2009). It is suggested that in the absence of this project it is likely that forests throughout the province, including those targeted for inclusion in the proposed project, will continue to lose forest cover at a rate of at least 1.5 to 2 percent per year (Forestry Administration of the Royal Government of Cambodia 2009).

Finally, it is estimated that without the project, community efforts to control illegal logging, poaching and regulate hunting will not be implemented with the same level of effectiveness. Many of the highest value tree species are already listed on the IUCN's, International Union for Conservation of Nature, threatened species list. As these trees and forests are depleted, so too are important indigenous sources of seed, reducing the potential for regeneration (Forestry Administration 2004). Hence, without the forest fragments that comprise the project area, the last habitat for tigers, bears, and other species will potentially disappear. This will almost certainly contribute to the extinction of the last tiger population in northwest Cambodia as the final refugia included in this project are deforested (Forestry Administration of the Royal Government of Cambodia 2009).

In conclusion, it is obvious that the financial, political and environmental benefits of the OM REDD project for the 13 communities within the project area are tremendous. However, it is also equally important to acknowledge that this proposed REDD project must be rigorously monitored in a variety of contexts to ensure its benefits are delivered. Simply because as argued by Poffenberger (2009), flawed policy and project parameters, once adopted, could constrain the emergence of an effective global strategy to link forest conservation by frustrating the efforts of communities, civil societies, and national governments through the imposition of high transaction costs, bureaucratic barriers, as well as complex and expensive methodological and certification requirements.

In addition, the substantive literature review in this paper could be utilized as guidelines to help increase the likelihood that the 13 community forestry groups operating under the

framework of REDD project will not be marginalized and exploited. Therefore, it is highly recommended that project developers shall commence with a careful analysis of the social, political, and spatial relations within those 13 communities that are defined for the purposes of REDD's community forestry initiative and how these relations affect its development and implementation. It is also imperative that REDD project developers need to ensure that financial and political obstacles, identified earlier in the third section of the paper, in regards to the legal and policy rhetoric and mechanisms for decentralizing or devolving rights, responsibilities, and power to the 13 communities shall be overcome through the proposed activities under the REDD scheme.

Finally, according to the reviewed literature several case studies demonstrated that local control over forest management on state and communal lands could have positive ecological outcomes where effective local-level institutions for forest management exist, especially when local people play a meaningful role in developing these institutions. Thus it is necessary that not only must REDD project developers guarantee that there exist mechanisms or means for communities to express their concerns and grievances in an equitable and equal participatory manner throughout the development and implementation of the project. They also must be cautious that those mechanisms are to be constituted based on the knowledge that communities, although problematically perceived as homogenous by outsiders, are composed of different groups in pursuant of diverse interests. To reiterate Rocheleau et al. (1996), despite widespread celebration of its democratic principles, community forestry potentially runs the risk of asserting primacy to local power

elites. This is above all a strategic factor that could either result in the achievement or disappointment of the ideal of REDD.

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