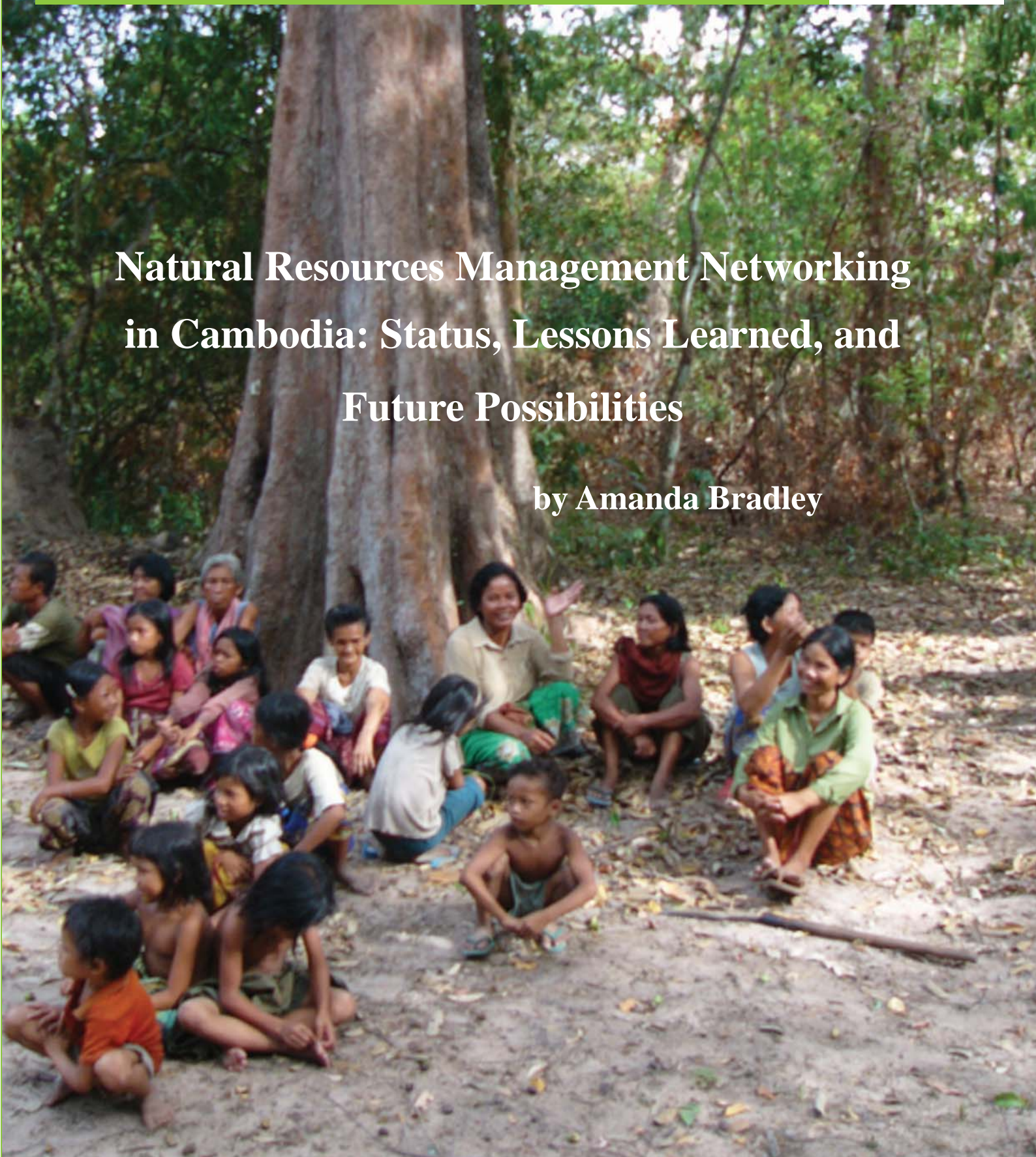


Community Forestry International



**Natural Resources Management Networking
in Cambodia: Status, Lessons Learned, and
Future Possibilities**

by Amanda Bradley



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would first like to thank Mr. Toeur Veasna, a primary contributor to this study. He coordinated and conducted several of the interviews and was a pleasure to work with.

In addition, I would like to thank the individuals who gave us their time for interviews, including Ms. Tara Lewis (ARC), Mr. Chea Vuthy (CFAC-Ratanankiri), Mr. Nhem Sovanna (Seila), Mr. Sean Prum (Mlup Baitong), Mr. Tang Bunleng, Ms. Ou Sopheary, and Mr. Nuth Onn (Concern), Ms. Uch Kimnary (SSP), Ms. Lam Saoleng (NGO Forum), Mr. Tak Sok (FNN), Dr. Carl Middleton (FACT), and Mr. Kim Sangha (Se San Protection Network). I would also like to express my appreciation to all of those involved in the NRM Forum Working Group for their valuable feedback and encouragement, including Toby Carson, Srey Marona, Ken Serey Rotha, Jean-Christophe Diepart, Toby Jackson, and Yang Phirom.

Finally, I would like to thank the following individuals for their editing and feedback on this study: Dr. Mark Poffenberger, Dr. Kate Smith-Hanssen, Mr. Graeme Brown, Mr. Robert Oberndorf, Mr. Toby Carson, Ms. Pia Wallgren, and Dr. Carl Middleton.

-Amanda Bradley

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	7
OVERVIEW OF EXISTING NRM NETWORKS	10
The Forestry Network	10
The Environmental Forum	10
Provincial CF & Natural Resource Management (NRM) Networks	11
Indigenous People’s Networks	13
Fisheries Networks	15
Community Forestry/Community Protected Area (CF/CPA) Network	16
Cambodia Community-Based Ecotourism Network (CCBEN).....	18
Association of Buddhists for the Environment (ABE).....	19
Se San Protection Network (SPN)	20
Farmer and Nature Net (FNN).....	21
AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF NRM NETWORKS	23
HOW NRM NETWORKS FUNCTION	26
Management and Communication	27
Membership	29
Meetings.....	30
Budgeting and Funding.....	31
Planning	32
Linkages to National, Regional and International Forum.....	32
GENDER AND CULTURE IN NRM NETWORKS	35
Gender Issues.....	35
Cultural Issues	36
EFFECTIVENESS AND CHALLENGES OF NRM NETWORKS	40
Strengths of Networks	40
Challenges of Networks.....	42
LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS	46
FUTURE VISIONS.....	49
CONCLUSION	51
REFERENCES	52
ANNEXES	53

LIST OF BOXES

- | | |
|-------|--|
| Box 1 | Proposed Objectives for a National Indigenous People's Forum |
| Box 2 | Demands of Stung Treng Community Representatives of the Se San
Protection Network |
| Box 3 | Problem Solving in Pursat |
| Box 4 | Excerpt from Statutes of ABE |
| Box 5 | How to Work with Monks |
| Box 6 | Excerpt from NGO Forum Evaluation |

LIST OF ACRONYMS

ABE	Association of Buddhists for the Environment
ADB	Asian Development Bank
AFA	Asian Farmers Association for Sustainable Rural Development
AFDI	Agriculateurs Français et Developpement International
CCBEN	Cambodia Community-based Ecotourism Network
CF	Community Forestry
CFAC	Community Forestry Alliance for Cambodia
CPA	Community Protected Area
FA	Forestry Administration
FACT	Fisheries Action Coalition Team
FNN	Farmer and Nature Net
HA	Highlanders Association
LWF	Lutheran World Federation
MOE	Ministry of Environment
IP	Indigenous People
NRM	Natural Resource Management
NREM	Natural Resource and Environment Management
NTFP	Non-timber Forest Product
OGB	Oxfam Great Britain
PLG	Partnership for Local Governance
RNRMN	Ratanakiri Natural Resource Management Network
RNSP	Ratanakiri Network Support Project
SADP	Southeast Asia Development Program
SPN	Se San Protection Network
WTO	World Trade Organization

INTRODUCTION

Environment and natural resources management (NRM) are very broad topics, and when considered on a national scale, they become tremendously complex. In general, they encompass forest management, fisheries, watersheds, wetlands, biodiversity conservation, protected areas, pollution and waste control, sustainable livelihoods – and a host of other components and cross cutting issues. In Cambodia, with its rich natural resource base and primarily rural population dependant on these resources, all of these issues are both relevant and vitally important.

There is also a wide range and diversity of stakeholders with interests in the environment. These include local communities, NGOs, government, and private sector groups. There are many factors which influence how these actors relate to each other and deal with environmental and natural resource management issues, including the legal framework, government structure, judicial system, business or donor interests, community empowerment, press freedom, education and awareness of the public, and the strength of civil society, among others. These factors all relate to the system of governance in the country.

In Cambodia, there has been increasing pressure on natural resources in recent years, with intensifying conflicts over land (land grabbing, encroachment, plantations), fisheries (illegal fishing, commercial fishing lots versus subsistence scale), as well as cross-sectoral conflicts, for example flooded forests (agriculture versus fisheries), and water use (upstream versus downstream; agriculture versus fisheries). Increasing competition for natural resources and escalating conflict is providing an impetus for the formation of networks.

A network may be broadly defined as a group of people, organizations, or institutions which come together to share information and develop cooperation on one or many sets of issues in order to make progress towards a mutual goal(s). There are many different kinds of networks including NGO networks, grassroots networks, multiple stakeholder networks, or national level or provincial level networks. Some networks may continue to operate for years, while others develop informally to address a specific issue or share

knowledge for a common cause. In some cases, when the issue is solved or addressed, networks may dissolve and cease operating fairly rapidly. Networks may function in a variety of ways, but generally speaking, they aim to either bridge the gaps between different sectors and interest groups or else to build consensus and capacity within one particular group, so that it can advocate for its own agenda.

NRM networks, in particular, seek to improve the way natural resources are managed, building on the synergies associated with cooperation. NRM Networks may take a holistic approach addressing issues across various resource sectors, or they may focus on a specific resource (i.e. forests) or interest groups (i.e. indigenous people). Many grassroots networks seek to empower local communities either directly via capacity building, or by giving them a voice in dialogue with government or through advocacy campaigns.

In Cambodia, civil society has been given a relatively large degree of freedom to form associations or networks, both formal and informal. These networks have been functioning for a number of years with varied success. Many individuals and groups involved with networks have been gaining skills and knowledge through practical experience. This study aims to gather ideas from some of these individuals, as well as the author's own experience participating in and interacting with several of these networks.¹ The report introduces most of the existing NRM networks in Cambodia and analyzes some of the general issues related to networking in Cambodia.

The overall objectives of this report are to:

- Introduce some of the existing NRM networks in Cambodia
- Describe some of the existing general practices for network management and operation
- Explore some of the cultural and gender issues related to networks
- Identify the challenges and successes of existing NRM networks and suggest some recommendations for the future

¹ Since 1998, the author has been loosely involved in the Environmental Forum, the Forestry Network, and more recently the Association of Buddhists for the Environment (ABE). In addition, she advises the Cambodia Community-based Ecotourism Network and assists the Ratanakiri Natural Resources Management Network (RNRMN).

This report is not a comprehensive analysis on the subject of NRM networks in Cambodia, although it does attempt to briefly cover most of the existing NRM networks.² In some cases, individuals who were interviewed shared candid viewpoints which were sometimes critical, and could be considered sensitive. These opinions are related openly with a view to initiating dialogue and improving networks in the future. It is hoped that the reader will also interpret these opinions similarly.

² The NGO Forum is supporting a Pesticides Network as well as a Land Rights Network. Neither of these are covered in the report.

OVERVIEW OF EXISTING NRM NETWORKS

This section provides an overview and introduction to a number of the existing NRM networks in Cambodia. While most networks are covered, this section is not a comprehensive inventory of all NRM networks in existence at this time.

The Forestry Network

The Forestry Network is a national-level network whose members are primarily local NGOs and community representatives. With the backing of the NGO Forum on Cambodia, an NGO umbrella group, this network formed in 2000 to assist communities living in forest concession areas to build capacity for advocacy and increase understanding of natural resource rights. There are 17 local NGO members. This network hosts quarterly meetings, and draws together up to 100 people from various provinces. Meetings are used for airing grievances as well as for capacity-building.

During the 2-3 day meetings, participants are given an opportunity to share experience from the field. Facilitators provide background on relevant laws, such as the Forestry Law (2002), Land Law (2001), and Community Forestry Sub-Decree (2003), and inform participants about their rights and responsibilities with regards to forest management. In addition, the Network organizers seek community feedback on new laws or policies as part of the public consultation process. For instance, the network compiled comprehensive feedback from communities on forest concession management plans.

Furthermore, organizers may take issues raised in these meetings and deal with through other channels, such as negotiations with authorities or by providing information to the media or to donors, as was done in statements to the annual Consultative Group and Donor Technical Working Group meetings. The Forestry Network meetings were originally held at The NGO Forum, but in 2005 Oxfam Great Britain (OGB) became the primary organizer.

The Environmental Forum

The Environmental Forum is open to all relevant NGOs and government partners for sharing experiences on environmental issues. Monthly meetings held in Phnom Penh and

organized by the NGO Forum are primarily attended by local NGOs. At the time of writing, there were 35 NGOs registered as members of the Environmental Forum. Meetings are held every third Friday of the month, with approximately 15 participants attending each meeting. The Environmental Forum has been active in organizing an annual World Environment Day (5 June) event in Phnom Penh. This event brings together a number of NGOs, university students and members of the media to raise general public awareness on environmental issues.

In order to solve key advocacy issues raised by members, the Environmental Forum has established a “Core Team” comprised of a subset of 14 NGO members. One of the primary activities is conducting field research into environmental problems. To date, the Core Team has worked on a variety of issues including pollution from factories in Phnom Penh, plantation issues in several provinces, and research into the affects of gold mining in Kompong Thom and Mondulkiri provinces. The concerted efforts of the Core Team have had some success in drawing attention to some serious environmental problems.

Provincial CF & Natural Resource Management (NRM) Networks

There are a number of provincial NRM and community forestry (CF) networks, mostly initiated and supported by Concern Worldwide, the NGO Forum, Seila, the Southeast Asia Development Program (SADP), and OGB, which includes at least seven provincial networks. These networks focus on sharing experiences and solving problems related to natural resources. Some function regularly, while others meet on an ad hoc basis. These networks involve a wide range of stakeholders, including many community representatives and government line departments.

It is interesting to consider these more localized networks in light of the efforts towards decentralization and delegation of increasing responsibilities to commune councils. While the legal framework still limits the authority of commune councils in managing natural resources, they play a growing role in commune planning and may have their own informal networks to solve conflicts over natural resources. Many commune councilors are key stakeholders in district and provincial networks dealing with natural resources. It remains to be seen if decentralization will increase the incentives and effectiveness of provincial and more local networks. A few of the more established provincial networks are highlighted below.

Pursat Natural Resource Management and Environment Network

Established in 2002, the Pursat Natural Resource Management and Environment Network was formerly a community forestry network; since Seila decided to contribute support in early 2004, the network has restructured to cover a broader scope of NRM and environment issues. The main objective is to share experiences, lessons learned, and general information on community forestry and other NRM issues. In addition, the network seeks to find strategies to address problems related to NRM conflicts. There are about 70 – 80 members attending the meetings, including government departments, local authorities, NGOs, and community members.

The management of this network originally rotated between a number of different NGOs and stakeholders in the province. This arrangement did not function well, so running of the network was turned over to the Forestry Administration (FA) office in the province.

Kompong Chhnang Community Forestry Network

The Kompong Chhnang Community Forestry Network was established in 2002 by Concern Worldwide with the aim to share experiences on problems related to community forestry (CF) implementation. About 50 people usually attend the quarterly meetings. There are many stakeholders involved including FA, Department of Environment, Seila, and NGOs. In addition to the quarterly meetings, commune-level sub-networks organize meetings approximately every two months. While the FA is officially taking the lead in running this network, it depends on support from partner NGOs such as Concern and the Lutheran World Federation (LWF). The network has been somewhat successful at solving problems related to CF and building awareness on the Forestry Law. In addition, FA staff that previously did not have an opportunity to go to villages now understand community perspectives better and have established relationships with villagers. Nonetheless, there was some concern that controversial issues such as the Pheapimex Land Concession might derail the network's activities.³

In addition to the networks in Pursat and Kompong Chhnang provinces, Seila is supporting and facilitating several NRM networks in other provinces and municipalities including Pursat (already mentioned), Kratie (established 2003), Sihanoukville (2004), Koh Kong, Siem Reap and Kep (2005). These networks have established partnerships

³ In 1998, the Pheapimex Company was granted a land concession of approximately 300,000 hectares in Pursat and Kg. Chhnang to plant eucalyptus for paper processing. The concession deal is a contentious issue for local communities.

with NGOs, and they hold their meetings on a quarterly basis. The meetings are attended by approximately 50 – 80 individuals, mostly civil society participants. Attendance is good because of a link with the Provincial Rural Development Committee Executive Committee, giving the networks official status and a formal mechanism for dealing with issues that are raised.

The aim of these networks is to coordinate activities and to inform and obtain advice from authorities on emerging NRM issues. The NRM networks have the advantage of being able to address environmental issues in a holistic way, since they cover several sectors including forestry, fisheries, and agriculture. For example, an NRM network may be able to recognize and deal with the downstream affects of logging on fisheries. Based on the success and lessons learned so far, Seila intends for these NRM networks to exist in all provinces by 2010.

Indigenous People's Networks

Though there is a population of over 112,434 indigenous people in Cambodia⁴, it is relatively recently that their concerns have reached the national agenda. There are over 17 ethnic minority groups⁵ throughout the country, some living in isolated communities while most are in the Northeast provinces of Ratanakiri and Mondulkiri. Indigenous people speak as many languages as there are ethnicities and their cultures and traditions are diverse. Most depend heavily on natural resources for their livelihoods, while their traditional swidden systems have ensured sustainable use of forests for centuries. Networking activities with indigenous people in Cambodia have focused on recognition of indigenous people's rights to manage resources as they have done traditionally for centuries.

⁴ In the North-East, the indigenous people living in Ratanakiri, Mondulkiri, Stung Treng, and Kratie represent about 66%, 71.1%, 6.6%, and 8.3%, respectively, of the total population within these provinces. Using 1998 census data, this represents 112,434 people or 0.95% of the total population of Cambodia. Indigenous people in other provinces represent about 0.04% of Cambodia's population.

⁵ Indigenous people are of many different language groups and live in many provinces: Kratie (Stieng, Kroal, Mel, Phnong, Kuoy, Thmaun), Mondolkiri (Phnong, Stieng, Kroal, Roong, Rhade), Ratanakiri (Tampuon, Jorai, Kreng, Brao, Lun, Kravet, Kachok), Stung Treng (Kuoy, Phnong, Kravet, Kreng, Khmer Khe, Lun, Brao), Preah Vihear (Kuoy), Kampong Thom (Kuoy), Koh Kong (Poar), Pursat (Poar), Kampong Speu (Suoy) and Sihanoukville (Saoch).

In 2004 efforts began in order to form a network bringing together indigenous people's groups from around the country in order to seek recognition for their rights and culture. This network is called the Indigenous People's Forum (IP Forum). These efforts were timed with the drafting of the Sub-Decree on Indigenous Land Rights, a defining legal document under the 2001 Land Law. Organizers hope that the mandate of this network will extend beyond the passage of this Sub-Decree to continue nationwide efforts to link indigenous communities and strengthen their cultures and communities. At the time of writing, the IP Forum was organizing a celebration of the UN Indigenous People's Day to raise awareness on indigenous people's issues. (See Box 1)

**BOX 1: PROPOSED OBJECTIVES FOR NATIONAL INDIGENOUS PEOPLES FORUM
(6 – 8 AUGUST, 2005)**

- Indigenous peoples in Cambodia share their ideas with regard to the state of their lives at the moment with regard to culture, social structures, environment and natural resources, health, education, and economics.
- Indigenous people share their ideas with regard to what they would like to see for the future.
- Indigenous people share their ideas for what they are doing or would like to do to achieve their visions.
- Indigenous people share their ideas for what outside support and changes they need or would like in order to support their visions.
- Indigenous people prepare their inputs to the UN International Indigenous Peoples Day ceremony and the final consultation of the National Indigenous Peoples Development Policy.
- Video record the outputs in a way that indigenous people can use them in the future.

Besides this national effort, Ratanakiri province has two effective grassroots network called the Ratanakiri Natural Resource Management Network (RNRMN) and the Highlanders Association (HA) for supporting the strengthening of indigenous communities. The RNRMN was originally formed in 2000 with support from several NGOs (NTEP, CIDSE, ICC) as well as Seila⁶ to provide input to national NRM laws and policies that were being drafted. The network now covers 22 of the 50 communes in the province and includes many indigenous groups, including Krueng, Jarai, Brau, and Tampuan. A primary focus is in establishing land tenure security to address increasing land pressure from illegal land grabbing, external business interests and private investors involved in land speculation. Indigenous communities face a variety of problems

⁶ Seila is a government project aimed to support decentralization. Donors include UNDP, DANIDA, DFID, etc.

including language (90% do not speak Khmer), low education, intimidation, and the lure of modern commodities such as motorbikes and televisions, which combined contribute to the loss of communal lands and weakening of the community.

The Highlanders Association is still in its development; it started with a cultural and community development focus, but has been moving toward a natural resource management focus. Both networks focus on building the capacity of indigenous facilitators to work directly with local communities to educate them about their natural resource rights and to strengthen their pride in indigenous traditions and culture. These grassroots networks have been effective in stemming the tide of land alienation, but continued land pressures and a weak administrative and judicial system necessitate continued efforts to further strengthen communities and civil society.

The HA takes a non-violent grassroots approach to solving land conflict amid threats of violence and intimidation, while at the same time trying to gain support for resolution among major actors including international donors and the United Nations (UN). There are monthly meetings held in different places among the communities. The networks are aided by several NGOs, including the CFAC-supported Ratanakiri Network Support Project (RNSP), Action Aid, Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFP) and the NGO Forum.

Fisheries Networks

The fisheries sector has one of the most comprehensive and active networks, managed by the Fisheries Action Coalition Team (FACT), a coalition of approximately 25 NGOs. FACT supports several projects aimed to build strong grassroots organizations to promote sustainable management of fisheries resources. The target beneficiaries are the Cambodian⁷ rural poor who depend on fisheries for their livelihoods. FACT was established by a group of nine NGOs in 2000, originally as a project of The NGO Forum.

⁷ At present only Khmer fishers are members of the Cambodian Coalition of Fishers. Ethnic issues around Tonle Sap Lake are emotive and volatile, with little integration between the two communities. Reinforcing this segregation, the recently passed Sub-decree on Community Fisheries Management stipulates Khmer citizenship as a pre-requisite to membership of a community fishery. Many Khmer fishers blame richer Vietnamese fishers for conducting most of the illegal fishing activities on the lake. Whereas richer Vietnamese fishers tend to be mobile, moving where the fishing is good, poorer Vietnamese fishers tend to remain in one settlement but generally speak limited Khmer, thereby precluding their inclusion in a Khmer fishers network due to language limitations. Furthermore, initial members of the network were Khmer, and at the early stages of the networks development there has been little incentive for the Khmer fishers to actively seek Vietnamese fishers to include in the network. Another ethnic minority on the Lake who do speak Khmer, the Chams, are however represented.

In January 2004, it became an independent organization following the government's reform in the fisheries sector whereby 56% of existing commercial fishing lots were released for community management. These nine NGO partners form a "Core Team," and there is also a Board which guides the overall program strategy. The primary geographical focus areas of FACT are around the Tonle Sap Lake and southern coastal areas, although there are some partner projects in the Upper and Lower Mekong.

FACT's efforts are divided between building up the coalition of NGOs working on fisheries issues, and supporting the development of a grassroots fishers network called the 'Cambodian Coalition of Fishers' that in May 2005 was registered as a CBO with the Ministry of Interior. FACT has organized several larger meetings, for example the "Community Fisheries Forum" held in Phnom Penh in July 2005, that brings together a wide range of stakeholders including government officials to discuss fisheries issues. FACT also organizes regular meetings at the commune, district, and provincial level to provide a forum where different stakeholders can discuss local issues and resolve conflicts.

FACT provides further support to the fisheries network through its Tonle Sap Community Database, which compiles and provides relevant information on fisheries issues using an action research approach with communities around the lake. FACT also supports Tonle Sap Watch, a project aimed at monitoring and reporting on major development activities around Tonle Sap Lake.

Community Forestry/Community Protected Area (CF/CPA) Network

The Community Forestry/Community Protected Areas Network (CF/CPA Network) is a national network which has rotating provincial meetings bringing together large groups of people from communities, NGOs, and government to share experiences on community forestry and community protected areas.



CF Network meeting in Siem Reap

This network, originally called the Community Forestry Network, was initiated in 1996 by the Community Forestry Unit of the Department of Forestry and Wildlife and the

Department of Nature Conservation and Protection of the Ministry of Environment, with financial support from the Cambodia Environmental Management Project (CEMP). In 1997, the network became temporarily non-operational the network became temporarily defunct. In 1998 Concern Worldwide expressed an interest in restarting the network and provided technical and financial support to reactivate it. In 2003, the network's name was changed to the CF/CPA Network in order to include communities managing forests in protected areas.

At the time of writing, the CF/CPA Network was in a state of transition. Instead of one joint network for community forestry and community protected areas, some members decided it would be better to form two separate networks: a CF Network and a CPA Network because of different laws and jurisdictions of the Ministry of Environment and the Forest Administration⁸. While the Forestry Law (2002) and Community Forestry Sub-Decree (2003) have been enacted, providing a clear legal framework for CF implementation, the Protected Areas Law and Community Protected Areas *Prakas* to legally recognize similar developments in the MOE protected areas system are currently in draft form.

Furthermore, the original network goal of awareness-raising on community management of forests had been largely achieved through a series of large national network meetings. In order to solve problems related to implementation in the next phase, different rules and regulations must be followed according to the relevant ministerial legal framework⁹. In fact, this transition of the network is an interesting case that illustrates how networks can adapt to changing external situations and needs, as well as how they may be influenced by differences between various government ministries."

⁸ The Ministry of Environment has jurisdiction over forests in the protected areas system, while the Forest Administration has jurisdiction over the Permanent Forest Estate which, generally speaking, is forest outside the protected areas system.

⁹ The 2002 Forestry Law and 2003 Community Forestry Sub-Decree govern community forestry in the Permanent Forest Reserve, while the Protected Areas Law and Community Protected Areas *prakas* (both in draft form) establish guidelines for communities wishing to manage forests in MOE Protected Areas.

Cambodia Community-Based Ecotourism Network (CCBEN)

Established in September 2002, the Cambodia Community-Based Ecotourism Network (CCBEN) includes approximately 20 NGOs, various government projects, academic institutions, and private sector agencies which meet on a quarterly basis. The major aim is to share experience, build capacity, and promote community-based ecotourism with a view to nature conservation and livelihood improvement. This network arose from the need to share experiences from the Yeak Laom project in Ratanakiri, which at the time was the first community-based tourism (CBT) project in the country.

The CCBEN's mission is to “manage tourism in a way that leads to equity, empowerment and poverty reduction for Cambodian people, while protecting and conserving natural, cultural and social resources.” The CCBEN is a relatively well-functioning and organized network despite the fact that it has no paid staff. It operates due to the commitment of time and resources from a number of its member organizations and their staff.



CCBEN presents at Mekong Tourism Forum

There are several notable accomplishments including regular quarterly meetings, establishment of a management committee, official statutes and legal registration as well as numerous expert presentations, discussion groups, reports, and training courses. In June 2004, the network organized a training course entitled Appreciative Inquiry Techniques for Community-Based Tourism Implementation in cooperation with an ecotourism NGO from Sikkim, India called ECOSS. CCBEN has its own website, a CCBEN brochure, and a set of posters to raise awareness on CBT sites around the country. While government ministries have not yet officially joined the CCBEN, officials occasionally attend meetings. This network is unique in that it includes academic institutions and private sector travel agencies as members.

One of the major challenges of this network is to set up a permanent office and staff so that the range and frequency of partner support activities can increase. As the tourism

industry expands, and land and resource pressures intensify, the CCBEN could play a critical role in advocacy and conflict resolution on behalf of local communities, particularly if government stakeholders are committed to the aims of the network.

Association of Buddhists for the Environment (ABE)

The Association of Buddhists for the Environment (ABE) is a newly formed network of monks interested in environmental issues with representatives from all 22 provinces. The network aims to support grassroots initiatives by monks as well as to facilitate a national level voice for the Sangha¹⁰ in dialogues on environment.

This network was initiated by the Alliance for Religions and Conservation (ARC), a UK-based NGO with support for several NGOs and religious groups in the region. During a study tour and regional conference for Buddhism and the Environment organized by ARC and the local NGO Mlup Baitong in May 2004, monks from many different provinces expressed support for the idea to form a network so that they could keep in touch with each other and continue to exchange information after the conference ended. As a result, the ABE was officially formed. Following the conference, a series of meetings were held to draft statutes, apply for official status, and elect representatives.

The ABE has a vision of establishing a network of model pagodas throughout the country. These pagodas would be centers for outreach and education for the surrounding community following their historical role, and they would promote sustainability and environmental protection, such as through community forestry. The ABE also promotes the importance of a Buddhist opinion and voice in the environment sector.

ABE has a spiritual foundation in the connection between Buddhist teachings and nature, but the network has faced challenges in defining what the appropriate role of monks should be in the day-to-day tasks of operating a network. Purists believe that monks should fully devote themselves to study and prayer, while more modern views encourage monks to take an active role in community development and education.

¹⁰ The Sangha is a term which denotes the communities of Buddhist monks and nuns; on the ideal (ariya) level, it denotes those followers of the Buddha, lay or ordained, who have attained at least stream-entry.

The ABE brings together two different strains of Buddhism, Mahanikaya and Dhammayutthkanikaya, both of which are headed by a different Patriarch with different political affiliations. Most of the Board members and provincial representatives are from the Mahanikaya sect; however, the patron of the network, the Supreme Patriarch Venerable Bou Kry, leads the Dhammayutthkanikaya sect. The ABE is strictly non-political, but it could be difficult for monks to resist the temptation to align themselves with other groups that seek support for their own interests. According to an advisor, there could be a certain naiveté in dealing with different pressures, particularly for monks in the provinces. The ABE also faces a challenge in expanding its funding base. Currently, it is largely dependent on ARC for financial support.

Se San Protection Network (SPN)

The Se San Protection Network (SPN) is a community-based network that was formed to articulate community concerns related to hydropower development on the Se San River. The goal of the network is to restore social, economic, and environmental rights of indigenous communities along the river. The Se San River flows from Vietnam into Northeast Cambodia, where it converges with the Sre Pok and Sekong rivers before becoming a tributary of the Mekong. In 1993, construction on the Yali Hydropower dam located on the upstream section of the Se San in Vietnam began. In 2000, following commissioning of two of the four turbines, large-scale environmental and social impacts were caused downstream by the modification of river flows and changes in water quality.

As a result of these impacts and the plans for a least six additional hydropower dams in the future in the region, the Se San Working Group was formed in early 2000 consisting of several local and international NGOs. The group subsequently evolved to become the Se San Protection Network in December 2001. A Secretariat was established in Ratanakiri province and a Steering Committee was formed to provide strategic advice. The Oxfam America East Asia Regional Office played an important role in supporting the network, particularly in its early stages. Besides technical and financial support, Oxfam America helped to build coalitions at the national, regional, and international levels. There is also an Advisory Board made up of representatives from regional and international groups including Towards Ecological Recovery and Regional Alliance (TERRA); Probe International (Canada), Rockefeller Brothers Foundation, Australia

Mekong Resource Center, Global Association for People and Environment (GAPE), and International Rivers Network (IRN).

The SPN has been effective in monitoring and collecting evidence of the downstream impacts of the Se San 3 dam, presenting reports, negotiating with various stakeholders such as the Royal Government of Cambodia, Mekong River Commission and ADB, and building a community network across the region. These community networks now cover two provinces, 6 districts, 25 communes, and approximately 55,000 people from 10 ethnic minority groups. They are recognized and supported by the Provincial and District governments. There have also been several Public Forums on the problems caused by the Se San dam. As a result of these and other activities, the ADB withdrew its assistance for the Se San 3 hydropower project in October 2000, forcing the Vietnamese Government to seek alternative financing. The SPN has continued to exert pressure on government to restore the natural flow of the river, and it plans to expand its target area to cover all three rivers in the Northwest (Se San, Srepok, and Sekong).

**BOX 2: DEMANDS OF STUNG TRENG COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVES
OF THE SE SAN PROTECTION NETWORK**

1. We request that the government along with organizations help stop the construction of hydropower dams on the Se San River, particularly Se San 3 and Se San 4.
2. We request that the natural flow of the river be restored.
3. We request that the dam builders and stakeholders who have funded the construction of the dam compensate villagers for all lost and destroyed property and equipment.
4. We request that the government of Cambodia negotiate with the government of Vietnam to find a solution.
5. We request that the MRC and stakeholders come to the provinces to study the impacts in consultation with the people along the Se San River.

Farmer and Nature Net (FNN)

Farmers associations started to form in Cambodia in 2002. There are currently more than 280 associations spanning 10 provinces which are linked at the national level in a federation called the Farmer and Nature Net (FNN). FNN has been supported by a local NGO called CEDAC (Centre d'Etude et de Developement Agricole Cambodgien), which has also helped to facilitate local farmers associations in each of the ten provinces. The main goal of this network is to mobilize rural people and build their solidarity to develop

ecologically sustainable agriculture and improved natural resources management. This federation is relatively new, but many of the structures for governance, communication, and future expansion are already in place. There has been progress towards raising awareness on the dangers of pesticides and introducing more ecological sound agricultural practices.

Local farmers' associations meet regularly, many of their own accord, and CEDAC supports an annual General Assembly meeting, as well as several Special Assemblies to deal with operational issues such as policies, work plans and budgets. An elected FNN Committee also meets every month to follow up on activities. These meetings are held at the local level in different provinces, often in farmers' houses. FNN aims to increase the number of Farmers' associations to 5000 by the year 2010.



Farmers designed their own logo for the Farmer and Nature Net (FNN)

FNN has ambitious goals to lead a “social movement” of Cambodian farmers and to give them a voice in national and international policy issues such as the WTO. The network currently struggles to meet these goals because members are all farmers, most of whom struggle to survive and produce enough food for their families. They have limited time and energy to devote to the network. Nevertheless, organizers hope that in the future when farmers have achieved more food security, their ability to contribute to policy issues will increase. Currently, there is little participation or involvement from government agencies or other NGOs in the agricultural sector; however their increased involvement is a future goal of FNN.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF NRM NETWORKS

There are several reasons why networks have formed and continue to function: information sharing, capacity building, coordination of activities, and advocacy and problem solving. A discussion of each of these follows below.

Information Sharing

Many networks cite information sharing as a key objective. This objective seems to be one of the easiest to achieve since it necessitates members merely turning up for meetings and participating or exchanging information through a website or e-mail group. On the other hand, most groups, such as the NGO Environmental Forum, feel that information sharing is not a sufficient objective and that action needs to be taken on some issues that arise. Information sharing can be seen as the first step in identifying and solving problems, even though the problem may be solved outside of the network meetings.

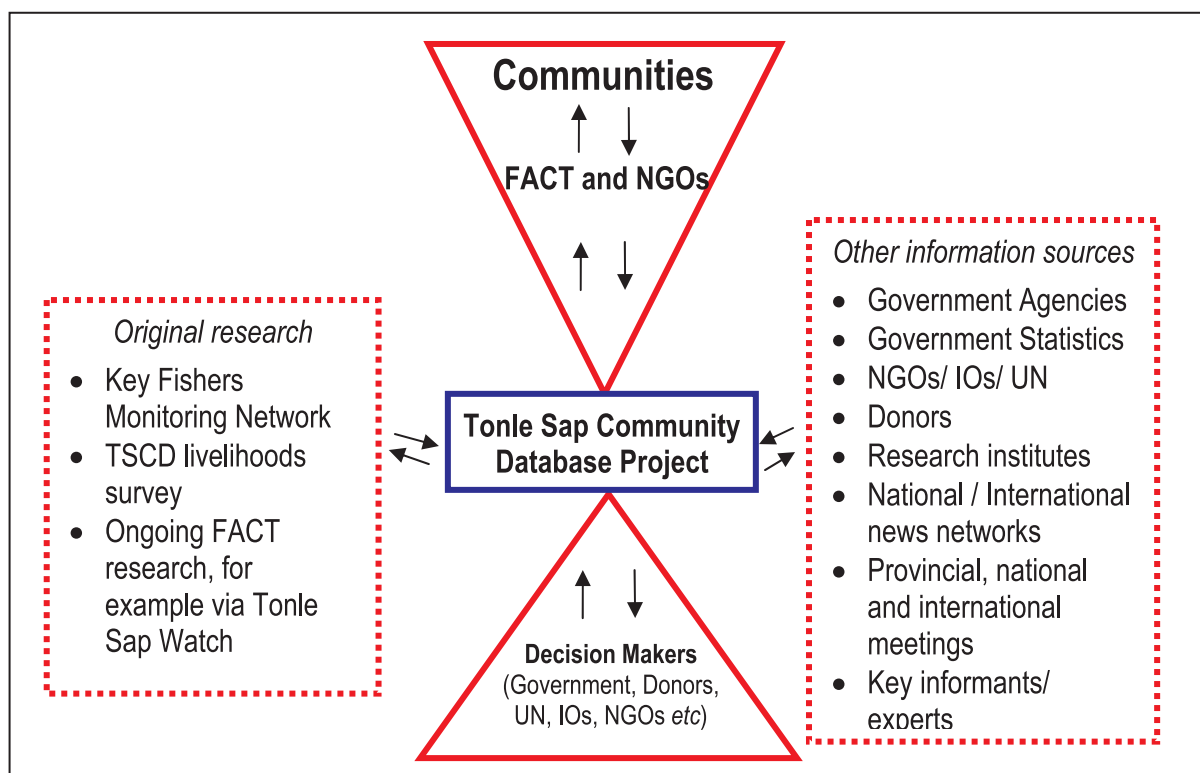
In Cambodia, adult literacy is quite low (67%)¹¹ and the effectiveness of communication through written materials is limited. Network meetings, which provide a forum for oral communication, are thus particularly important. Information sharing may also be possible through newsletters, e-mail exchanges, and reports. The CCBEN has an effective e-mail exchange which alerts its members to a variety of opportunities and news related to community-based tourism. Networks not only share information among their members; they also serve to centralize information and experience which then can be presented in a unified way for awareness raising or advocacy.

Capacity-Building

Capacity-building is an important objective of many networks. Skills and knowledge acquired through participation in networks include presentation skills, knowledge of laws and legal rights, advocacy, minute-taking and report-writing, to more specific issues like facilitation of community-based tourism, community forestry, and education techniques. For villagers and local NGO members with limited access to education, these skills can be particularly valuable. Network members may also learn new skills through Training

¹¹ Education for All National Plan, 2003-2015, Royal Government of Cambodia.

FIGURE 1: SCHEMATIC OF INFORMATION EXCHANGE FACILITATED BY TONLE SAP DATABASE PROJECT



* The above diagram describes how the TSCD will facilitate flows of information between stakeholders. Information will be collected from a community level via FACT, CCF and partner NGOs, then channeled to the database. This information will then be disseminated to decision making groups via email circulars, newsletter, and the website based database. Vice versa, information collected from decision making groups will be passed back down, via FACT networks, to communities. Original research together with other information sources will also constitute information resources to the database.

of Trainer (TOT) methodology. Afterwards, participants should be capable to train others on the same material. Organizing trainings through networks may be a very efficient way to spread skills and knowledge. For instance, the Forestry Network effectively trained its members on Rights and Responsibilities of Communities in the Forestry Law. Following the network meetings and trainings, member NGOs conducted follow-up training in their target areas.

Some networks have also conducted study tours to expose their members to similar experiences in other areas. The Forestry Network, for example, has organized study tours to both Nepal and Laos for its members. The CCBEN has organized study tours to several CBT sites in Cambodia, including Yeak Laom in Ratanakiri, Te Tuk Puah Hot Springs in Kg. Speu, and Prek Toal on the Tonle Sap Lake. FACT conducts environmental rights and advocacy training.

Coordination of Activities

The process of sharing information and planning through networks helps to better coordinate activities and avoid overlap. Coordination of activities is one of the major benefits of multiple networks. In Kratie, for example, the CF network was able to divide CF target areas to avoid overlapping activities. The network was an appropriate mechanism to bring several NGOs together to work out an acceptable solution. With the increase of donor support and NGOs throughout the country over the past few years, the role of coordination has become more important.

Advocacy and Problem-solving

From the NGO and community perspective, problem-solving is one of the main reasons for setting up and running networks. By joining together to confront problems, communities and NGOs feel their claims or voice is stronger. There are some impressive examples of how networks have worked to solve problems using peaceful and creative solutions. The Forestry Network, for example, has enabled communities to voice their problems with forest concessionaires and to control illegal cutting in forest areas on which they depend. With support from network meetings and trainings, communities have increased their ability to effectively express their ideas and demand solutions for injustices.

In Kratie, for example, villagers were able to stop illegal logging activities by reporting the problem to the network. Banning of the cutting of resin trees may also be attributed to the activities of various networks and key activists.¹² The SPN has effectively forced the development of a policy of water governance between Cambodia and the surrounding countries as a result of its lobbying and networking activities. FACT was able to influence the Sub-decree on Community Fisheries Management, although not to the extent sought.

BOX 3: PROBLEM SOLVING IN PURSAT

Mr. Nuth Onn of Concern Worldwide Pursat claims that if one group tries to solve an issue by themselves without letting other institutions know, they may be blamed later on. He also says that success in solving problems is dependent on the commitment of communities. He gave an example of how one problem with a community forestry area was solved in Pursat.

“In Bongkong Khmom, there were soldiers from Kravanh who cleared the forest and settled in the community forestry area of the village. First, what we did was inform the relevant institutions and local authorities about the issues. At the same time the network also discussed with the community to find a strategy to solve the problem. We were behind the community and assisted them with ideas. A provincial meeting was held and attended by relevant institutions and all concerned participants. During the meeting the FA said that a community forest had already been established and explained by showing some evidence. The provincial authorities understood the issue. Finally, the meeting came to a solution that those soldiers had to find other places outside the CF to settle.”

¹² Resin trees provide a sustainable source of income for many forest-dependent communities in Cambodia, particularly in the Northeast. In 2001, Prime Minister Hun Sen banned the cutting of resin trees in order to protect this source of livelihood for local people.

HOW NRM NETWORKS FUNCTION

A few of the networks mentioned in this report have official government recognition, through registration with the Ministry of Interior as an “association”.¹³ Some, such as the ABE and FACT have governing statutes, a Board or Management Committee, and official status with the Ministry of Interior. As registration can be a lengthy and costly process, other networks such as the CF/CPA network and the provincial networks operate on a more informal basis. Some networks claimed that since their members are registered, there is no need to register with the Ministry of Interior. Others felt that since government representatives attended the meetings, there was sufficient official recognition.

In the case of the Se San Protection Network, it avoided the issue of registration since it was originally a project of a registered local NGO, NTFP. When police in Ratanakiri enquired about official registration, the network claimed it was under the umbrella of NTFP. Since there is no NGO Law in Cambodia yet, it is unclear whether there is a requirement for networks to be officially registered. However, the process of registering, while time consuming, is a way of building consensus around network objectives and creating greater legitimacy. With a strong hierarchical system, particularly in government, the registration of a network can be influential in securing participation of government representatives.

Official registration seems to be more important for national-level networks, although provincial or local networks may benefit as well, particularly if they are involved in sensitive or controversial issues (such as land issues) where lack of legal registration can be used to threaten networks with closure. In early 2005, for example, the Highlanders Association in Ratanakiri was threatened with closure following protests related to land.

¹³ The Ministry of Interior accepts applications for networks to register as associations or “semakum.” The application is very similar to the one for NGO registration. Both call for submission of organizational statutes, official address, and CVs of the governing Board or Management Committee. The process generally takes about 1 – 3 months, and there is an administrative fee for which a receipt may be obtained.

BOX 4: EXCERPT FROM STATUTES OF ABE

Purpose: ABE is established to promote and foster a cleaner and healthier environment and to preserve its natural resources, specifically its forests, its wildlife and its aquatic resources.

Objectives: ABE shall have the following objectives:

- a. To actively represent the Buddhist Sangha and Buddhist lay people in promoting and influencing the policies and programs of RGC and other appropriate organizations and agencies that foster a cleaner and healthier environment
- b. To actively represent the Buddhist Sangha and Buddhist lay people in promoting and influencing the policies and programs of RGC and other appropriate organizations and agencies that preserve Cambodia's forests wildlife and aquatic resources.
- c. To help protect the rights of monks and lay people trying to protect or improve their environment and protect Cambodia's forests, wildlife and aquatic resources.
- d. To help improve the livelihood of the Buddhist Sangha and lay people through the equitable and sustainable use of natural resources.
- e. To facilitate and support the Sangha and lay people in their management of the environment and their protection of natural resources.
- f. To promote environmental education for all Cambodians in order that they have the capacity to manage and sustain the environment.
- g. To establish an information gathering/dissemination network and an administrative centre for the furthering of the objectives of ABE.
- h. To support, coordinate or initiate community based programs with outputs that result in a healthier and cleaner environment, the preservation of forests, wildlife and aquatic resources, and the equitable and sustainable use of these natural resources.
- i. To disseminate information through print or other media to improve the awareness and understanding of the community on the purpose and objectives of ABE and of its views on environmental policies, issues and programs.
- j. To establish a library as part of the ABE Administrative Centre.

Management and Communication

Most NRM networks are initiated and run by NGOs. There are some networks, such as the CF Network in Pursat, whose management was turned over to the Forestry Administration Cantonment office, though the NGO Concern continues to provide backstopping and financial support. In general, management of networks is stronger when there are staff whose time is allocated to network management. If networks depend on members to volunteer their time and resources for management, they are rarely functioning regularly.



Monks vote on ABE statutes

While there are certain individuals who are “leading” and supporting the networks more than others, in general, decision-making is participatory. In other words, the leaders of the networks are working more as facilitators and providing opportunities for members to make joint decisions about network

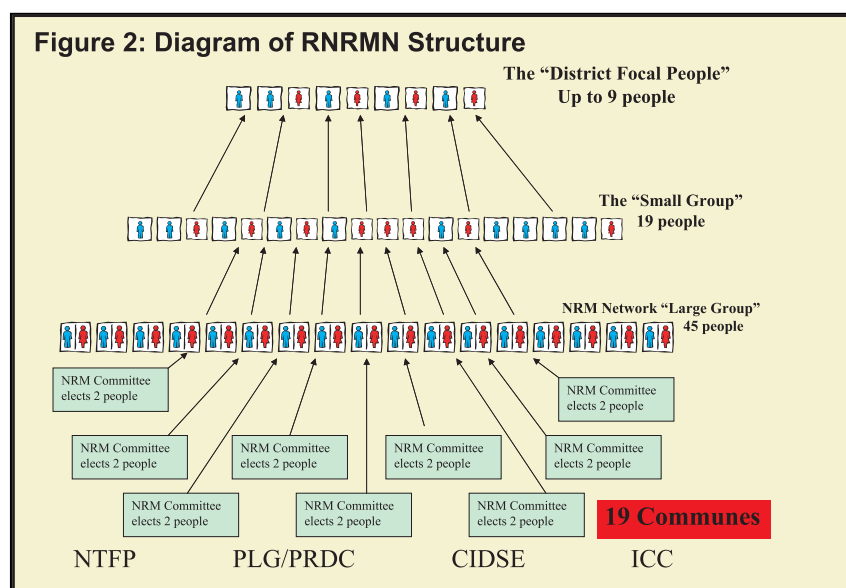
plans and activities. Several networks use the approach of establishing a “core team” or management committee to concentrate on network tasks and operations. The Environmental Forum, FACT and ABE have all established core teams, while the CCBEN has a management committee made up of 5 elected NGOs.

The time it takes to build management capacity may sometimes be underestimated. Instead of one-off inputs, a longer-term approach to institutional strengthening may be called for. For instance, the ABE organized a training course on Board management for its members. The course was very well-received, but participants did not have the capacity to take the next steps in following up. FACT also recognizes that it takes a long time to build capacity. It has been working with the Cambodian Coalition of Fishers for over a year to build its capacity as a community-based organization. The organization is intended to become independent from FACT in 2006.

Organizational structures may be a key aspect of effective network management. In general, the more decentralized the structure, with opportunity for wide participation in decision making, the more inclusive and democratic the network will be. A flat structure makes it more likely for a network to continue to meet the needs of its members because there is continuous feedback from a good portion of representatives. The regular election of committees or officers is another way to ensure that the network is representative of its members. The RNRMN in Ratanakiri has a well-functioning structure with 3 focal people in each village and 5 focal people in each commune and district (See Figure 2).

Many networks still seem to have some degree of involvement of foreign advisors, and there are few networks run entirely by Cambodians themselves. Foreign advisors may have valuable inputs for network management, discussions, and funding. In the case of FACT and the Se San Protection Network, foreign advisors play important roles in accessing, analyzing, and synthesizing information from donor projects, while at the same time building network linkages with other international organizations and embassies.

It is important that foreign advisors do not dominate discussions or agendas of networks in order to support and encourage local ownership.



Communication

There are several modes of communication used by networks. Most networks rely on informal communication for organizing meetings. More and more communities have telephone service, so this is a common way to spread information about meetings and other issues. Some networks have websites (CCBEN, ABE, FACT)¹⁴ which allow them to reach the general public, but these websites are not always updated regularly with current information. An exception is FACT which releases all its main reports regularly on its website. All networks studied conducted their meetings in Khmer (except local meetings of HA and RNRMN in Ratanakiri which are conducted in the local indigenous language); however, some correspondence is in English.

Some networks have used the media effectively to inform the public on issues related to their networks. The CF/CPA Network has produced a series of newsletters which are distributed throughout the country during national meetings. FNN and FACT also produce and distribute newsletters on agriculture and fisheries issues respectively (“Fisher’s Voice” and “Tonle Sap Watch” newsletter). FACT has researched and published, amongst other documents, a series of booklets called “My Tonle Sap” with personal accounts from fishers living on the lake as a means to build understanding and awareness of fisheries issues. Other groups, such as the IP Forum, have worked closely with local newspapers to make sure that events and issues related to indigenous people are covered by journalists.

Membership

Most networks have NGOs, community representatives, and government stakeholders as members. The CCBEN also has academic institutions and private sector members, and the ABE has primarily monks as members. When organizations or institutions are members of a network, they may delegate different people to represent them at the network meetings. Some networks have requested official representatives with decision-making ability to increase effectiveness in taking action.

In general, networks have a very open approach to membership, and anyone with interest is welcome to join. Only the Environmental Forum charges a membership fee, but this fee is based on a sliding scale relating to an organization’s annual budget. The CCBEN is considering a \$100/year membership fee for private sector groups. Otherwise, other networks are free of charge for members.

¹⁴ The CCBEN website is located at www.geocities.com/cambodiaccben. The ABE has a website with other regional networks at www.sanghanetwork.org. The FACT website is located at www.fact.org.kh.

In the case of some well-funded networks, rather than requesting financial support from their members, on the contrary, the network supports the participants' costs for attending, including transport, lodging, and food. While not currently feasible in many cases, the financial contribution of members may be a way to encourage buy-in of the members, as well as to work towards future sustainability of the network. This idea is discussed more in the next section.

It may be interesting to consider a heightened role for young people to participate in networks. While the rhetoric of natural resource conservation advocates sustainability for the benefit of future generations, it seems that there are limited efforts to support inclusion of young people in networks. In most cases, young people while lacking work experience, have a great deal of enthusiasm and energy and are often willing to work with little or no support. Building their capacity and experience through participation in networks is one way to ensure sustainability of networks and what they are working towards.

Meetings

Networks tend to meet on a quarterly basis, though some networks meet once a month, or else the sub-groups or committees meet more frequently. Several networks such as FNN and FACT organize large annual assemblies or forums for a larger group of their members, typically on an annual basis. Some provincial networks only meet when there is a problem to solve or when time and budgets are available. In general, it seems that setting meeting dates in advance, such as in an annual work-plan, make it more likely that networks will meet regularly.



FNN General Assembly held in Siem Reap in 2004.

Since the purposes and needs of networks and their members differ, there may not be any standard for how or when meetings should be conducted. In general, most of the individuals interviewed felt that it was important to have a good foundation at the grassroots level and that more informal meetings were useful in understanding community perspectives.

It is also recommended to nurture a wider variety of individuals to participate in network meetings, rather than depend on a select group of more educated members. A member of the SPN claimed that NGOs and networks rely too much on a small subset of local people with higher capacity to attend meetings. In some cases, these people are invited to attend so many meetings that they have less time to make a living and thus become poorer.

Budgeting and Funding

All networks depend directly or indirectly on NGO or donor funding. There is also a great range in the cost for arranging meetings. Some networks such, as the Forestry Network and the CF/CPA network, spend thousands of dollars per meeting primarily to cover transportation and accommodation costs of participants from the provinces. For instance, the Forestry Network spends approximately \$8,000 per quarterly meeting. The CF/CPA Network had an annual budget of roughly \$12,000 for four quarterly meetings, and the FNN spent approximately \$10,000 for its general assembly. In contrast, the ABE spent approximately \$400 for a 2-day national-level meeting involving 28 monks.

In the case of ABE, there is cost efficiency since monks are obliged to stay in pagodas and eat only two meals per day. They may rotate the location of meetings so that different monks play the role of host. Most of the expense is for travel costs from the provinces. The ABE has developed a list of public transport costs from each province in order to provide support based on the actual cost. The cost of national-level CCBEN meetings is even less than that of ABE. This network relies on members to cover their own costs for participation, so there is no network budget for meetings. The rotating host organization covers the cost for a snack. This system works well, except it is rare for members with offices in other provinces to be able to attend, and participants are limited to salaried staff and some students. Generally speaking, the more locally-based a meeting, the less expensive it will be since travel costs are minimized.

For network meetings held at the provincial level, the cost was generally about \$200 per meeting, with most of the budget covering transportation, food, and per diems. The SPN's district-level meetings cost about \$10 - \$12 per meeting. The farmers' association meetings of FNN may have no costs because the meetings are held in the village. It may be useful to consider a cost-benefit analysis of local versus national meetings. While these meetings serve different purposes, if funds are limited it could be more useful to spread provincial, district, or community-level networks to other areas.

The question of how per diems and financial support for meetings could affect the motivation for attending was raised by several people. One interviewee said that sometimes participants may come for two meetings in the same week and collect support from both, while attending just parts of each meeting. She said it has been difficult to assess whether the financial support provided to participants reflected the actual expenditures for meeting attendance. In many cases, participants might stay with their friends or relatives and eat very inexpensive food, thereby saving an amount in per diems equivalent to more than a typical month's salary.

As a result of such financial gain, the motivation for attending network meetings may become askew. Participants may become more passive or agreeable in an attempt to preserve their future invitations to

meetings. On the other hand, if financial support is not provided, then many members might not be able or willing to attend. Mr. Kim Sangha of the SPN claimed that the extreme levels of poverty among villagers in the Northwest sometimes made the per diem support a matter of survival. It seems important to find a suitable balance for financial support so as not to jeopardize the energy and commitment of members, yet still ensure participation.

Planning

Participatory planning for networks allows the members of a network to identify their objectives, activities, resources, and timeframe in an organized manner with consensus from all of the members. If a clear plan exists in which the members feel a sense of ownership, implementation of the activities will generally be easier. The degree of planning may also relate to the mandate of the network. If the network is purely for information exchange during quarterly meetings, then planning is relatively simple. Networks with a broader mandate may need budgets, time frames and clear commitments from members to organize activities such as training courses, newsletters, and advocacy activities, etc. It is also important that network plans remain flexible to make it possible to address emerging issues. Considering that there are a variety of members with different interests and a changing external situation, flexibility is an important element of network plans.

Based on the interviews, in general, national level networks have prepared annual plans whereas provincial or grassroots level networks generally have not. The reason for this may be that the capacity and perceived need for planning outside of Phnom Penh is limited.

Linkages to National, Regional and International Forums

Some networks have effectively linked their activities at higher levels by linking with other networks and relevant stakeholders in the country and in the region. The NGO Forum on Cambodia is playing a crucial role to bring salient environmental issues to the forefront of national policy debates. While its capacity to handle the plethora of issues is limited, it is playing a key role by presenting reports to the annual Consultative Group meetings of donors and Government, documenting and publishing reports, drafting letters with its members and sending them to key policy makers, and negotiating behind the scenes.

There has been some discussion about the need to establish a parallel structure which would also work to solve NRM issues, but which would take a “softer” approach by actively involving government stakeholders and more international NGOs. A proposal for such an NRM Forum is presented in the Annex. In view of the escalating conflicts over natural resources, it seems that more efforts and strategies to coordinate and solve problems would be useful; however, the formation of such a forum depends on commitment from a range of stakeholders.

In addition to networking within the NRM sector both nationally and regionally, there may be a need for NRM networks to link with other sector networks. For instance, grassroots indigenous people's networks have been developing links with human rights networks to ensure protection for community activists. FACT is eager to join forces with the FNN to deal with issues related to Cambodia's entrance to the WTO. There are also opportunities for learning among networks. At an NRM Forum discussion in May 2005, members of the NRM sector were able to hear about lessons learned from the Medicam network in the health sector.

In terms of links to regional and international forums, FACT has partnerships with SEAFish Justice Foundation, Empower Network, Resolving Fisheries Conflict Network (World Fish Center), and Mekong Fisheries Network. These links are essential to deal with fisheries issues that frequently cross international boundaries; they are also a means of capacity building, information sharing, joint research¹⁵, and "keeping Cambodia in the regional picture." Similarly, the Se San Protection Network has used linkages to international groups such as the International Rivers Network strategically to lobby government and donors. As a result of the combined efforts of different partners, the SPN has forced the issues to the forefront of bilateral relations with Vietnam.

In August, 2005, the SPN was invited to participate in the National Assembly to present information on the situation along the Se San. The CCBEN communicates informally with other community-based practitioners in the region and includes individuals on its mailing list. The ABE organized a regional conference in May 2004 to exchange experience and encourage environmental activism among monks and nuns, and similar networks in Laos and Thailand are linked in the Sangha network website.

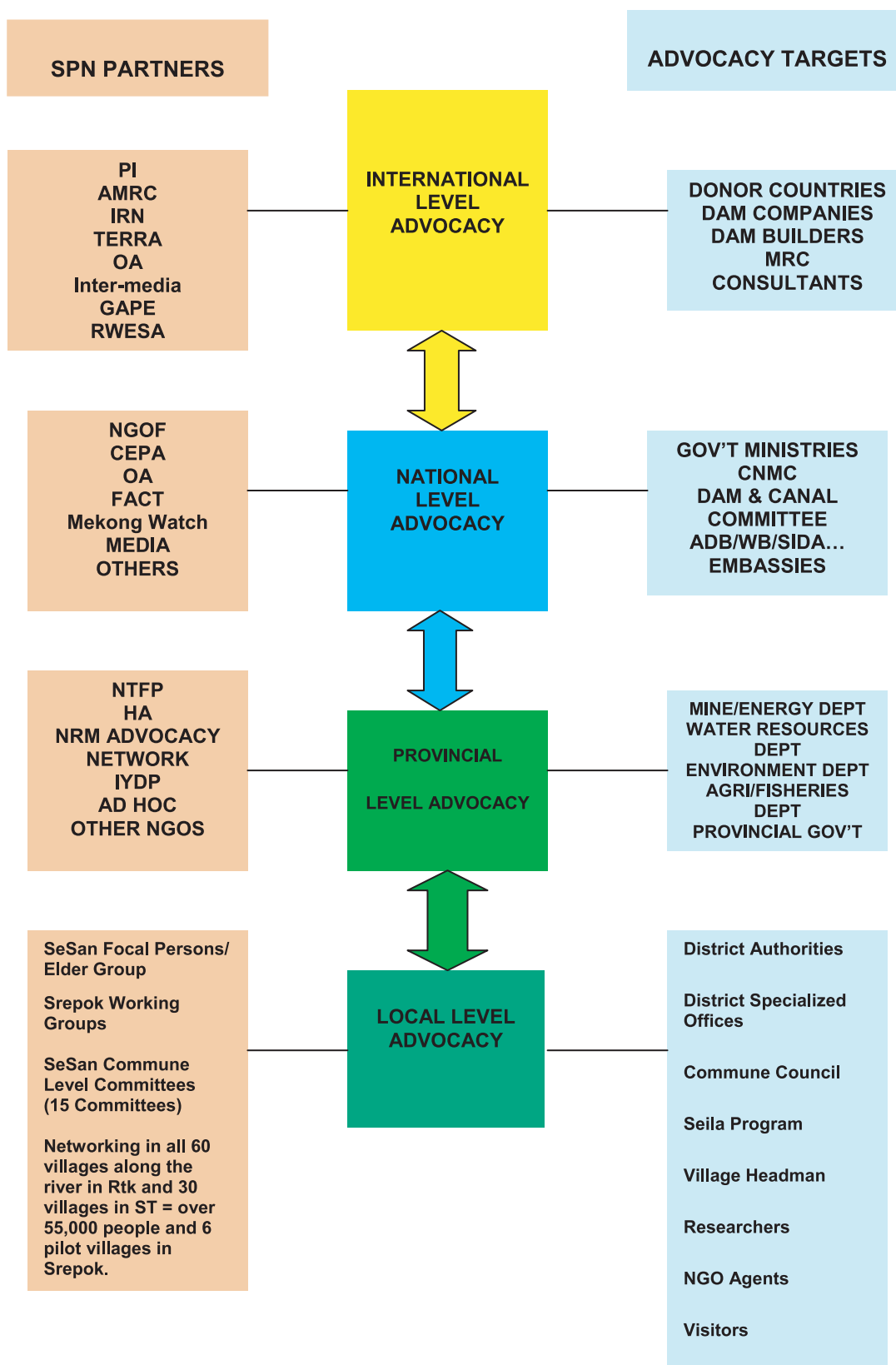
The FNN has developed links with a French farmers group called AFDI, as well as Asian Farmers Association (AFA), both which support capacity-building and exchange visits. In the case of AFDI, a group of Cambodian farmers visited France to learn about ecological agriculture and farmers' cooperatives, while French farmers also visited Cambodia. RNRMN links with the Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact and the International Working Group for Indigenous Affairs and has been successful in using these links to conduct exchange visits and to bring in community trainers from other indigenous peoples networks.

The exchange of information at a regional level can be beneficial for networks in several ways. Learning can be shared so that networks can improve their capacity and work. Lessons learned in one region may be applicable for implementation elsewhere. Regional cooperation can also increase the status and legitimacy of networks. It can be particularly important in advocacy activities which

¹⁵ FACT and Resolving Fisheries Conflict Network jointly researched and produced a case study on fisheries in Kg. Chhnang.

require drawing wide attention to an issue in order to have impact on decision-making or related policies and laws.

FIGURE 3: SESAN PROTECTION NETWORK - ADVOCACY STRUCTURE



GENDER AND CULTURE IN NRM NETWORKS

The following section takes a look at some of the issues related to gender and culture which affect networks. In general it seemed to be difficult for many of the interviewees to analyze particularly the cultural issues which influence how networks operate and function. It may be that Cambodians who have limited exposure to other cultures, find it difficult to critically analyze their own culture. Nevertheless, there were a number of interesting ideas arising from the discussions on gender and culture. These insights may provide a deeper understanding of why things function the way they do within and among networks.

Gender Issues

Many networks have made an effort to achieve gender balance, with the exception of ABE.¹⁶ Some networks specifically invite women or female representatives to ensure gender balance, although women sometimes find it more difficult to attend meetings because of family responsibilities or personal security issues. There are assumptions about the appropriate roles for men and women in networks. Some interviewees found that women are much better at negotiating with authorities since they have a ‘softer’ style. There are also assumptions that men should lead networks. None of the networks interviewed had women in the top leadership roles, although in many cases women played an important role in organizing and supporting meetings.

In the case of provincial networks, there was more concern about a lack of gender balance in meetings. In Pursat, only 30% of the NRM network members were women, while only about 20% were women in the Kg. Chhnang CF network. Oddly, one NRM network organizer noted that representatives of the Department of Women’s Affairs were sometimes men. In the case of the Se San Protection Network, organizers felt the participation of women in meetings was one determinant of how successful a meeting was. If a significant number of women attend and share their ideas, the meeting is considered to be a better one.

The Forestry Network specifies in invitations that “at least 2 ladies” should attend. In an external evaluation of the project gender integration was noted as a recommendation. “Local women play a significant role in the forestry project. Far from a silent force, they are identified as some of the most active forest activists. At the same time, the project design does not explicitly account for nor measure an outcome that is focused on women. The project should create an outcome that gender is integrated into activities and positions on forestry issues.” It seems that external evaluations may be an impetus in getting networks to include more women and measuring their progress with regards to gender.

¹⁶ ABE is an association of monks only. During formation, there was discussion as to whether Buddhist nuns should also be invited as members; however, most monks felt that it would be easier to concentrate efforts with monks only. The disparity between monks and nuns in the Buddhist religion is also an indication of traditional gender stereotyping, which is in turn reflected in the network.

In the case of FNN, about 24% of the committee members were women, primarily because of the influence of the organizing NGO, CEDAC. Furthermore, it was often difficult to document whether the members and participants were men or women because people registered as households.

In the northeast, the situation is more difficult as many of the people in indigenous communities do not speak Khmer and find it difficult to be involved in networking activities if they are conducted in Khmer. This is particularly an issue for women because women traditionally have much less access to education. The Highlanders Association has fewer problems because it has a greater ability to operate in local language and focuses on issues of cultural survival. The RNRMN has more difficulties in promoting women's involvement because of its focus on rights and legal education by the network (requiring higher literacy)

It was suggested that gender should be incorporated into the statutes or by-laws of networks and that gender should be "mainstreamed". Gender mainstreaming was viewed as a "condition of donor funding". While the concept of gender was clear to all interviewees, it was unclear if the commitment to gender was based on donor influence or a genuine belief in its necessity. The capacity for understanding gender and how it can be mainstreamed to networks is a question which needs further analysis.

Cultural Issues

It is important to consider Khmer culture and how it can affect networks and their functioning. As mentioned, this question was relatively difficult for many of the interviewees to answer; however, some thoughts which were shared are outlined. Many of these are based on general assumptions or stereotypes.

First, in general many Khmer hesitate to ask others for help. Therefore, there should be mechanisms in place in network operation to make asking for help easy. For instance, network agendas should give ample opportunity for raising issues of concern, and facilitators should make sure that everyone has a chance to speak.

In addition, questioning is not common in Asian culture. Questioning may be perceived as a way of accusing or looking down on someone. So there is a need for a mechanism for expressing concerns. Face-to-face discussions are very important. It was also suggested that network members should maintain a "soft" way of speaking and advocating. In other words, conflict and "losing face" should be avoided during meetings.

Because of the generally top-down or hierarchical system in Khmer society and its organizations, it is important for representatives to receive support and a clear mandate from their own institutions. For instance, in inviting a local official to attend a meeting, it is first necessary to make a request to this person's superior. In Cambodia, social relations function according to an embedded patron-client system, whereby weaker or poorer individuals seek to build relations with a more powerful or wealthy "patron" who can provide security and opportunities in return for support and agreement with his/her decisions. This system makes it very difficult to ensure genuine participation.

Since status is quite important in Khmer society, it is also important to consider the status of the network. Garnering support from higher officials or donors may increase the respect for the network and make it easier to get support from various stakeholders. At the same time, it is important to be aware of rivalries between different ministries, particularly at the national level. Egos are generally fragile, and can be easily damaged.

The FNN found that it was much easier to organize Farmers Associations in communities with a tradition of "*prawvadey*." This is a Khmer custom of cooperation for agricultural activities. Families will join together and help each other to plow, plant, or harvest their crops on a rotation basis. Because this basis of cooperation already exists, it has been much easier to mobilize communities in these areas.

As a further example, the unique "rules" for interacting with monks are elaborated in Box 5. Finally, it is important to respect seasonal schedules, traditional ceremonies, and individual indigenous cultures and traditions. Meetings should not conflict with important events, and appropriate respect should be paid to people such as village elders. In many indigenous cultures, it is common to place restrictions on entering a village for festivals, in the case of sickness, or other events. This is referred to as "*saen phum*."

Villagers will place a symbol of leaves and branches at the entrance of a village to alert outsiders to the special restrictions. During the agricultural seasons, villagers may travel up to 10km to work on *chamkar*, and network organizers may need to travel longer distances to meet villagers. The work of organizing meetings is clearly more challenging in such situations; however, it is important for network organizers to respect these traditional patterns and restrictions.

BOX 5: HOW TO WORK WITH MONKS

In the case of the ABE, there are a number of important cultural issues related to Buddhism which must be considered. For instance:

- Meetings with monks should open with chanting
- Laypeople should lower their eyes and avoid constant eye contact with monks
- Laypeople should avoid touching monks and maintain neutral space
- Money is a delicate subject, so it should not be spoken about directly and any payment should be made by envelope.
- Laypeople should never interrupt or speak over monks
- Dress of laypeople working with monks should be conservative
- Laypeople and monks must eat separately and monks must be served lunch before 12 noon. Monks can not participate in dinner meetings.
- If traveling by car, monks should sit in front and separate from women
- During the period of “*Chol Vesa*,” monks may not make overnight visits away from their pagodas.

Indigenous communities have been said to be far more egalitarian and less formal than Khmer communities, though there are many similarities that are found with traditional rural communities (and an ethnicity called Khmer D'om seems to be older Khmer rural culture).

In the Indigenous People's Forum held in Kompong Speu, 9-12 September, 2004 the results of discussions on the Identity of Indigenous People, Indigenous people were said to be able to be identified by the following common characteristics:

- We have indigenous blood (our parents and grandparents were indigenous)
- We live communally
- We use land and forests communally
- We respect spirits (*neak ta*) and have ceremonies for the village *neak ta* every year
- We call (pray) for help and have ceremonies to compensate when spirits help
- We have ceremonies to call up “*araks*” (a kind of spirit called up to find out why someone is sick)
- We practice rotational agriculture
- We hold sacrifices when we farm
- We have village leaders (*chah srok*)
- We have burial forests
- We have our own indigenous languages

From this it can be seen that there is perhaps an inherent networking within indigenous culture and an inherent identity that may be an essential part of networking.

However, people working with networks in Ratanakiri, and some in the networks themselves, have reported that indigenous culture has not been static in recent times. People have been influenced by

government, school, military and other hierarchical structures and, because this has given them access to education and Khmer speaking skills these people are often chosen and put forward into networks. Traditional community decision-making in and between villages, however, is based around a traditional leader called a “*Mae Kantieng*,” who is a leader within a group of elders, many of whom do not speak Khmer. There is a concern that modern networking to address modern problems is further weakening traditional community management structures. Networking structures need to be sensitive to this issue.

To address all these issues, the RNRMN and HA have been establishing networks which include elders. The RNRMN has also been trying to operate its network with younger community representatives being selected through the traditional elders system, the elders being able to remove the younger people if they do not work for community benefit. In all these activities it is seen as essential that the network mirror as closely as possible the culture and language of the people, something that has made it essential that outside support structures (or projects) have indigenous people as mobilizers and trainers.

EFFECTIVENESS AND CHALLENGES OF NRM NETWORKS

Networks across the country have experienced challenges as well as successes, and failures. This section looks at some of the strengths and weaknesses in the existing networks.

Strengths of Networks

One of the most important strengths of networks is their ability to build relationships and trust among stakeholders by increasing mutual understanding. This function may include relationships between participants and members as well as with a broader array of stakeholders who are targets for advocacy by the network. One interviewee claimed that rumors were prevented because the meetings provided an arena to air any concerns or “stories” for verification or response. According to the FACT Advisor,

For FACT, for the fisher network (CCF) we have found that fishers have found it very valuable to share experience both from around Tonle Sap/ coastal, and between inland and coastal, to find that many of the challenges they face are common, and therefore they could work together to solve them.

In addition, networks provide a means to find creative non-violent solutions to problems and conflicts. For example, monks working with the ABE are particularly good at discussing and resolving conflicts over natural resources. They can get access to authorities easily, they can effectively lead communities and represent them, and they can confront perpetrators with a certain sense of invulnerability because of their religious status. For example, the President of the ABE, Venerable Bun Saluth, has approached soldiers in the community forest and asked them to stop logging activities for the sake of protecting the forest.

Nhem Sovanna, NREM Advisor at Seila, finds the provincial NRM networks effective in improving governance. He says, “People have started to question the government departments about their efforts to implement the laws. This is increasing government accountability. Sometimes government officials know the law, but they refuse to acknowledge it.” In Kratie, FA officials have been asked to explain about the role of communities in managing forests according to the law. Discussions such as this can put dialogue on the right footing, diminish accusations, and build trust. On the other hand, if not properly facilitated, such discussions can be threatening to government who interpret them as accusations. Some networks arrange pre-network meetings with community stakeholders to give them a chance to formulate their ideas for discussions and presentations at the network meetings. Networks have also demonstrated their ability to assist different government agencies and stakeholders to better coordinate their activities, as previously mentioned.

Box 6: Excerpt from NGO Forum Evaluation

“The Project has been successful in equipping the NGOs working in the area to build the confidence of local people to speak out on their own behalves. This is accomplished through regular networking meetings organized by local NGOs and periodically attended by NGO Forum staff. Government commitment is difficult to gauge and has many external factors acting upon it. This will continue to be a strain on the Project.”

In addition, some networks have been able to achieve community empowerment. The RNRMN and the farmers associations of the FNN are good examples of how networks with very strong grassroots approaches can build local interest groups, improve livelihoods, and effectively strengthen communities. In many areas, farmers associations now meet independently to exchange information on farming techniques, operate rice banks or savings groups, or deal with other agricultural challenges. In Ratanakiri, the RNRMN activities have helped to slow the rate of land loss by informing local people about their rights to natural resources. This empowerment approach is particularly important from the standpoint of long-term sustainability. Many of these groups at the village, commune, or district level will continue to meet regardless of higher-level network meetings.

Many networks have been able to influence national law and policy. For instance, the Forestry Network has effectively influenced Government policy related to forestry concessions by combining grassroots activism with skillful diplomacy, quality research and documentation. The impacts of forest and land concessions on local communities are visible to both the Cambodian government and the international community, and these perspectives are taken into account in policymaking and implementation.

Several networks have been able to support dialogue on natural resources management at the regional or international level. Since environmental issues are not limited by national boundaries, networks can be important mechanisms for building international support for solving environmental problems. The success of the Se San Protection Network in convincing the ADB to withdraw its support for a hydroelectric dam in Vietnam is a good example.

Most networks have been fortunate to secure enough financial support to keep their activities running. In general, donors have recognized the benefits of networking. There is a shift in some donors’ thinking from supporting NGOs to develop networks, to supporting local associations themselves directly. At present it is not clear how this can be done easily, but the dominance or buffering effect of NGOs is recognized.

Networks are useful for solving natural resource issues from a holistic point of view. For example, in Pursat, when flooded forest was cut, it affected fisheries. Issues that cross commune boundaries can also be solved.

Challenges of Networks

Along with the strengths of networks, there are also a number of weaknesses and challenges. One of the biggest challenges of networks is in their institutional frameworks and structures. Time constraints are cited as a major hindrance for effective management. In particular, most provincial networks don't have permanent staff dedicated to running the network. Distance/ remoteness is a problem in maintaining networks. For example, coastal fishing communities can often only be reached by boat, making it time consuming in travel and expensive to hold meetings – often the communities also do not have telephone coverage, meaning that meetings must be arranged in advance and cannot be easily changed.

Another challenge that many networks face is their inability to solve some problems, particularly problems of a large scale involving powerful individuals. These types of problems were often felt to be beyond the scope or ability of solution. For instance, the CCBEN has been challenged to solve land conflicts which affect community-based tourism sites, but has failed to address these problems. In Kompong Speu, LWF and FFI, both CCBEN members, were facilitating a community-based ecotourism site at the Te Tuk Puh Hot Springs in Oral district, Kg. Speu province, with the local indigenous Suiy community. However, a concession was granted by the Government to the New Cosmos Company to develop a resort on the site. LWF appealed to the CCBEN to help to address this issue, but the members were unable to develop a coherent or effective strategy.

For many networks, particularly those based in the provinces, there is a struggle to make sure that critical issues related to policy and legislation can reach the national level. In most cases, there is no clear mechanism for bringing these issues to a national level, although as mentioned the NGO Forum is fulfilling this role to a certain extent. Nevertheless, the FNN, which has a broad base of support from over 280 Farmers associations, claims to have no clear mechanism to bring salient issues to the national level. As yet, there is no formal relationship with the Ministry of Agriculture Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) or donor working groups.

Following a Forum on Decentralization and Natural Resources Management in February 2005, several NGOs and government stakeholders have been considering the formation of an NRM Forum which could assist networks to better coordinate their activities and bring important issues to a higher level, such as the Donor Technical Working Groups. A workshop was held in May to discuss this NRM Forum concept and attendance was good. It remains to be seen whether this NRM Forum can be formed and operate effectively. (See Annex 3– concept paper)

Other challenges cited were legitimacy and intimidation of community members, particularly for grassroots networks, particularly those focusing on advocacy. According to Chea Vuthy with the Ratanakiri Network Support Project (RNSP), “Communities have little exposure to issues of law and civil society. In addition, the Government is sometimes suspicious of the network because it thinks the network is opposed to the Government. In fact, the network is only trying to strengthen communities.” Without clear legislation on the functioning of NGOs, associations, and networks in Cambodia, this “grey” area in the law may be used to threaten any network that is critical of government. Networks which don’t involve government as members and confront government on advocacy issues are particularly at risk of intimidation. The decision of whether or not to include government stakeholders as members is influenced to some extent by issues of legitimacy. Depending on the mandate of a network, it may or may not be useful to involve government.

Involving government may make it easier to solve problems in some cases, but dominant or top-down personalities may hamper free discussions. If the network is perceived as an advocacy organization, government officials may refuse to participate, particularly at the national level. Sometimes the need to pay per diems may make it too expensive to invite government representatives. Interestingly, the CCBEN has reached a compromise on this issue by distinguishing between “core members” who are civil society groups with a right to vote and “associate members” from government and the private sector.

Several people noted a challenge to run networks because of generally limited education and knowledge among members. This was particularly true in the case of indigenous communities, who also face language barriers in addition to low education levels. Basic network tasks such as planning, documentation, and facilitation are significantly easier for those with formal schooling. While most networks kept minutes from their meetings, some felt challenged by basic record-keeping. The FNN faces a challenge in documenting its activities along with its successes and failures. It seems that the coordination of meetings and activities leaves little time for reflection and useful documentation.

It is also difficult for networks to make decisions if only low-ranking staff attend meetings, particularly if they are not empowered by their organizations to make decisions. In general it seems to be a challenge to get good participation with equal contributions from various members. According to a member of the Forestry Network, “Some people are active, while some are free riders. For example, I myself tried to develop a proposal and then other members copied from me. Some people do not accept others’ ideas for improvement.”

Another challenge faced by networks may be differences in focus between government institutions. For example, the CF/CPA network faced problems when Forestry Administration (FA) and Ministry of Environment (MOE) officials presented different agendas. According to one member,

Sometimes there is domination by a single person or institution. One group may be more active than others. Some think that the network is not theirs so it is hard to involve them. Problems raised by communities are rarely solved; the network delays and is not responsive. So, sometimes what is planned doesn't happen. This always happens in government institutions that represent the network members. Some government staff do not listen to communities problems and do not encourage communities to develop community forestry.

An advisor to FACT also noted some difficulty in resolving issues on the Tonle Sap related to the jurisdiction of Provincial Office of Fisheries and the Provincial Department of Environment staff, as mandates for the agencies are in cases unclear.¹⁷ Generally speaking it seems that problems between government institutions are more acute at the national level; while most provincial networks demonstrate good cooperation between different line departments.

Financial sustainability is difficult to achieve. None of the networks interviewed had a clear plan for financial sustainability; most depend heavily on donor funding. There was little hope that networks would continue if funding was lost. "I don't think they'd do it," said Tara Lewis, when asked if the ABE could function without ARC support. On the other hand, this is a very new network and it can be argued that it needs time to develop. Other networks such as the CCBEN function organically without any direct funding since members share responsibilities and commit time to the activities. While this is an unusual case, this network's outputs are also limited by a lack of permanent staff.

Sometimes lack of funds inhibits progress towards network goals. In the case of the Forestry Network, members were asked to put together budgets for district level network activities, but later on it was discovered that no funds were available to cover the budget and the initiative was put on hold. In the case of the Pursat NRM Network, one member claimed that he wanted to widen the membership of the network to include other NGOs in order to broaden the funding base. A more realistic interim goal may be a more equal sharing of financial responsibility among supporting partners of networks.

In Ratanakiri, the indigenous community networks (RNRMN and HA) are also operating with donor support. Graeme Brown, CFI Coordinator for Ratanakiri, related some ideas of local indigenous communities related to donor support:

¹⁷ The Tonle Sap Lake and its floodplains between national routes 5 and 6 were designated as a protected area by Royal decree in 1993 and a UNESCO Biosphere reserve in 1997. Whilst the Ministry of Environment is responsible for the management of protected areas, the Department of Fisheries is charged with management of fisheries resources, therefore causing confusion in the mandate when considering conservation and management of Tonle Sap Lake's fisheries.

Members have often discussed what they will do if they do not have donor support. They have said that they need to be able to continue since the problems and issues that they deal with will not go away when donor support stops. They say that they will need to address sensitive issues such as land rights and that they will need to have independence. In order to do this, they will try to progressively build the contribution from communities themselves. They are aware of other grassroots networks throughout the world that rely on donations of surplus food (one family, one kilo of rice); they see that communities could be establishing things like community cashew nut plantations and using the income from them to support their representatives participation in networking activities. They say that they will work with their commune councils so that networking activities can become part of commune council plans and fund allocations. They say it will take a long time but they are aware of the issue. They say what makes it most difficult is the donor-dependency habit established by NGO's and government. They say that it is difficult for network-owned activities to compete with NGO and government-owned activities when NGO's and government have more money and often use it to buy participation, thereby creating an expectation that people receive things rather than do things by themselves.

LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the discussions with various individuals and experience in working with several networks, there are some general recommendations. These recommendations may not be relevant to all networks, and should be interpreted on a case-by-case basis.

Informal Meeting Style

Formal meeting styles can inhibit communication. Formal meetings with hierarchical seating arrangements, many speeches, and strict scheduling make it difficult for participation by a wide group of stakeholders. At the Pursat NRM Network, one member said that in the beginning, FA officials and other authorities were seated on a platform in front of other participants. This style intimidated local community members from speaking.

Recommendation: Arrange network meetings in an informal style, so that all participants are seated at the same level. Avoid formal speeches, and speak in local language. If possible, make the meetings fun and organize exercises for building trust among various stakeholders.

Financial Sustainability

Networks are highly dependent on NGO/donor funds, which ties into the issue of sustainability. It also brings into question the continued effectiveness of networks. Do they continue to function because donors pay for them or because they are meeting the genuine needs of participants? Limiting per diems and instituting membership fees may be a way to increase buy-in.

Recommendation: Put a plan in place for future financial sustainability of the network. Seek a wider base of funding support and consider membership fees where feasible. Limit per diems for participants to actual costs, and try to standardize support with other NGOs or donors who support participants.

Legal Recognition

Legal recognition of the network increases legitimacy and status. Registering with the Ministry of Interior is the appropriate channel for registration. This process requires completing some paperwork and paying an administrative fee. A receipt should be provided.

Recommendation: Networks should legally register with the Ministry of Interior.

Clear Vision, Mission, Management Structures and System

Networks function more smoothly and with greater consensus if there is a clear mission and vision, management structure, defined responsibilities for members, and annual workplan. Relevant

institutions should be clearly identified. Capacity-building to support this process is necessary, not only for provincial or more local networks, but also for many national networks.

Recommendation: If not already in place, develop mission, vision, management structures and systems for the network, including management committee, by-laws or statutes, and a list of members. Take the time to develop an annual work plan with participation from members and beneficiaries.

Participatory Management and Decision-making

Networks will meet the needs of their members most effectively if there is a participatory management and decision-making structure.

Recommendation: Establish participatory management and decision-making by developing the annual work plan together with members and allowing all members an opportunity to participate and share ideas. Do not allow any one group or person to dominate and try to gather a broad group of representatives.

Documentation and Evaluations

Many networks don't document well their activities and success, and even fewer conduct reviews or evaluations of their activities.

Recommendation: Conduct an annual evaluation to reflect on their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats so that future activities are improved. The network should regularly review whether or not it is meeting the needs of its members.

Coordination and Information Sharing

Many networks function relatively well internally, but they lack coordination with other networks and mechanisms for taking lessons learned and critical issues to a higher level.

Recommendation: Establish a national NRM Forum to help coordinate the work of many different networks and draw attention to salient issues. When possible, establish a website to share information more widely.

Openness and Inclusiveness

One of the most encouraging aspects of networks is their inclusive nature. In most cases, almost anyone is welcome to join a network meeting (although they may sometimes be invited to observe only). By encouraging the openness of networks it ensures that the network broadly reflects community interests. Including more youth in networks promotes a longer-term strategy of capacity-building and sustainability. Women also have an important role to play in networks, and gender balance is an important objective, not just in terms of being present at meetings, but creating an environment which welcomes and appreciates their input.

Recommendation: Maintain the openness of networks. Nurture young people to join and participate actively and support gender balance.

Alignment of Support Organizations

Most networks are operating with the support of an NGO or donor. This support comes with dangers. If a participatory decision-making style is desired in a network and the supporting organization does not have the same style that it wants to support in the network, there is little chance that the network they are supporting will develop a participatory style. If people in the support organization are interested most in their short-term personal benefit, the communal nature of benefits from the network is also not likely to survive.

Recommendation: Support organizations have an obligation to adopt and reflect the norms and values that they aim to promote. .

FUTURE VISIONS

The following statements give a sense of the broad visions and hope that many individuals have for networks in the future. Forming a vision of what networks can achieve is the first step to setting a path towards more sustainable and equitable resource management. It is encouraging to see that many individuals involved in networks continue to be motivated and hopeful about the future. The potential to achieve such visions will depend on how networks continue to develop and strengthen in the coming years.

We want one of our partners or institutions to be able to run the network by themselves. We want it to have strong capacity to implement (it's activities) without support from Concern. In the long term relevant institutions have a role in leading the network. (The network will) reduce conflicts related to NRM particularly forest resources in the province. And we want communities to have strong commitments and show their ownership of their natural resources.

– Nuth Onn, CF Project Officer, Concern, Pursat

In 5 years, the CF target area of the network will have more participation and be recognized by law and be supported by government. Communities in the target area will not be abused.

– Ms. Ouch Kimmary on behalf of the Forestry Network

In 2010 we aim to have 5000 Farmers Associations participating in Farmer Nature Net.

-That Sok, CEDAC, FNN

We want to create model pagodas that can conduct outreach to the community, establish community forestry, and increase local knowledge, by strengthening the link to Buddhism. We want the Buddhist community to have a voice in the environment sector.

– Ms. Tara Lewis, Advisor, ABE

Manage tourism in a way that leads to equity, empowerment and poverty reduction for Cambodian people, while protecting and conserving natural, cultural and social resources.

– CCBEN Vision Statement

We aim to have NRM networks in all provinces by 2010.

- Nhem Sovanna, Seila

Indigenous people will be able to coordinate and solve problems by themselves. They will be able to preserve their traditions and culture. There will be harmony and good relationships with other groups. There will be provincial, national, and international networks.

– Chea Vuthy, Ratanakiri Network Support Project

FACT wants to see a society where people can gain access to fishery resources to have enough food for their day to day living; where local fishing communities' voices are heard and taken into account in decision-making and policies formulation; where fisheries resources are used and managed in a sustainable way for the benefits of the present and future generations; where local people have equal access to fishery resources and are supported to attain their social, political and economic rights and enhance their quality of life; where fishery resources are not just for economic benefit but also for social cultural and environmental values of the local people.

-FACT Brochure

We have some small hope that we can restore the natural flow of the rivers in Ratanakiri. We need international attention for the human rights and environmental justice issues to make sure that the laws are enforced.

-Kim Sangha, Se San Protection Network

CONCLUSION

This report has briefly reviewed most of the natural resource management networks in Cambodia, identified their overall aims and effectiveness, analyzed their strengths and weaknesses, proposed some recommendations, and related some of the visions for the future.

It is clear that a lot of experience has been gained through networking experience in Cambodia in the past few years. It is important that this experience continues to be shared, and that the lessons learned are used to further improve network operation and management. The effectiveness of networks depends on maintaining their relevance in a changing external situation.

In some cases, there may be a tendency to undervalue networks. Their value in strengthening cooperation and solving natural resource issues may not be fully recognized because individuals and NGOs are focusing on their own work plans and responsibilities. The power to make real impact on the management of natural resources depends on cooperation from all stakeholders. This study aims to bring more attention to the important role of networks, and to encourage better participation and support for their valuable work.

REFERENCES

- Australian Mekong Resource Center (2003), *The Sesan Protection Network: A Review of its Formation and Initiative*, (Australia: University of Sydney)
- ABE (2004), *Statues of ABE*, (Phnom Penh: ABE)
- CCBEN (2005), *Statues of CCBEN*, (Phnom Penh: CCBEN)
- FACT (2004), *Fisheries Action Coalition Team, Draft Annual Report*, (Phnom Penh: FACT)
- FACT (2005), *Report on General Fishery Issues Around Tonle Sap Lake, Cambodia from the 'Key Fishers' Monitoring Network'*, (Phnom Penh: FACT)
- Meas, Nee (2005), *Organizational Review, Ratanakiri Network Support Project (RNSP) and Highlander Association (HA)*, (Phnom Penh: Village Focus International and Community Forestry International)
- Tonle Sap Watch (2004), *Tonle Sap Watch*, (Phnom Penh: FACT)

LIST OF INTERVIEWS

- Bradley, Amanda Interview, 29 March, 2005
- Ou, Sopheary, Concern Worldwide, 4 April, 2005
- Uch, Kim Nary, Setrey Santepheap Dambey Pakristan (SSP), 4 April, 2005
- Tang, Bun Leng, Concern Worldwide, 5 April, 2005
- Nuth Onn, Concern Worldwide, 5 April, 2005
- Sean, Prum, Mlup Baitong, 7 April, 2005
- Lam, Sao Leng, The NGO Forum on Cambodia, 20 April, 2005
- Lewis, Tara, Alliance for Religions and Conservation, 28 April, 2005
- Nhem, Sovanna, Seila, 29 April, 2005
- Middleton, Carl, FACT, 29 July, 2005
- Sok, That, Farmer and Nature Net, CEDAC, 2 August, 2005

ANNEXES**1. CONTACT LIST**

NAME	ORGANIZATION	TELEPHONE	E:MAIL
Ms. Tara Lewis	Alliance for Religions and Conservation (ARC)	012 247 238	tarawitharc@yahoo.com
Venerable Hiek Sopheap	Association of Buddhists for the Environment (ABE)	012 781 545	sopheap@asia.com
Mr. Nuth Onn	Concern Worldwide, Pursat	012 706 702	onn.nuth@concern.net
Ms. Ou Sopheary	Concern Worldwide	012 949 654	sopheary.ou@concern.net
Ms. Uch Kimnary	Strey Santepeap Dambey Pakristan (SSP)	012 242 188	ssp_org@yahoo.com
Mr. Tang Bunleng	Concern Worldwide, Kg. Chhnang	012 753 552	bunleng.tang@concern.net
Mr. Nhem Sovanna	Seila	012 959 429	sovanna@seila.gov.kh
Ms. Lam Saoleng	NGO Forum	011 920 406	saoleng@ngoforum.org.kh
Mr. Kim Sangha	Se San Network	011 942 621	se_San@camintel.com
Mr. Tath Sok	Farmers Nature Net (FNN)	012 832 279	tathsok@online.com.kh
Dr. Carl Middleton	FACT	012 885 315	carl_middleton@hotmail.com
Mr. Graeme Brown	CFAC-Ratanakiri	012 981 226	graameb@camintel.com

2. NETWORK SUMMARY

Examples of NRM Networks	Date formed, status	Key Objectives	Organization	Membership	Key Strengths and Challenges
Forestry Network	2000	Assists communities living in forest concession areas to build capacity for advocacy and increase understanding of natural resource rights.	Quarterly meetings (2-3 days each) are used for airing grievances as well as for capacity-building.	Local NGOs (17) and community representatives.	Effectiveness in representing communities, solving forestry conflict and achieving improvements in forestry management. Expense and logistical issues for organizing regular national meetings Difficulty to involve government stakeholders
Environmental Forum	199?	Sharing experiences on environmental issues.	Meetings are held every third Friday of the month	Open to all relevant NGOs (35 registered) and government partners	Core team can document and address specific issues Limited participation of international NGOs and government stakeholders
Provincial CF & NRM Networks (Pursat, K. Chhnang)	various	Sharing experience and information on CF and other NRM issues, as well as resolution of problems and awareness-raising on law	Usually quarterly meetings. Many have support from Seila or Concern.	Government stakeholders (from several departments), NGOs, local communities	Good cooperation and participation from many line departments with some problem-solving capacity No clear mechanism to take issues to the national level
Indigenous People's Networks	2002 (RNRMN)	Protect the environment and natural resources of indigenous communities, while strengthening	Grassroots network with community, district, and provincial representatives. Focus on training and	Indigenous communities	Strong bottom-up approach with trust and problem-solving capability developing. Low capacity and education among indigenous communities, as well

		communities and land tenure security	capacity-building with training teams visiting local communities		as language barriers. Land pressure and disintegration of community
Fisheries Action Coalition Team (FACT)	2001	Promote sustainable management of fisheries, improve food security for rural poor, empower local communities to improve access to fisheries resources	NGO Core team of 9 organizations meets regularly for planning	Cambodia Coalition of Fishers including local fishing community representatives	Strong bottom-up approach Transportation and communication among fishing communities is difficult
Community Forestry/Community Protected Areas Network (CF/CPA Network)	1997 (CF Network)	To share information and experience on community management of forests, as well as to solve problems.	Currently splitting, Forestry Administration manages CF Network with support from NGOs. Ministry of Environment has not yet initiated a formal CPA network.	Representatives of local communities, local and international NGOs, government stakeholders	Effective in allowing communities to share their experience among a diverse group. Conflict between FA and MOE
Cambodia Community-based Ecotourism Network (CCBEN)	2002	Build capacity in community-based tourism Share information and raise awareness on CBT Promote CBT sites Advocate for CBT	Quarterly members meetings and monthly management committee member meetings. Website and e:mail are major means of communication	Approximately 20 members including NGOs, CBOs, universities, private sector, and government partners.	Involving government stakeholders. Addressing CBT advocacy issues effectively Establishing permanent staff and office

Association of Buddhists for the Environment (ABE)	2004	Promote and foster a better environment through the Buddhist Sangha	Annual general assembly Membership with a Board meeting every three months	Membership open to monks, nuns, or Buddhist lay people. Monk representatives in each province	A new organization with capacity and fundraising challenges. Definition of monks' roles in organizational management
Se San Protection Network (SPN)	2000	Restore social, economic, and environmental rights of indigenous communities along the Sesan river	Organized district network meetings as well as public forums	Covers communities in 6 districts with a population of over 55,000.	Strong bottom-up approach Strong links to many international organizations for advocacy support. Low likelihood for success in achieving difficult objectives
Farmer and Nature Net (FNN)	2002	Mobilize rural people and build their solidarity to develop ecologically sustainable agriculture and improved NRM	Local meetings of farmers associations. Annual general assembly	More than 280 associations in 10 provinces	Strong bottom-up approach and possibility of sustainability No clear mechanism for bringing issues to the national level. Limited cooperation with government and other NGOs

3. NRM Network Proposal

Proposal Note for the Establishment of a NRM Forum in Cambodia

By
Yang Phirom (CFI)
Srey Marona (CBNRM LI)
Ken Serey Rotha (CBNRM LI)
Amanda Bradley (CFI)
Jean-Christophe Diepart (GTZ RDP)

Introduction

Following the NRM Stakeholder Workshop held on May 5th 2005, a feed-back meeting was organized between the different members of the provisory NRM Forum Committee (27/05/05). This meeting aimed at outlining the conclusions of the NRM Stakeholder Meeting and, on that base, designing a draft guideline to establish a National NRM Forum.

Even if the debates didn't reach a consensus on the content that such a Forum might have, a series of ideas have been raised concerning the objectives, membership, activities and motoring mechanisms of the future Forum. The objective of this paper is to systematize those ideas and propose draft guidelines to establish a national NRM Forum.

Broadly speaking, two options can be designed. The first option envisions an NRM Forum as an umbrella between sector NRM networks. The Forum is structured by cross-sector meetings where experiences and lessons learnt from each sector networks area exchanged. The second option envisions the creation of a NRM Networking Support Facility that could provide a set of technical, institutional and organizational services for the reinforcement or the creation of sector networks. Two diagrams are also provided to outline the different options.

Option 1: Umbrella Forum between existing Sector Networks

Objectives

- Exchange experiences and lessons learnt from the different sector networks
- Sharing information on the activities and methodological tools from the different networks.
- Bringing up experiences from each network into multidisciplinary discussions and disseminate information on success stories and technical/institutional innovation for community-based natural resources users and committees
- Documenting and disseminating this exchange of experiences.
- Address problems, conflicts, issues which arise in the sector networks

The role of the NRM Forum would be to present in a multi-sector arena the conflicts evoked in the respective networks and possibly identify ways to solve them. But it goes beyond the scope of the NRM Forum to endorse the responsibility of solving the conflicts. This function should remain under the hands of each sector network.

Methodology and Activities

Meeting:

The NRM Forum would consist of regular meetings where participants will actively participate and discuss ideas once or twice a year. Meetings/workshops will be organized in rotating locations to different provinces around the country.

Activities:

Content wise, such a forum should be organized on a thematic basis in order to create an added value and not duplicate what the existing networks are already doing. Thus there is a need to address cross-sector issues, i.e. where different sector interact, have to cooperate, negotiate or solve problems. The discussions would better be organized on a case-studies basis and guided by questions and answers. Here below are given five ideas of possible cross-sector topics that could be tackled by the NRM Forum.

Natural Resources Management and Sub-National Governance:

What power and functions can be attributed to sub-national governance bodies (provincial level, district, CC) for NRM? What does work out, what doesn't work out? What can be done to improve the power and function of these sub-national governance bodies?

Monitoring & Evaluation in NRM:

What mechanisms/procedures could be put in place with community-based members to monitor and assess the impact of CB-NRM activities?

NRM Research:

What have we learned from researches in NRM? What are the further needs for relevant research in NRM? How to implement them and share their results?

Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture: How to design a meaningful and realistic land use planning where land users interests interact? NRM Regional Discussions based on the situation in specific ecological region like the coastal zone, the Tonle Sap flood plain and/or the plateau.

Documentation:

Documentation of experience could be done by mean of a newsletter that keep the NRM stakeholders informed about on-going NRM activities (meetings, workshops, new guidelines, new projects...) and provide them with recommendations from the different networks.

Organization:

An organizing committee has to be constituted to take responsibility for the design of the NRM Forum activities. One representative from each sector networks could be members of this committee.

Nevertheless, no consensus is found yet on who should sit in this organizing committee. Then, a secretariat should be designated for organizational matters: carry out the administrative works, compilations of relevant documents, follow-up.

Membership:

The membership of the NRM Forum is crucial. It was agreed that both government, organizations based (CNGOs and IOs) representatives should sit in the Forum and this in the perspective of bringing representatives of people at all levels with an equal voice

Nevertheless, a consensus is not found yet on who exactly will represent the sector networks into the Forum. Thus three variants are identified:

Variant 1

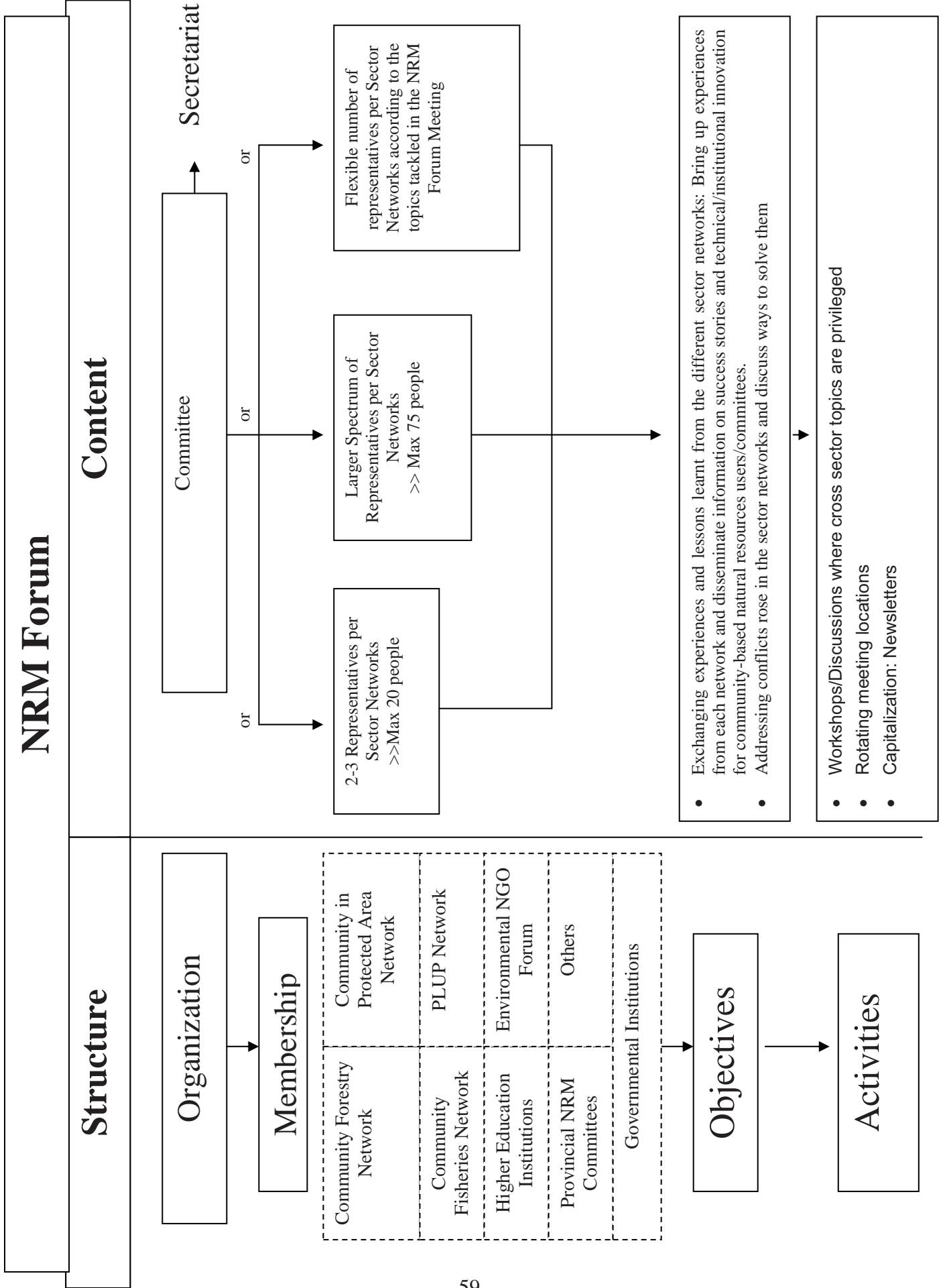
2-3 designed people represent their respective networks and liaise with other networks (1 organization based representative and one government based representative per network). Thus the total number participants in the National Forum would approximate 20 people.

Variant 2

Larger spectrum of participants from each networks (civil society, government institutions, community members) meet in a larger forum with a number of participants approximating 75 people.

Variant 3

2-3 designed people per network plus additional participants according to the topics tackled. The idea here is to have a more flexible membership where specific resources people can be invited on request according to the topic of the meeting, i.e. Higher Education Institutions representatives can be invited to share researches methodology and findings.



Option 2: NRM Networking Support Facility

Objectives

- Provide a set of technical, institutional or organizational services for the reinforcement or creation of sector networks.
- Exchange experiences and lessons learnt from the different sector networks
- Compile and disseminate information on NRM activities in Cambodia

Methodology and Activities

Services:

The NRM networking support facility will offer a pool of resources persons to provide expertise to existing or future networks

Expertise on technical issues (i.e. making a CFo-CFi management plan, mapping exercise)

Support for the organization of sector networks meetings

Organizing specific trainings on request

Web-Site:

The NRM networking support facility could be best structured as a web-site, for instance called, the "NRM Portal". This website would offer the advantage to be accessible by everybody provided an internet connection. The web site will give access to a Comprehensive DataBase of regularly updated information related to NRM activities in Cambodia

Description of all sector networks

Description of all Projects and Programs

NRM related documents

Legal Literature

Geo-referenced data

Steering and Monitoring:

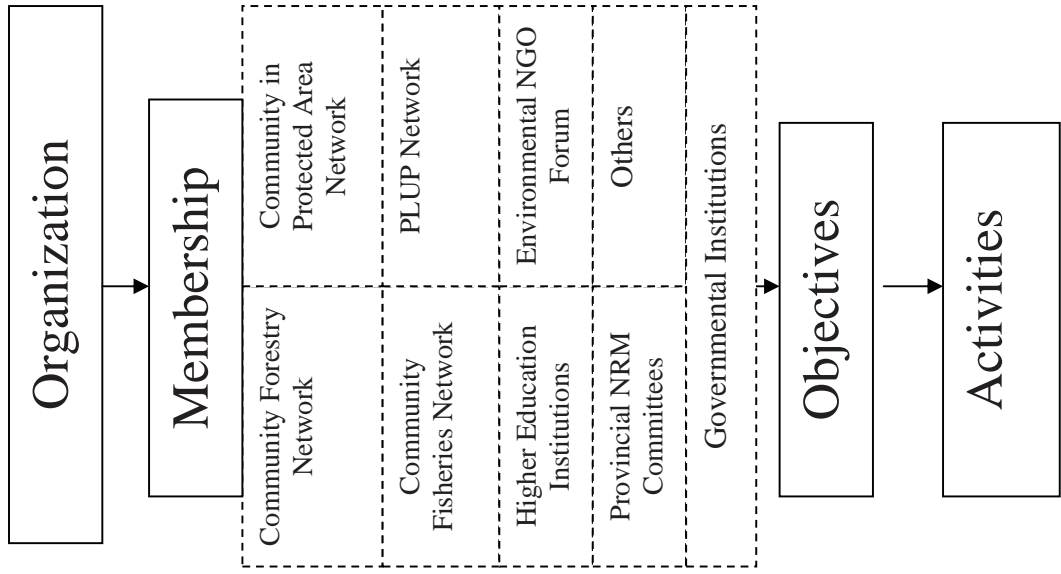
An organizing committee has to be constituted to take responsibility for the design of the NRM Networking Support Facility activities. No consensus is found yet on who should sit in this organizing committee. Then, a secretariat assisted by a web-master should be designated for organizational matters: carry out the administrative works, building of the database, compilations of relevant documents, follow-up.

Membership:

One representative from each sector network should be designed to be the focal point, which brings up experiences from his own network, participate in the design and the update of the web-site.

NRM Networking Support Facility

Structure



Content

