

Submitted to the United States Agency for International Development

**Cambodia**

**Interim Environmental  
Strategic Plan**

**Annex 1**  
to the  
**Environmental Review: Status and Trends in Environmental  
Management and Options for Future Action**

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## Acronyms

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ADB	Asian Development Bank
ANE	Asia Near East (USAID)
AusAID	Australian Agency for International Development
CAA	Community Aid Abroad
CBNRM	Community-Based Natural Resources Management
CCSP	Commune Council Support Project
CDC	Council for the Development of Cambodia
CEDAC	Centre D’etude et de Developpement Agricole Cambodgien
CEMP	Cambodia Environmental Management Program (USAID)
CEPA	Cultural and Environmental Preservation Association
CFI	Community Forestry International
CI	Conservation International
CITES	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora
DANIDA	Danish International Development Assistance
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
DFW	Department of Forestry and Wildlife/MAFF
DG	Democracy and Governance
DoLA	Department of Local Administration/MoI
EAPEI	East Asia and Pacific Environmental Initiative (USAID/ANE)
ENR	Environment and Natural Resources
ENRM	Environment and Natural Resources Management
FAA	Foreign Assistance Act
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN
FFI	Flora and Fauna International
FY	Fiscal Year
GAP	Governance Action Plan
GEF	Global Environmental Facility
G/ENV	Global Environmental Bureau (USAID)
GIS	Geographic Information System
GTZ	Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (German Technical Assistance)
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
HR/DG	Human Rights/Democracy and Governance
IDRC	International Development Research Center (Canada)
IESP	Interim Environmental Strategic Plan
IPM	Integrated Pest Management
IQC	Indefinite Quantity Contract
IR	Intermediate Result
MAFF	Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries
MLMUPC	Ministry of Land Management, Urban Planning, and Construction
MoE	Ministry of Environment
NCSC	National Council for Support to Communes/Sangkats

NEAP	National Environmental Action Plan
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
NRE	Natural Resources and the Environment
NRM	Natural Resources Management
NTFP	Non-Timber Forest Product
PVO	Private and Voluntary Organization
RFP	Request for Proposals
RGC	Royal Government of Cambodia
SADP	Southeast Asia Development Program
SCSR	Supreme Council for State Reform
SIDA	Swedish International Development Agency
SO	Strategic Objective
STF	Seila Task Force
TA	Technical Assistance
TAF	The Asia Foundation
TFCA	Tropical Forestry Conservation Act
UK	United Kingdom
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
US	United States
US-AEP	United States-Asia Environmental Partnership
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USFWS	United States Fish and Wildlife Service
USG	United States Government
WCS	Wildlife Conservation Society
WI	Wetlands International
WPO	Wildlife Protection Office/DFW/MAFF
WWF	Worldwide Fund for Nature/World Wildlife Fund

## **1. The Current USAID/Cambodia Program**

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USAID/Cambodia's program for FY 2001 is focused on democracy and human rights, reproductive and child health, HIV/AIDS prevention, assistance for war and mine victims, and microfinance. The present position of the US government towards assistance to Cambodia prohibits direct technical assistance to the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) but allows assistance to nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and local government. If the US government changes its position and allows engagement with the central government, this will allow more scope for governance strengthening. The proposed Interim Environmental Strategic Plan (IESP) for USAID/Cambodia is designed to be integrated into the new Strategic Objective (SO) 1 that will result from the results of this assessment and a democracy and governance (DG) assessment to follow. The present SO 1, "strengthened democratic processes and respect for human rights," presents a clear vehicle to incorporate natural resources governance programming at the Intermediate Result (IR) level. The Mission's support for commune council elections to be held in February 2002 provides an excellent foundation for such assistance. At present, much of the conflict and human rights abuses in Cambodia reflect disputes over access to and control over land and natural resources. New laws and decentralization initiatives provide a legal and institutional basis for putting more control over land and resources into the hands of communities and local government.

USAID/Cambodia was formerly an important donor in environment and natural resources (ENR) through the Cambodia Environmental Management Program (CEMP) that was begun in 1996 and terminated in July 1997 as a result of the political conflict at that time. CEMP supported activities in environmental policy, applied environmental management, strategic planning, biodiversity conservation, environmental constituency building, and information management implemented through four US-based private and voluntary organizations (PVOs) and the International Development Research Institute (IDRC) of Canada.

## **2. USAID ENR Policies and Programs**

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For maximum synergy, the IESP for USAID/Cambodia should dovetail with the environmental policies and programs of the Asia Near East (ANE) Bureau, the Center for the Environment, the Center for Democracy and Governance and other Washington-based divisions of USAID. The IESP proposed here closely aligns with the ANE Bureau's environmental strategies of policy reform, capacity building, and increasing public involvement in governance and decision making. Moreover, the IESP clearly supports the USAID Center for the Environment's first SO: "increased and improved protection and sustainable use of natural resources, principally forests, biodiversity, and freshwater and coastal ecosystems." As the Center for Democracy and Governance continues to investigate correlations between democracy and the environment, further synergies are also likely at this strategic junction. The Administrator has recently instructed the Agency to articulate new environmental initiatives and the ANE Bureau will explore several programming areas including improved forest governance.

On a programmatic level, a number of activities that might be supported through this IESP will also enhance and benefit from various USAID regional initiatives. For instance, the East Asia and Pacific Environmental Initiative (EAPEI) of the ANE Bureau provides a mechanism for support of community protection of wildlife, community-based natural resources management (CBNRM), and related policy level work in select locations in the region including two activities in Cambodia. When the results from the EAPEI request for proposals (RFP) for 2002 are determined there may be other Cambodian programs as well. Another ANE Bureau program, the US-Asia Environmental Partnership (US-AEP), focuses primarily on "brown" issues, but some funding for collaborative "green" activities might be possible under the new US-AEP Environment and Civil Society Partnership program. G/ENV has Leader with Associates cooperative agreements with six partner conservation NGOs. This program is currently funding some Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF) activities in the Lower Mekong including Cambodia. The USAID Secretariat for Implementation of Tropical Forestry Conservation Act (TFCA) facilitates payment of US government debt towards forest conservation activities that might be employed in Cambodia in the future. Cambodia has \$216 million in PL-480 debt to the United States but it is presently classified as "politically unlikely" of being eligible for debt-for-nature swaps. If this situation changes, TFCA may open up further conservation funding in Cambodia. Other programmatic linkages are also possible through the international work of other US government agencies such as the US Fish and Wildlife Service's (USFWS's) programs for tiger, rhino, and elephant conservation.

### **3. Proposed ENR IR Under SO 1**

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The following text is proposed for integration into the introductory statement of SO 1 as it is revised based on this assessment and the forthcoming DG assessment:

#### **Governance of Natural Resources in Cambodia**

Cambodia's rich endowment in forest, fish, and wildlife resources are on a downward trajectory of degradation and depletion that is adversely affecting the livelihoods of the rural poor and could gravely diminish the ability of natural habitats to support rare plants, animals, and aquatic organisms, many of which have already been lost in other countries of the region. Most rural Cambodians are below or at the poverty line and are exceptionally dependent on forests and inland waters for protein, nutritional supplements to household rice production, and cash income. Improved rural security in recent years has attracted international private sector interest to Cambodia's still relatively abundant timber and fish resources. A weak legal and institutional framework for managing natural resources combined with a chaotic and corrupt political environment resulted in illegal and unsustainable logging on a massive scale. Communities were displaced from traditionally owned lands and denied access to forest resources by powerful business and military interests. Businessmen were also given exclusive rights over rich inland fisheries upon which locally communities were dependent. Wildlife is unsustainably and illegally exploited to supply domestic markets, neighboring countries, and northeast Asia.

The Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) has acknowledged that the ad hoc allocation of concessions and the unmanaged exploitation of forest, fish, and wildlife resources is a serious political, social, and economic problem for the country and has begun to see its solution in terms of improved natural resources management (NRM) governance, with more control over natural resources vested in communities and local government. The RGC has embarked on an ambitious program to improve governance and strengthen democracy at all levels. The Supreme Council for State Reform (SCSR), headed by the Prime Minister and supported by six reform councils, guides the DG reform process. The government is strongly encouraged and supported to implement DG reform by citizens, civil society, and donors. The RGC issued a Governance Action Plan (GAP) in January 2001 that describes specific governance improvement actions within a strategic framework in the following seven key areas: 1) legal and judicial reform, 2) civil service reform and decentralization, 3) public finance reform, 4) anti-corruption, 5) gender equity, 6) armed services reform, and 7) natural resources management.

The GAP states that fair resolution of NRM conflicts in the areas of lands, forests, and fisheries is essential to social peace and environmental stability, which are fundamental to poverty alleviation and economic development. The resolution of land use conflicts is seen by the government as critical to basic human rights and the development of a positive investment climate. The RGC recognizes that access to land as well as forest and fishery resources by the rural poor is necessary to ensure sustainable livelihoods and to alleviate poverty. In order to achieve more equitable and transparent NRM, the RGC has made a commitment to improved governance by strengthening the legal framework for land and NRM supported by

complementary measures to deconcentrate government functions and decentralize political authority.

The election of commune councils, scheduled for February 2002 and supported by the Mission under this SO, is a significant practical and symbolic step towards decentralizing authority to the level immediately above the community. The Commune Administration Law empowers elected commune councils to manage and use natural resources in a sustainable manner, although the councils do not have management authority over lands and resources within the national forest estate. The RGC has stated its commitment to building institutional capacity at the province, district, and commune levels of government while also creating a coherent and clear legal framework for local governance. The RGC recognizes that local government is best positioned to resolve the increasing number of land disputes and to counter the trend of growing landlessness among the rural poor.

Rural people need secure tenure to agricultural land and access to forest and fishery resources. The government recognizes that the livelihoods of rural communities are jeopardized by timber and fishery concessions and has taken initial steps to redress this problem through community use provisions in drafts of the Fishery Law and the Forestry Law. Large areas of inland waters formerly under concession have been turned over to community control and timber concessionaires must now allow community access to forest resources. The RGC recognizes that the degradation of forest and fisheries resources through unsustainable management will have a direct negative effect on rural livelihoods and that loss of associated royalties will further limit the government's ability to fund poverty alleviation programs.

The RGC created the Seila Program as a framework for deconcentration and decentralization reforms. Reforms under the current phase of Seila are focused at the province/district and commune/village levels to build capacity and strengthen administrative, finance and planning procedures. Development committees are being created at all levels from the province to the village to provide an institution for coordination, planning, and participation in development. Crosscutting themes of the program are gender, NRM, and poverty alleviation. Seila has done pioneering work in integrating NRM into all levels of development planning in Ratanakiri Province and plans to develop a strategy for replicating this approach throughout the country. Donor support for natural resources training and capacity building is needed at the province, commune, and community levels in order to apply this approach and tailor it to local natural resources and biodiversity values.

## **Proposed IR: Strengthened local governance of natural resources to secure community control over resources critical to rural livelihoods**

### **Rationale and Approach**

Support for community and local government control over land and critical natural resources strengthens governance at the grassroots level, improves the sustainability of NRM, promotes livelihood security and poverty alleviation, reduces natural resource-related conflict and human rights abuses, and has the potential to improve biodiversity conservation. USAID experience in other Asian countries indicates that community-based natural resources management (CBNRM) and strengthened local government NRM capacity often provide an important first

step toward democracy and gives local government the skills and confidence needed to promote civil society participation and transparency in other areas of public life. Experience indicates that good natural resources governance leads to general improvements in governance.

Cambodia is currently revising its entire legal framework for land and NRM to provide more use rights for rural people and more control by local government. At the same time, the RGC is increasing the scope of its Seila decentralization program to cover most provinces while focusing on local-level NRM procedures and capacity as a key element of the program. The next several years will be a critical period for USAID support of strengthened and decentralized natural resources governance.

On the human level, Cambodian farmers typically cannot grow enough rice to feed their families throughout the year and rely on access to natural resources in the forms of fish and non-timber forest products (NTFPs) during shortfall periods. Secure natural resource access is an important step toward household food security and poverty alleviation. In recent years, Cambodians have been displaced and deprived of the natural resource-derived portion of their livelihoods through allocation of timber, fishing, and land concessions. These appropriations, often illegal or quasi-legal, have led to violence and murder, which is probably a more significant source of conflict in Cambodia than political rivalry. Appropriation of traditionally owned land and resources deepens the poverty of rural families and may lead to starvation, especially when other factors are also contributing to increased landlessness. Violence resulting from natural resource conflicts and deprivation of access to natural resources critical for survival constitute important human rights abuses in Cambodia.

The Mission will build on the experience, goodwill, and relationships gained through its support of the commune council elections to nurture the development of NRM governance capacity at the commune as well as district and provincial levels of government. The mission's support of NGO efforts to expose politically motivated human rights abuses can form the basis of efforts to identify and curb human rights abuses resulting from NRM conflicts. Corruption is the root cause of many land and resource conflicts as well as the illegal harvest of wildlife and timber. Support of improved NRM governance provides the Mission with a point of entry to identify and counter corrupt practices in both of these areas.

Communities in many Asian countries have proven to be good stewards of forest and fishery resources when they have secure tenure over the resources along with appropriate institutions, legal support, and incentives for management. Under these conditions, resource management is often more sustainable than it would have been under government agencies or the private sector. Sustainable management not only ensures community incomes and livelihoods, but can also protect critical natural habitat and conserve the animals that depend on it. Communities often need awareness training, technical support, and additional incentives to pursue biodiversity conservation as part of their system of land and resource management.

The Mission will achieve this IR through entry points at the community level, at the commune and other local government levels, by influencing the development of national NRM policy and implementing regulations, and by influencing the behavior of the private sector towards communities. The bulk of resources will be invested at the community and local government

levels through several possible mechanisms. This multi-level approach will allow the Mission to promote information flow and discussion among the levels of government as well as take advantage of synergies with other IRs within SO 1. The four points of entry for this IR are described below along with a brief rationale and illustrative activities.

**1. Community-Level Entry Point: Improved community control over management and conservation of forest and fishery resources.**

There are a number of examples of successful CBNRM activities supported by NGOs and donors in various parts of Cambodia involving forest, fishery and coastal resources. These activities cover a limited number of communities and there is a critical need to introduce CBNRM to other resource-dependent communities incorporating lessons that USAID has learned through successful activities in Nepal, the Philippines, and Indonesia. The approach developed by USAID/Cambodia at the community level can then be introduced more broadly into the government decentralization program.

*Illustrative Activities*

- Assist communities to develop institutions to manage resources under their control.
- Assist communities to identify, value, map, and plan the management of their resources.
- Strengthen the capacity of communities to advocate for their resource use rights to government and the private sector.

**2. Local Government Entry Point: Strengthened ability of commune councils and other levels of local government to implement new land and natural resource management laws and to reduce natural resource-related conflict and human rights abuses.**

Upon election, commune councils will have a general mandate to implement NRM laws but no capacity or procedures to do so. In order for decentralized NRM governance to work at the commune level, significant capacity building will be required. Initially, commune councils will have meager financial resources and little experience relevant to NRM. During their first five years of existence, the commune councils are expected to play an important role in channeling local concerns over NRM issues to higher levels of government and in assisting communities with land and NRM planning. The ability of commune councils to access required technical and administrative knowledge will largely determine their ability to perform their intended roles and their effectiveness will significantly influence the pace and direction of decentralization and particularly local-level control over land and resources. Their ability to manage natural resources fairly and transparently will be one of the foremost governance issues at the commune level. Provincial and district levels are also limited in their ability to manage land and natural resources by weak or absent procedures and capacity for land use planning and limited means to identify and value land and resources used by local people.

*Illustrative Activities*

- Provide commune councils with legal and technical training that will allow them to play their intended role in NRM.

- Educate communities and resource users about their rights under new land and NRM laws and how to effectively advocate for recognition of their rights.
- Facilitate cooperation and joint activities between human rights/democracy and governance (HR/DG) and conservation/environmental NGOs and other civil society organizations.
- Assistance to establish land and natural resource conflict prevention and resolution mechanisms to be implemented at the commune and province levels.
- Support NGOs to investigate and publicize natural resource-related human rights abuses.
- Develop and foster mechanisms for inter-level and interagency cooperation with respect to NRM and land use planning at provincial and lower levels.
- Support conservation NGOs, in cooperation with the USFWS, to strengthen the ability of provincial-level government agencies to control the illegal harvest and trade of wildlife and timber.

**3. Legal Framework Entry Point: Support civil society to participate in the process of national-level consultations to refine and monitor the implementation of the legal framework for land and natural resource management as they relate to CBNRM and NRM governance at provincial and lower levels.**

The Mission is currently prevented from direct engagement with national-level agencies responsible for NRM and biodiversity conservation but lessons learned from implementation of CBNRM activities and local-level NRM governance can enter into national-level policy dialogue via NGO, international organization, and donor partners. USAID can also seek to influence policy through public awareness campaigns and support of civil society organizations to participate in NRM-related political dialogue. Drafting of regulations to implement the Forestry, Fishery, and Land Laws will present important opportunities to affect policy over the next year or two.

***Illustrative Activities***

- Disseminate to donors and NGOs lessons learned from natural resources DG activities at the community and local government levels and support NGOs to advocate the incorporation of these lessons into government policy.
- Support NGOs to participate in the process of consultation and review of implementing regulations for soon-to-be approved Land, Forestry, and Fishery Laws.
- Support NGOs to identify illegal activities and corruption related to NRM and bring their findings to the attention of the government and the public.
- Provide public awareness and environmental education to help citizens participate in the political dialogue about NRM and biodiversity conservation.
- Encourage NGOs to develop mechanisms for ENR conflict prevention and resolution.
- Support NGOs to monitor the enforcement of ENR laws.

**4. Private Sector Entry Point: Facilitate improved natural resources management by the private sector through recognition of community rights and innovative partnerships with communities and communes.**

Domestic and international firms involved in natural resources extraction in Cambodia have long been considered a major part of the problem of poor NRM as well as the driving force behind corruption and many human rights abuses. Current efforts by the RGC to cancel poorly performing forest concessions and the vast reduction in the number of fisheries concessions provide an opportunity to assist those private sector firms who are interested in playing by the new rules of natural resource governance as articulated in the new Land, Forestry, and Fisheries Laws. Decentralization of NRM authority to the community and commune levels may also provide an opportunity to nurture the development of small businesses to support land and natural resources planning and impact assessment.

***Illustrative Activities***

- Devise and demonstrate incentives and approaches for the private sector to partner with communities and communes to manage and market natural resources.
- Support NGOs to establish forest certification in Cambodia as a private sector-driven means to improve forest management, and in the context of this IR to use certification as a leverage point to gain recognition of community resource use rights by concessionaires.
- Create the opportunity for the growth of small, knowledge-based businesses by giving communities funds and guidance to hire local firms to assist them with natural resources and land use planning as well as environmental and social impact assessment, if warranted. This would create 1) an incentive for the private sector to offer services usually provided by government or NGOs, 2) a new business niche in rural areas, and 3) employment for university graduates in natural resources and agriculture.

## 4. Programming Approaches, Costs, and Design Issues

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### 4.1 Approaches and Costs

The programming options and illustrative activities presented in Section 3 can be used to selectively build a natural resource governance IR for USAID/Cambodia at various funding levels. The program design will take advantage of synergies with other SO 1 programming that will emerge from the upcoming DG Assessment. The natural resources governance needs identified in the IESP are significant and worthy of USAID assistance. Most of these needs are amenable to effective and useful interventions at various levels of funding. The presence of a large and diverse group of international and domestic NGOs operating in both ENR and DG provide a wide variety of partnership and programming options in addition to direct technical assistance. The following general approaches to implementation of the IESP correspond with the indicated levels of annual funding commitment over the coming three fiscal years:

**Basic Programming (\$1 to 1.5 million):** This approach would generally rely on implementation of activities by NGO partners with a relatively narrow programming and spatial focus. Indefinite Quantity Contracts (IQCs) could be employed to assist with detailed program design as well as provide carefully targeted technical assistance. Buy-ins to existing global and ANE programs would be an option at this programming level.

**Intermediate Programming (\$2 to 3 million):** This approach would provide enough funds to allow the implementation of a relatively broad programming package directed at a suite of related issues in one or two target provinces with supporting national-level NGO advocacy. A mix of mutually supporting technical assistance (TA) and NGO programs could be designed, with IQCs or other contracting mechanisms providing longer term or more comprehensive TA.

**Comprehensive Programming (\$4 to 5 million):** This approach would broaden the intermediate programming approach to comprehensively address a suite of related issues, bring in more partners, and possibly work in additional provinces. This approach could be built around a long-term technical assistance contract or a number of shorter contracts. A year or more would be required to establish a program that could absorb this level of funding.

USAID funding of an ENR IR at either the intermediate or comprehensive programming level would allow the Mission to make a significant contribution towards solving one or more of the pressing natural resources governance challenges identified in the IESP and thereby also have a positive effect on poverty alleviation, the growth of civil society, and biodiversity conservation. Cambodia's success at overcoming major challenges in managing its land and natural resources will have an enormous effect on the lives of rural people and economic development at all levels.

## 4.2 Design Issues

**Adaptive Planning:** NRM is evolving rapidly in Cambodia as the legal framework is strengthened, government NRM authority is decentralized, and donors launch new projects and programs to assist the RGC and local government during this period of rapid change. Planning and programming must keep pace with new developments in this rapidly changing environment. Despite the growth in ENR donor assistance, many needs remain unfilled in terms of 1) local and community-level natural resource governance and planning, 2) innovative conflict resolution mechanisms, 3) assistance to provinces and districts not being reached by other donors, and 4) engagement of the private sector. Specific NRM governance assistance needs, especially with respect to commune councils, will become clearer as implementing regulations of the Commune Administration Law are promulgated and donor/NGO studies of commune council support needs are finished. A general guideline on commune land use planning is currently being formulated. Seila is currently developing a strategy, due to be finalized in November, that will provide a road map for mainstreaming NRM at provincial and lower levels of government. This strategy will identify specific assistance needs.

**Donor Coordination:** When funding levels for the proposed ENR IR are known and areas of interest have been chosen from among the illustrative activities in the IESP, the Mission should coordinate programming carefully with other donors to avoid duplication of effort and to ensure the most effective use of USAID funds. All of the bilateral and multilateral donors interviewed during the ENR assessment welcomed USAID's participation in natural resources governance and felt that additional donor assistance is clearly needed given the magnitude of the task. The DANIDA Natural Resources and Environment Programme Manager specifically recommended that donor coordination occur through the Council for the Development of Cambodia (CDC) as informal coordination is unlikely to be successful. A number of donors pointed out that all donors working with local governments should use the RGC's Seila decentralization program as a framework for assistance. Funds can be channeled directly to the provincial level under Seila or parallel to Seila funding channels and managed through separate bank accounts. Implementation under Seila is flexible, the most obvious options being partnership with the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), partnership with another donor, through NGOs, or by contracting the services of a consulting firm.

## 5. Potential Partners

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Potential partners for USAID programming within the four entry points of the new IR include local and international NGOs, local government, central agencies, other donor programs, and the private sector.

### 5.1 PVOs

PVOs concerned with NRM issues in Cambodia fall into three categories: 1) local grassroots NGOs working on local issues, often with support from an international partner or “parent” organization; 2) Cambodian national NGOs with a broader thematic focus, again often with external mentoring and support; and 3) international NGOs, which have considerable technical and management capability and are building capacity among their local colleagues. Few local or national NGOs are fully capable of independent programming, with almost all relying on an expatriate organization for leadership and financial support. USAID programming should focus on the leading PVO players, strengthening their ability to build capacity among Cambodian NGOs.

**The Asia Foundation (TAF):** Programming in Cambodia is focused on human rights and governance issues. Recognizing that human rights violations are at present less frequently political and more frequently to do with control over natural resource access, the Foundation has begun to examine which NGOs are best positioned to work in the NRM area, what are their strengths, and how to develop supporting partnership relations with them. Their program will attempt to reduce community-level conflict and rights violations over natural resources through supporting community organizations, will seek to educate citizens on their rights relating to natural resources, and support their participation in the development of government legislative and policy. The Foundation intends to organize a Conference on Democracy and Natural Resources Management, which would begin with sessions at the provincial level, culminating in a national conference in Phnom Penh. TAF can be expected to play an effective leadership and coordination role in NRM governance.

**NGO Forum on Cambodia:** NGO Forum is a membership organization made up of over 60 Cambodian and international NGOs. The forestry subprogram has been effective in its interventions at the national level of debate on forest management, and is now broadening its focus to strengthen local communities in protecting their rights of access to forest resources. NGO Forum is currently circulating a project proposal to *Promote Good Governance and Democracy Building in the Forestry Sector*. The objectives of this project are to build a nationwide grassroots network to empower communities to protect their rights to natural resources access and to contribute to improved governance by strengthening civil society input into government decision making.

**Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS):** WCS is a US-based international NGO with a history of conservation activity in Cambodia going back to the 1950s (then as the New York Zoological Society). Activities include the dialogue between the Department of Forestry and Wildlife (DFW), the timber industry, and the NGO community; working directly with one of the forest concessionaires (SL International – Samling) to conserve wildlife in the concession;

and developing a proposal for establishing a conservation area through landscape management in the northern plains region, an area of considerable importance for biodiversity conservation (Prey Vihear and neighboring provinces).

**CONCERN Worldwide:** CONCERN focuses on community forestry, conflict resolution between local communities and forest and agricultural concessionaires, and at the policy level on providing inputs to the drafting of the Community Forestry Sub-Decree. Training of trainers for community forestry and participatory land use planning is through CONCERN's support to the Cambodia Community Forestry Training Center.

**Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF):** WWF is an international NGO based in Switzerland. The Cambodia program is strongly supported by the US WWF affiliate. The program focuses on ecoregion-based conservation planning, protected areas management, biological and ecological assessments, CBNRM, the wildlife trade, and sustainable forest management. WWF is undertaking a geographic information system (GIS)-based study of poverty impacts of forest concessions on neighboring communities. WWF's ongoing project, Dry Forest Landscape Conservation Initiative - Resource Rights and Planning, which is strongly oriented toward improved NRM governance and CBNRM, has been supported by USAID funds via TAF.

**Community Forestry International (CFI):** CFI is a US-based organization collaborating regionally with the Asia Community Forest Network to support the development of policies and procedures to enable communities to participate effectively in forest management. A proposal to this end has been submitted to EAPEI this year.

**Wetlands International (WI):** WI, an international NGO, has been doing CBNRM in coastal and other areas in Cambodia, in particular in the communities dependant on the mangrove ecosystem at Ream Park on the Gulf of Thailand coast. Funding to WI for this work has been on a project basis, from several donors especially the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and DANIDA.

**Conservation International (CI):** This US-based NGO has recently begun a program to support DFW to conserve a large tract of forest between two protected areas in the Cardamom Mountains. Their current efforts are directed primarily towards protection and enforcement, but they plan to develop community-based activities. These two organizations are collaborating in and around the Cardamom Mountain area on a number of wildlife protection and protected areas initiatives. Although their focus is not now at the community level, it may become more so in the future.

**Flora and Fauna International (FFI):** FFI is a UK-based NGO that has been instrumental in calling international attention to the biodiversity value of the Cardamom Mountains and will soon begin to implement an Global Environmental Facility (GEF)-funded project there that will include involvement of local government in conservation planning.

**Oxfam:** Oxfam Great Britain (Oxfam GB) has conducted a series of studies on landlessness and has explored the relationships between natural resources and livelihoods. Oxfam GB and

Oxfam US are both building CBNRM into their projects and working to empower communities to manage their natural resources.

**CARE:** CARE was one of the principal partners in the former CEMP Program (see Section 6), but its portfolio does not currently contain any activities that are explicitly oriented toward NRM. CARE mission management expressed an interest in re-engaging in CBNRM.

**Community Aid Abroad (CAA), and Cultural and Environmental Preservation Association (CEPA):** This partnership of an international and a Cambodian NGO has been working successfully with fishing communities on CBNRM in Steung Treng province, as well as on policy development at the national level.

**Mlup Baitong (Green Shade) and Southeast Asia Development Program (SADP):** These two NGOs have been working primarily in the Kirirom National Park, with support for community education and organization in the buffer zone, ranger training, alternative livelihood development, and an environment program for national radio broadcast.

**Save Cambodia's Wildlife (Sandkrohs Satprey):** Save Cambodia's Wildlife works with the Wildlife Protection Office of the DFW, and with the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport in carrying out educational programs on wildlife conservation, mostly in Prey Vihear Province in the northwest. Some funding for staff training has been provided by TAF.

**Centre D'étude et de Developpement Agricole Cambodgien (CEDAC):** CEDAC works mainly in the provinces of Kandal, Kampong Chhnang and Prey Veng on CBNRM, sustainable agriculture, training farmers, field research, integrated pest management (IPM), organic agriculture, and training of rural youth.

**Commune Council Support Project (CCSP):** CCSP is a joint project of several NGOs working to build capacity of commune councils with support from GTZ and AusAID as described in Section 8. Could be a vehicle to support NRM at the commune level.

## 5.2 The Private Sector

Large private enterprises are perceived as among the leading villains in the NRM sector, especially in forestry. This is largely a fair assessment. However, the present attempt by the RGC to implement a new and sustainable management regime in the forest sector offers an opportunity to build bridges with those private sector players who are willing to behave more responsibly once the rogues' concessions have been cancelled. Improvement has already begun in some cases. Forest certification, currently supported by WWF, offers economic incentives for improved forest management on the part of concessionaires.

Land use planning and environmental impact assessment at the local level present an opportunity for encouraging the growth of Cambodian professional services firms in the area of NRM. Effective demand on the part of provincial and commune administrations for technical services in these aspects of NRM will trigger a supply response in the development of Cambodian consulting firms perhaps with international partners (e.g., Ta Prohm Environment

Ltd.) and private sector-oriented NGOs (e.g., Enterprise Development Cambodia). Some of these services are being delivered by NGOs, but the need is much greater. There is also potential for concessionaires to work directly with local communities as described in the illustrative private sector activities in Section 3.

### **5.3 Donors**

Donor programming in NRM in Cambodia is growing and coordination is needed. Informal coordination is provided by the Donor Working Group on Natural Resources Management, co-chaired by ADB and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). However, this body tends to be issue focused rather than concerned with broader programming. In the longer term, the appropriate body for donor coordination in NRM and other domains is the CDC, and new programming in NRM should be done in consultation with that body. It is worth noting that one of the problems of institutional development in Cambodia is the history of project-centered assistance from donors, at the expense of more institutionally integrated support. The USAID CEMP project was a welcome if only partial exception, and program coordination via the CDC would contribute to strategic integration.

At present the major donors in NRM and related governance work are the World Bank, ADB, DANIDA, United Nations Development Program (UNDP), UK Department for International Development (DFID), Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), and FAO, in approximately descending order of size of contribution.

### **5.4 Government**

Identification of potential partners in the central level of the Royal Government, and a strategy for engaging with them, is provided in Section 6. That strategy is partly premised on the emerging structural and functional relations between central agencies and local government institutions, which are themselves evolving rapidly. At local level, the soon-to-be-established commune councils offer an attractive opportunity to support a democratically elected grassroots-level institution that has an important, if currently ill-defined, mandate for NRM. Support of provincial governments is an important option as more power is being deconcentrated to this level and provincial governors have the full spectrum of sectoral technical agencies at their command. Provinces also have the power and capability to address large-scale land use issues like forest conversion to agriculture. The results of current decentralization initiatives should make local government partnership options clearer by early 2002.

## 6. Strategic Approach to the Royal Government

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The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries (MAFF) and the Ministry of Environment (MoE) are the obvious government recipients of donor support in the NRM sector. The DFW within MAFF has considerable donor support with respect to forest management and limited support with respect to wildlife management. DFW is an important potential partner because it manages the national forest estate, but the department suffers from internal conflicts resulting from its dual roles in conservation and timber production. The Department of Fisheries is the key player in fisheries management and will be the leading force behind the shift toward more community involvement in fisheries management under the leadership of its proactive Director General.

The MoE has had little donor support since the closure in 1997 of the USAID-led, multidonor project, CEMP. The design of that project was very sound, including donor coordination in partnership with senior ministerial officials, and a broad scope of capacity building in the various departments. Protected areas management, IPM and pesticide use regulation, and the preparation of the National Environmental Action Plan (NEAP), all figured prominently in the scope of work. A resumption of support to MoE in a comprehensive institutional capacity-building mode like the CEMP project presents an attractive (but by no means simple) programming opportunity given the institutional weaknesses of MoE. A recently initiated World Bank project is providing some support for protected areas management and the DANIDA Natural Resources and Environment (NRE) Program will provide capacity-building assistance. The NEAP is now overdue for evaluation and a second iteration.

The Ministry of Land Management, Urban Planning, and Construction (MLMUPC) is relatively new but is quickly moving to play an active role in land use planning and titling with assistance from several donors. Given the relatively technical nature of its work, MLMUPC would have to be considered a secondary partner for USAID programming in the area of improved natural resources governance.

More generally, a strategy for engagement with the RGC in the domain of NRM would have two major aspects, which share the property of responding to the Royal Government's expressed commitments to democratic reforms, especially of decentralization and deconcentration, transparency, and public participation, by

- contributing to the development of capacity at local government levels and in those units of the national government which relate directly to and support them; and
- focusing particularly on those aspects of institutional development where democratic processes of public stakeholder consultation have been mandated and begun, but where resources are lacking to carry out such processes on a broad scale.

Some examples:

- i) National Council for Support to Communes/Sangkats (NCSC). The initial mission report of the GTZ/ADB Decentralization Roadmap Study (18 August 2001) suggests three components of support for the commune councils: 1) strengthen the operating capacity of the Department of Local Administration (DoLA) in the Ministry of Interior and of the NCSC which it serves, 2) train local councils to learn how to play their roles and discharge their responsibilities, and 3) implement the intended review of commune boundaries (to make boundaries more rational and reduce the number of communes).

Support to DoLA itself is likely to come from GTZ and other donors, with whom the proposed program could partner to provide support to the commune councils. The GTZ/ADB mission report states the council support needs:

*“Commune/Sangkat councils’ role in service provision will be very limited in the first mandate [after the commune elections of 03 February 2002]. They will take over civil registration functions from commune chiefs, and most rural councils will be involved in rural development planning through Seila. However the Commune/Sangkat representative role – linkages between the council and villages, channelling local concerns over natural resources management issues, lobbying districts and provinces about quality and transparency of service delivery etc. is appropriate for all councils, and, whatever the outcome of the boundary review, will be a core role of the future. Strengthening commune/sangkat capacity to better perform this representative function might be a second objective of the first mandate. However with over 1800 commune/sangkat, district and provincial administrations, any NCSC actions in relation to systems development, promulgation of materials and training will be expensive, and current budgets are minimal.”*

Preparation of a sub-decree under the Commune Administration Law is now underway, and the Royal Government has mandated the DoLA to engage a public and participatory process in its development, to be completed before the elections. Elaborating regulations under the sub-decree will be an on-going process, and NRM issues will be a key component.

- ii) Review of commune boundaries. Present commune/sangkat boundaries require redefinition, as there are too many and some are too small to be viable democratic governance units (larger communes would have greater capacity and revenue, enabling them to take on more decentralized functions). Optimal size and actual boundaries will be complex issues concerning local revenue, NRM and land use planning, and the structure of government *vis-à-vis* services/authority of line ministries. It will be important that technical assistance be made available as soon as possible after the elections, so that changes can be determined well in advance of the beginning of the second commune/sangkat mandate, in about 2007. Clearly this represents a strategic programming opportunity in a technical and political process involving central and local participants.

Engagement over a five-year period would be required with the NCSC and the DoLA in the Ministry of Interior, either directly, through civil society partners, or in a donor consortium.

- iii) Seila. While not all observers are equally satisfied that the Seila program represents the best or only approach to implementing rural development programs through local governance structures, it is clear that the Royal Government's commitment to it is very firm. The GTZ/ADB report points out that the functional relationship between the Seila Task Force (STF) and the NCSC is a complementary one, Seila being concerned with implementation and NCSC being concerned with the legal and procedural framework. Support to equitable management of natural resources through the Seila structure offers several advantages to a donor concerned with democratic change on the one hand, and with carefully circumscribed engagement with the central government on the other.

Funds supplied via Seila are managed in a very transparent and accountable manner, financial procedures at local level being a key component of the capacity-building work of the program. Accounting at the national level with the STF provides means for earmarking funds to particular places and functions, or for contribution to core Seila requirements. Seila funds are playing and will increasingly play a critical role in enabling local government units to undertake key rural infrastructure projects in response to local demand as articulated in the development committees in the villages and in the commune councils. Water supplies, and tertiary roads supplying access to services, markets, and patches of natural resources, will be fundamental assets for viable communities, and the community-based management of such infrastructure is a key function of local government. In themselves, they are tangible outputs to which a donor can point as evidence of impact. More importantly, contributions to building local capacity for their sustainable management will help build the rural economy, on which Cambodian democracy must depend. Seila is now in an expansion phase after some years of experimental development, and resources are urgently needed for its full deployment to all provinces.

- iv) CDC. Finally, given the multifaceted and multi-institutional aspect of NRM, it can be argued that the institutional high ground for donor support in the sector is in fact at the CDC, which has a mandate for the coordination of all donor support to the RGC. While the CDC may have been a weak and possibly dysfunctional institution prior to 1997, it has since then emerged as a serious component of the public and private investment planning process. The government recently appointed the rather dynamic Minister of Commerce as the Vice Chair of the CDC, recognizing the important linkages between investment and international trade. Taking into account that the government's "Pro-Poor Trade Development Strategy" includes the diversification and commercialization of agriculture as a key component, and that such a policy has obvious NRM implications, it would appear that CDC itself will have an important high-level role in NRM. The CDC's position as coordinator has prompted DANIDA to use the CDC as a counterpart for its very large intervention in the NRM sector.

## **7. Relationship of the IESP to the Recommendations in the Tropical Forest and Biodiversity Annex**

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### **7.1 Overall Recommendations for Further Biodiversity and Tropical Forest Conservation Actions**

The Tropical Forest and Biodiversity assessment prepared to fulfill FAA Regulations 118 and 119 was researched and written in parallel to this parent ENR report. The full assessment is attached as Annex 2 to the main report, and its principal recommendations are summarized here. This chapter serves to show how well the overall recommendations presented in this IESP relate to the recommendations contained in the 118/119 assessment. The recommendations included in the biodiversity annex are:

- 1. Local government agencies at the provincial level need to be strengthened in their efforts to understand and enforce existing natural resources laws and regulations.**

The present situation in Cambodia is one of a near total lack of enforcement of laws relating to fisheries, wildlife and forests. Even in cases where the will exists, relevant agencies and authorities at the provincial level do not have the equipment or expertise to effectively enforce these laws. Providing appropriate tools and training to provincial fishery and forestry departments could have a strong and noticeable impact towards safeguarding key natural resources in these areas.

- 2. New policies and laws need to be developed that provide a better framework for conservation and sustainable use of forests and biodiversity.**

In many cases the existing natural resources policies and laws are not biologically sound, do not ensure community access to land and natural resources, and do not appropriately handle the necessary role of communities in managing resources at the local level. While important new laws are being finalized, support is still needed to strengthen civil society to advocate development and implementation of appropriate implementing regulations.

- 3. Communities need to be strengthened in their understanding and capacity to sustainably manage the natural resources within their domain.**

In some cases, communities already have access to land and natural resources but could benefit from an increased understanding and better tools to use these in a more sustainable manner. Under a new Community Fisheries Sub-Decree, communities are being given access to resources that have formerly been in private hands. In both cases capacity-building efforts are needed at the community level to ensure their understanding of relevant policies and to help them sustainably use and manage these resources.

- 4. Appropriate management plans need to be developed and implemented for important protected areas and key resources.**

Protected areas in Cambodia have largely been set up without a clear understanding of the biodiversity and natural resources contained therein. The entire protected area system in Cambodia needs a full review to ensure that it contains areas that contain a representative sample of the nation's biodiversity. Each protected area needs a well thought out management plan and the capacity to enforce it. Strong consideration must also be given to the sustainable use of key natural resources by communities that have traditionally depended on them.

**5. CITES efforts need to be strengthened and the trafficking of wildlife species needs to be curtailed.**

Although Cambodia is a party to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), it has so far not been strong in implementing actions to reduce the trade of wildlife and natural products across its borders. The role of NGOs in monitoring CITES compliance needs to be strengthened along with the relevant government entities charged with enforcement. The provisions of a new Wildlife Law, currently in draft, will give the DFW greater legal authority to control the wildlife trade.

**6. The management rights of private sector timber concessionaires and commercial fishing block holders must be appropriately defined and enforced to reduce conflicts with local communities and to avoid unsustainable extraction of Cambodia's natural resources.**

Within Cambodia, many large blocks of natural resources are allocated to timber and fishery concessionaires. Regulations regarding management of these resources and giving appropriate access to communities must be strengthened; sustainable management plans must be developed; and the concessionaires' compliance with these plans must be enforced. The RGC is revising the legal framework and has begun to take steps to meet these requirements.

**7. Capacity-building efforts are needed to strengthen the knowledge base of natural resources managers in government agencies and NGOs and to strengthen Cambodian institutes of higher education to produce graduates with such knowledge.**

Cambodia lacks educated and trained individuals in positions of responsibility and authority within its government agencies at all levels, and within the NGO and university communities. More students need to receive training in areas of NRM and conservation so that they can fill some of these gaps. In addition, the national university system requires institutional strengthening to enable it to fulfill its role in educating the future generation of natural resource managers in Cambodia.

**8. More information, environmental education and awareness programs about forests and biodiversity are needed in Cambodia at all levels.**

Among the Cambodian public, there is limited awareness of the nation's biodiversity riches and conservation needs. More education and awareness programs need to be developed and implemented for targeted audiences ranging from school children, to community groups, to the

general public. These efforts need to include all media, such as radio, videos, billboards and in-person discussions in order to have maximum effectiveness in this largely illiterate country.

**9. A database of information on species and their occurrence in Cambodia needs to be established and the relevant data collected from the field to enable effective management of biodiversity resources.**

At present there is a scarcity of information about the presence, distribution and life history information for most species within Cambodia. As part of institutional strengthening programs, a database of species information needs to be set up and data needs to be collected from the field before Cambodia's biodiversity can be effectively managed and conserved.

**10. Geographical focus: Local and provincial level biodiversity and forest conservation activities are especially scarce but critically needed in the dry dipterocarp forests and associated wetlands and river stretches of the northern plains and adjacent highlands.**

The northern plains of Cambodia and adjacent highland areas stand out for the convergence of rivers with diverse fish species with some of the largest remaining tracts of dry dipterocarp forests in mainland Southeast Asia. Within these forests are small wetlands that support sizeable populations of large and elsewhere rare waterbirds and large mammals such as wild cattle, elephants, and tigers. This area has not yet attracted much donor attention and needs to be recognized and supported soon before key resources are lost. Community-level work in these areas would have the greatest impact on conservation of globally important biodiversity and important forest habitats. If funding for community- and provincial-level work is limited, it is suggested that it be focused here first.

**7.2 Analysis of Relationship between the Proposed IR and the 118/119 Assessment**

The points of entry and illustrative activities suggested in this IESP are closely related to a number of the overall tropical forest and biodiversity conservation recommendations presented in this report. Some of the most salient overlaps are considered here.

The proposed community entry point 1 clearly corresponds to biodiversity recommendations 3 and 8 that involve empowering local people to manage their own resources and providing them with knowledge about them. Community control over their resources is also a factor that can be addressed through policy changes described in recommendations 2, 4, and 6.

Entry point 2, local governments, just as clearly responds to biodiversity recommendations 1 and 7 and to some degree with recommendations 2, 4, 6, and 8 as well. In all of these recommendations, it is important that the local government entities be strengthened, empowered, and educated to perform their natural resource-related responsibilities effectively.

Similarly, entry point 3, concerning legal frameworks, closely dovetails with biodiversity recommendations 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 which all involve civil society to one degree or another in efforts to learn more about and monitor the enforcement of existing laws and to work on the development of new and more effective ones.

The private sector entry point 4 also closely corresponds to biodiversity recommendation 6 with overlaps in other recommendations as well. Although presently in Cambodia the private sector presents some of the greatest impediments to biodiversity conservation, this could turn around, and more appropriate involvement of the private sector could be an asset.

If the local- and provincial-level work outlined in all the entry points focuses on the northern plains and associated wetlands and river stretches then biodiversity recommendation 10 will be addressed as well.

The only biodiversity recommendation not covered in some way in the proposed IESP is Number 9, which requires a scientific perspective most likely beyond the purview of USAID programming. Although implementing recommendation 9 will have long-term positive effects, right now the threats to forests and biodiversity in Cambodia are immediate and severe. Addressing items 1 through 8, with a focus on geographical recommendation 10, will go a long way towards facilitating the more immediate and necessary actions.

### **7.3 Conclusions**

As can be seen in this section, the points of entry suggested in the IESP strongly overlap a number of the tropical forest and biodiversity recommendations suggested in this section. If any of the illustrative actions are funded in support of these points, then they will also help address the loss of natural resources and biodiversity. The present situation in Cambodia is putting undue stress on remaining natural forests, wetlands, and aquatic ecosystems and to the fish, wildlife, and plant species that live within them. Any and all actions that are funded by USAID to address this situation are sure to help the people of Cambodia who depend upon these resources and will in turn greatly aid international biodiversity conservation efforts.

## 8. Natural Resource Conflict Prevention Analysis

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Cambodia's widespread conflicts over natural resource ownership and management are even more pronounced than in most developing countries, largely as a result of the political chaos and wars that have shaped Cambodian society over the last three decades. Villagers, displaced persons looking for a place to live, and private sector firms eager to gain access to land and resources are the key actors in the conflicts. Conflict is expressed in a range of ways from smoldering resentment to armed violence that often results in death, usually of villagers at the hands of guards hired by concession owners. Important underlying causes of natural resources conflict in Cambodia are the lack of a clear private and state property rights regime and the absence of legally guaranteed access to the natural resources on which people depend for survival. Most rural Cambodians are engaged in subsistence farming and rely on access to natural resources and land for their livelihood and for whom this access is a basic human right.

Land and resource grabbing by powerful individuals and firms is the most visible cause of conflict. Forest concessions covering 40 percent of the nation's land have been granted to well-connected foreigners and local elites under discretionary authority of self-interested civil and military officials. This was done without public process or consideration of the customary use rights of local populations to timber and NTFPs that they rely on for subsistence and cash income. Large areas are now being allocated to agricultural concessions that will clear the remaining forest and thereby completely eliminate community access to forest products. Cambodia's extensive freshwater fishery resources are mismanaged in much the same way. The result is extensive and sometimes violent confrontation between local communities and the armed guards of the concession holders. "Land grabbing" is not the only factor that limits people's rights to subsistence and other economic use of natural resources. A large proportion of the population is clustered around the poverty line, and misfortunes such as an illness in the family push many poor families into landlessness. These families then become more reliant on gathering of "common property" resources including illegal hunting, or perhaps worse yet are forced to put their children into exploitative wage labor including the commercial sex industry.

Conflict over natural resources will be reduced by 1) the implementation of a legal regime which defines the property and access rights of the citizenry and their communities, and the responsibilities of all levels of government in ensuring them; 2) the building of capacity in national and local government to plan and manage land use wisely, and to mediate conflict effectively, and 3) the empowering of civil society to organize, collect, and share information, and to assist individuals and communities in the political process of ensuring equitable access to the means of a decent life. The RGC has already begun putting in place a legal framework and other governance actions that provide a basis for achieving these objectives, but political will, resources, and support/pressure from civil society and the international community will be needed to ensure that progress continues toward meeting the objectives. Development of locally effective means of conflict mediation and resolution will take time, given the mistrust of authority and mistrust within communities engendered by the Khmer Rouge social experiment, the Vietnam-controlled regime which followed, and the rampant corruption which has ensued over the past decade.

Two top priorities for conflict resolution are a legal means to assign private property rights under the new Land Law and means to assign management rights to communities under the new laws on Land, Forestry, and Fisheries. With multidonor support, MLMUPC has begun the systematic registration of land titles at village and commune levels in two provinces. Systematic registration includes survey, public display of survey results, and a socially transparent process of adjudication administered by local officials. GTZ pilot work confirms that these processes effectively ensure minimum conflict over the “natural justice” of who has title to what in Cambodia’s previously confused land tenure regime. With over 13,000 villages in the 1,600 communes of Cambodia’s 230 districts and 24 provinces, this primary task is an enormous one. The planned program covers only 11 provinces over 10 years, and additional donor support will be needed to extend the program to the rest of the country in reasonable time. Community based management of natural resources is supported by provisions of the new Land Law and draft Forestry Law as well as more detailed implementing regulations in draft sub-decrees on community forestry and community fisheries. NGOs have begun to assist communities to assert these rights, but much more assistance is needed to overcome ignorance and willful obstruction by government officials and the private sector.

Conflict prevention will also depend on the capacity and willingness of stakeholders to effectively play their roles in the NRM process. Commune councils will be key NRM players, as the Law on Commune Administration (*Kum/Sangkat*) specifies. Considerable training and technical support will be needed to allow the councils to understand and play their NRM role. Communities must also be trained to understand their land and NRM rights and obligations under the new laws. Government resource managers and private sector resource extraction firms must understand the new rules of the game and be willing to abide by them. Considerable training is needed at all levels of government to alter the current paternalistic mindset of officials to one of serving the public and working collaboratively with communities. An example of the type of support needed is the Commune Council Support Project, an activity supported by several NGOs, and designed among other things to 1) disseminate information to commune councils via a newsletter in English and Khmer, 2) engage commune officials and local communities, and 3) identify local NGOs concerned with local governance and assess their needs.

## 9. Gender Analysis

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Men and women often have different responses to outside interventions, and these interventions often have a different impact on men and women. Many well-meaning projects have unknowingly contributed to the disempowerment of women. There is no general gender approach to project design that can be applied in every case. A needs analysis or study with a gender perspective should be conducted before any program or projects are implemented.

With peace has come rapid internal migration and rapid and unsustainable exploitation of resources in upland areas. These developments mean the traditional subsistence livelihood system is becoming increasingly insecure. To help indigenous women maintain their status and power in a rapidly changing environment, it will be important for aid providers to recognize the special roles women play in society, and ensure that development assistance is appropriate. For example, projects that increase the marketing potential of local products (NTFP or handicrafts) gathered or produced by women will help to address the deepening power imbalance. Proper and appropriate management of conservation, NRM, and development projects will benefit both men and women. Women should receive training in Khmer, English, numeracy, and business to be able to take advantage of opportunities related to ecotourism.

**Education – Developers of environmental and NRM education programs should recognize the following constraints:**

- Knowledge of Khmer language is limited among women indigenous groups.
- Across all ethnic groups women have lower literacy than men.
- Women have less access to training and education than men.
- Women’s movements are more restricted than men’s, because of cultural constraints and their role in caring for children and other household duties

To be effective in reaching program objectives for the participation and empowerment of women, project designers will need to address these constraints. Training programs will need to be conducted at the village level, rather than a central location, in an appropriate language. Remedial adult education for women should focus on literacy, numeracy, and business. Education on the environment and NRM should be provided in an accessible format, usually verbally (in-person or by radio) rather than as printed materials.

Often projects are implemented through local officials and opinion leaders, or village headman. Almost all are male, and look at problems and solutions from male perspective. Environment and natural resources management (ENRM) projects need to involve women at every stage of development and implementation to ensure that the different gender impacts are understood and taken into account.

Small-scale marketing is a woman’s domain in Cambodian society. Women do most of the selling of agriculture produce, fish, aquatic plants, forest products, etc. Projects that aim to shift marketing to a larger scale, like shrimp farms or agricultural cooperative, may negatively impact women. On the other hand, projects aimed at improving women’s marketing skills

could increase their income and status. By working in the marketing sector you can reach women.

## **Recommendations**

There have been few studies on gender perspectives for marine and freshwater fisheries. More research needs to be done in this area. There is a need to identify better ways to address issues of access and equity in resource use and management.

Women should be given the opportunity to acquire appropriate technologies that will enable them to contribute effectively to sustained fisheries development and growth. It is therefore essential to increase women's participation and decision making in fisheries development efforts.

Women (particularly women-headed households) and the landless poor rely heavily on the commons for income and as a safety net. Access to common resources (aquatic and forests) should be available to anyone free of charge regardless of ownership, land, and capital. They can therefore be regarded as an important resource for livelihood support.

To inform the development of environmental and NRM projects, USAID, its grantees and sub-grantees should:

- collect gender-disaggregated local data on NRM practices and livelihoods,
- formulate gender-sensitive policies and plans based on a gender-disaggregated needs assessment, and
- formulate policies and plans to improve women's access to resources.

USAID programs should:

- train field staff in gender-sensitive and participatory planning and program implementation;
- acknowledge women as directly involved in NRM, rather than as merely wives;
- support women's efforts in marketing and processing natural resources;
- conduct adult education to improve women's literacy, and access to appropriate information on resource management;
- provide legal education and support to women in order to improve their access to and control over natural resources;
- pay attention to health issues related to the environment, including waterborne diseases and safe pesticide use;
- ensure that resource programs benefit local communities, especially women who rely on these resources to meet their livelihood requirements;
- monitor the equitable access to benefits of projects addressing food insecurity and poverty for poor and food insecure women, particularly in women-headed households; and
- involve women more in planning and decision making.