

Development Alternatives in Mondulakiri Province

Cambodia

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Moul Phath

EPL Liaison Project manager WWF

Cambodia

Email: Phath.Moul@wwfgreatermekong.org



Background Information

The Cambodia-Lao-Vietnam (CLV) Triangle Development Project targets 10 provinces: (1) Cambodia: Mondulakiri, Ratanakiri, and Stung Treng. (2) Laos-PDR: Attapeu, Saravan, Sekong. (3) Vietnam: Dac Nong, Dak Lak, Gia Lai, and Kontum. The determination of priority for development areas are: (i) infrastructure, (ii) agriculture, fishery, and forestry, (iii) services, (iv) industry, (v) social area and science and technology, (vi) environmental protection and efficient land management, (vii) national and regional security and defense, and (viii) trade and investment facilitation. Mondulakiri Province is a remote located in the Northeastern part of Cambodia and close to the border with two Vietnamese provinces: Dac Nong and Dak Lak. Mondulakiri Province has a total area of 1,366,891 hectares and a population of above 60,000 people. Based on forest cover baseline 2010, satellite source of WWF, the total area is divided into 39% of semi-ever green forest, 51% of deciduous dipterocarp forest, and 10% of non-forest. The key biodiversity importance of the province is: (1) Habitat – semi-ever green forest, deciduous dipterocarp

Quick facts

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Zone	Mondulakiri Province
Theme	Regional Economic development
Leading Agency	National Government

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forest, wood land, grassland, and water flow system. (2) Wildlife species – common, rare, endangered, and serious endangered species.

Development Perspectives

To meet the above 8 development criteria, the Government of Cambodia has prioritized the following development areas to achieve regional economic development:

Conservation – The Royal Government of Cambodia officially registered 4 protected areas (PA) which are under the supervision of two different ministries. The Ministry of Environment (MoE) manages the Nam Lyr Wildlife Sanctuary and the Phnom Prich Wildlife Sanctuary while the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fishery (MAFF) manages the Mondulkiri Protected Forest and the Seima Protected Forest. Meanwhile, indigenous people are living based their livelihoods alternatives surrounding and inside those protected areas.

Tourism – According to the CVL Development Triangle Project, Mondulkiri province has newly started developing and implementing a 5-year development strategy focusing on natural tourism. At the same time, the province launched a pilot strategic plan aiming at encouraging ecotourism through the organization of mountain bike fund ride and races. The possible attractions for ecotourism include: viewpoints on the forest cover; water fall resorts, grassland landscape and wildlife. Local tourists like to enjoy the scenery, appreciate the view on the forest cover (sea forest) and relax at water fall resorts. Differently, international tourists like to go on treks in the forest, ride mountain bikes and camp next to rivers. The Ministry of Tourism (MoT) declared Mondulkiri province to be the area best suited for natural tourism in Cambodia and in the entire CVL Triangle Area. MoT expects that in the next 5 years (2014-2018) the number of tourists (either local or international) will increase to 300,000 people at the provincial level (Sdeung Sokhom, Secretary of State of MoT, 17 May 2014).

Investment – The Royal Government of Cambodia gave the authorization to exploit some of the forest land that was initially part of a protected area. This decision will allow agro-industry and mining exploration projects to take place. No less than 20 companies (in between 500-1900 hectares per company) have been granted licenses to develop rubber plantation and gold mining exploration/exploitation. In one of the four protected areas (Nam Lyr Wildlife Sanctuary), forest land has been entirely converted into land for agro-industry development. Mondulkiri province is also the target of hydropower development projects (along Srae Pok River), as Chinese companies have expressed interest in getting involved. One hydropower substation has already been developed with the support of the Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA).

Infrastructure – The Mondukiri province has 4 roads connecting to the Vietnamese provinces. They mainly serve to exchange local products between the two countries, especially rubber, cassava, and other secondary crops. National Road No. 175 is constructing to connect from the province to neighbors in Cambodia across two protected areas (Seima Protected Forest and Mondukiri Protected Forest). Currently, there are plans to build another national road which will also be constructed across a protected area (Phnom Prich Wildlife Sanctuary). Railway and airport are not an option for the government until year 2020 (based on source of information CLV roundtable meeting on 20 January 2009).

Challenges and Recommendations

Challenges: Mondulkiri Province might face serious fragmentation of its natural resources. The Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fishery have not established clear mechanisms to monitor and evaluate the impacts of economic activities on the environment. For instance, the Economic Land Concession (ELC) Company did not follow the agreement it signed with the government and did not follow the government's instruction. Unfortunately,

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such companies never get any official punishments. Moreover, either Mondulkiri Province or Vietnamese provincial authorities do not have trans-boundary conservation cooperation since the 4 lines of roads connected.

Recommendations: (1) Authorities shall have strict measurement and enforcement mechanisms to ensure all ELC companies invest in the right way, fairly sharing benefit, and respecting clean development mechanism (CDM). (2) Cambodian province and Vietnamese provinces shall strengthen the 8 development areas through cross boundary economic cooperation, as stated by the 3-country leaders.

Challenges: The Mondulkiri Province still has not established a Provincial Land Use Plan. However, this was one of the requirements stated in the Phnom Penh Declaration on the deepening of the Cambodia-Lao-Vietnam Development Triangle Areas, on 16 November 2014. Recommendation: Mondulkiri province shall comply with the requirements and develop a land use plan identifying ecosystem services provided by the area, to understand the requirements of short, medium, and long terms development.

Conclusion

Due to its proximity to Vietnam, Mondulkiri province has been integrated into the CLV Development Triangle Area. But Mondulkiri province is also home to the last intact forest of Cambodia. Several investors have expressed their interest in agro-industry, gold mine

exploration/exploitation and hydropower projects. Meanwhile, other projects have been implemented in order to create an economic network with Vietnam and other CLV target areas. However, these economic developments lack communication, stakeholders' participation and environmental impact assessment. In order to ensure that the balance between economic, social and environmental benefits is maintained, policy makers must convince investors to use the "Environmental Impact Assessment and/or Integrated Valuation of Environmental Services and Tradeoff".

Reference

The following documents informed the development of this paper:

Roundtable on exchanging experiences in developing landlocked remote areas of Cambodia, Lao, Vietnam and India, January 20, 2009, Ministry of Commerce, Kingdom of Cambodia

Phnom Penh Declaration on the deepening Cambodia-Lao-Vietnam Development Triangle Areas, 16 November 2010, Phnom Penh, Cambodia

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