Policy Making for Sustainable Development
and the
Yeak Laom Commune Protected Area

Consultant Report
Kenneth G. Riebe

International Development Research Centre of Canada

and

UNDP/CAREERE-Ratanakiri
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In a broad and general way this report covers over three years of work developing a sustainable development policy strategy for Northeast Cambodia. In a much more specific manner it deals with the experience of Yeak Laom Commune Protected Area, in Ratanakiri Province. Program activities took place both in Phnom Penh and Ratanakiri, with a fair amount of travel in between. I need to acknowledge a number of fellow travelers for their support, both personal and professional.

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Pleurt and the rest of the Committee and staff
All the People of Yeak Laom Commune.


Cover Photo: Ethnic Tampuan Highlanders place traditional bamboo weaving and thatch roof on the Yeak Laom Lake Environmental and Cultural Centre.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

POLICY MAKING FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
AND
THE YEAK LAOM COMMUNE PROTECTED AREA

The pace at which Cambodia’s Northeast is being ‘developed’ is threatening to worsen an already weak position from which the indigenous Ethnic Highlanders or Chunchiets could gain from that development. The external pressures generated from immigration of lowlanders from other provinces and from Cambodian and foreign investment in land, for industrial agriculture crops such as oil palm, rubber, cassava, kapok, coffee, etc., and especially logging, are all contributing to the increasing disenfranchisement of the Highlanders. In order for the Chunchiets to be able to engage in and benefit from development, there must be participation from all stakeholder groups in building a strategic consensus about the character of that development. For consensus makers the challenge of building that participation is considerable: ‘horizontal’ participation has to be complemented by ‘vertical’ participation from national to local levels.

This report describes the involvement of the International Development Research Centre of Canada (IDRC) in policy development and action research in Northeast Cambodia, from November 1995 up to September 1998.

In Part I, it reviews activities as they related to the larger on-going debates about the character of development of Cambodia’s northeast provinces: Kratie, Stung Treng, Mondulkuri and Ratanakiri.

The report relates how IDRC, in the beginning through its early activities as lead agency of a ‘consultative group’ of IO/NGOs and later through the work of the ‘Resource Management Policy – Ratanakiri Project’ (RMPR) in developing the Yeak Laom Commune Protected Area, became an active participant in the sustainable development strategy debate. That debate is about what kind of development is best for the Northeast and most importantly, who benefits from that development.

In Part II, background information about the study site is presented including:
- Land Area and Usage
- People and History
- Cultural Significance
- Protected Area Status
- Development Potential

In Part III, the report reviews activities that took place after IDRC and UNDP/CAREERE-Ratanakiri joined forces in July of 1997 up to August 1998.

It explains how IDRC/CAREERE worked in concert with both the Provincial Government and local Ethnic Highland communities to further establish the Yeak Laom Commune Protected Area. It describes IDRC/CAREERE efforts at supporting the local community’s capacity to
manage the area. That effort was rewarded with the issuance of a 25-year management contract between the Provincial Government and Yeak Laom Commune. The renewable lease gives them management rights and responsibilities over the Yeak Laom Lake and the surrounding Core Zone of the Protected Area.

Part IV will provide some analysis of the key issues emerging from the Yeak Laom Lake Community Management experience. Stakeholders and their roles are explored as well as the circumstances and manner in which the Provincial Government agreed to devolve authority to the local community. Some consideration is given concerning the use of water, wood and bamboo, as well as the likelihood for tourism and commercial development in the Core Zone.

Sustainability issues are also explored, with a review of the previous year’s expenditures and income generated. At present, financial sustainability appears a long-term goal, with Committee/Staff salaries, Building and Grounds Maintenance and Operations and Management costs exceeding the amount of money generated.

Part V provides summaries for the Phase I IDRC Project as well as for the Phase II and Phase III IDRC/UNDP/CARERE 2 Project. In Phase I IDRC combined its research role with policy development and local capacity building for provincial department staff. Local community participation was limited. Phase II was much more community-based, with emphasis on building community capacity and institution building. In Phase III IDRC/CARERE has obtained a long-term lease for the local community and provided infrastructure. Local community capacity building has continued, but needs more work to be sustainable and more community owned.

The Commune Lake Management Committee’s ability to manage the area has grown and an increasing number of participants understand its importance to the Commune. Long-term vision and basic principles for Core Zone development are under discussion. Participation has been hindered by competition with other daily work involving food production and marketing.

The program has been an influential player in the formation of a sustainable development policy for Northeast Cambodia and had a considerable impact on critical issues such as land tenure and natural resource/protected area management that are affecting indigenous people.

The report concludes that the CBNRM activities that were carried out and discussed in Yeak Laom provided the basis for present CBNRM activities in other parts of the Province. UNDP/CARERE has drafted plans to ‘marry’ this community-based natural resource management approach to its Local Planning Process.

IDRC saw an opportunity and made a commitment to Yeak Laom without really understanding the local situation or the myriad number of problems it would face. However, it made the right decision and the project now has considerable vision and long-term impact.
The report recommends that IDRC should continue to honor its commitment to Yeak Laom by guaranteeing continued funding into the next century. As CARERE replicates the lessons learned in Yeak Laom and incorporates them into future planning, it must also take the time to build local community resources. CARERE must field motivated, qualified and skilled staff to work at Yeak Laom in order to do so.

For the local people, they must realize the importance of Yeak Laom for the future of their community. They too, must look for the most motivated of their community to work at the lake.

The Highland Peoples Development Policy is all but concluded. The ‘peoples’ voice was heard and to some extent, listened to. The result is hopefully a realistic strategy, with a broad base of knowledge, understanding and commitment from all the groups involved, and with continuing strong links to successful local initiatives, like Yeak Laom. Yeak Laom should maintain its place as a venue, where all stakeholders can express their views about the significant issues facing Northeast Cambodia.

Included in the Annexes are:
1. Timeline of Activities
2. Provincial Protected Area Declaration
3. Rules and Regulations of the Core Zone of the Protected Area
4. Management Contract between Ratanakiri Province and Yeak Laom Commune
5. Draft Statutes
6. Highland Peoples’ Development Policy (Khmer)
8. SWOT Analysis
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GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS AND TERMS

CARERE - Cambodian Area Rehabilitation and Regeneration Project, a UNDP Government and Community Development Project
CBNRM - Community Based Natural Resource Management
CBTD - Community Based Tourism Development
CDC - Commune Development Committee
CEMP - Cambodian Environmental Management Project
Chamcar - Swidden or shifting agricultural field (sometimes pejoratively known as slash and burn farming)
Chunchiet - Khmer language word to describe Ethnic Highlanders, also known as Khmer Leu
CIDSE - Cooperation Internationale pour le Developpement et la Solidarite, international NGO working in Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam - in Ratanakiri since 1991
Consultative Group - Consortium of agencies working in Ratanakiri that organized the 1996 seminar ‘Sustainable Development in Northeast Cambodia’
DDC - District Development Committee
Health Unlimited - International NGO, working in Ratanakiri since 1990
HPP - Highland Peoples Programme, (UNDP Project operating in Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam and Laos)
IDRC - International Development Research Centre of Canada
IMC - Inter-Ministerial Committee on Highland Peoples' Development, chaired by the Ministry of Rural Development
Khset - Khmer language word for province
LPP - Local Planning Process
NFE - Non-Formal Education
NGO/IO - Non-Government Organization/International Organization
N.E. Cambodia - Generally refers to the provinces of Mondulkiri, Kratie, Stung Treng and Ratanakiri, sometimes Preah Vihear
NRM - Natural Resource Management
NTFP - Non-Timber Forest Products Project – NGO supported by OXFAM/Novib
PRDC - Provincial Rural Development Committee
Riel - Cambodian currency. (Riel 3700/US$1 as of December 1998)
RMPR - Resource Management Policy Ratanakiri (IDRC’s Phase I Project in Ratanakiri)
SEILA - Cambodian Government’s Rural Development Strategy that will replace the CARERE Project
UNESCO - United Nations Environmental, Social Cultural Organization
UNOPS - United Nations Operations Services
UNDP - United Nations Development Programme
VDC - Village Development Committee
PART I
1.0 INTRODUCTION TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

“A simple, ancient and now days trite saying summarizes a very basic and important principle: ‘Give people fish and they can eat that day, teach people to fish and they can eat for the rest of their lives’. Broadly speaking, the saying means that change agents should spark the development process; teaching people to learn new skills in managing themselves, ultimately building self-reliance among them.”¹ But these days, this old saying isn’t quite true enough. If we teach people only to fish, they may deplete the fishery resource. As agents of change, we must also teach people to manage the fishery, so that the resource will continue to be available for future generations.

“Sustainable development means improving and maintaining the well-being of people and ecosystems. It entails integrating economic, social and environmental objectives, and making choices among them where integration is not possible. People need to improve their relationships with each other and with the ecosystems that support them, by changing or strengthening their values, knowledge, technologies and institutions.

Major obstacles include lack of agreement on what should be done, resistance by interest groups who feel threatened by change, and uncertainty about the costs and benefits of alternatives. Overcoming these obstacles requires continuing public discussion, negotiation and mediation among all interest groups, and development of a political consensus.

Sustainable development involves trade-offs between economic, social and ecological objectives. Such trade-offs cannot be determined by ‘scientific’ means alone, no matter how multi-disciplinary. They are value judgements, and therefore ‘people-centered’ approaches to sustainable development strategies are needed. Participation of stakeholder groups is critical for decision-making, and for tasks within the strategy cycle, taking different forms of participation for each task. The result will be a more realistic strategy, with a broader base

of knowledge, understanding and commitment from the groups involved, and with better links to promising local initiatives. The challenge of participation is significant."

1.1 Problem Statement
Although one could argue whether or not the Ethnic Highlanders or ‘Chunchiets’ of Northeast Cambodia are poor, there are a number of criteria by which they may be considered:

- Loose organization rendering them prone to entrance, use and destruction by external forces. They have the least access to and control over their own resources, which has encouraged outsiders to enter and exploit these through modernized systems of extraction.
- Lack of capital and lack of knowledge of other cropping systems, which secure increased land productivity and especially land tenure.
- Lack of local markets for their products, which has resulted in a dependence on the lowland economy and market.
- Changing roles. The traditional relationship among members and leaders, which had existed in balance for centuries, is being undermined by the changing times, where money and material goods are increasingly valued. The solidarity that people once had with and for one another, is under threat.
- A dependence on outsiders for development solutions. There is ample justification for many Highlanders to believe that they are the least addressed sector in Cambodian society. Hence, any form of assistance from government or non-government agencies is seen as a means of alleviating their poor socio-economic condition. Also, these offices are often viewed as resource-rich, meaning they could easily provide the needs of the people. This misplaced orientation, however, has led to dependency.

The pace at which Cambodia’s Northeast is being ‘developed’ is threatening to worsen an already weak position from which the indigenous Ethnic Highlanders or Chunchiets could gain from that development. The external pressures generated from immigration of lowlanders from other provinces and from Cambodian and foreign investment in land, for industrial agriculture crops such as oil palm, rubber, cassava, kapok, coffee, etc., and especially logging, are all contributing to the increasing disenfranchisement of the Highlanders. In order for the Chunchiets to be able to engage in and benefit from development, there must be participation from all stakeholder groups in building a strategic consensus about the character of that development. For consensus makers the formidable task of building participation is considerable: ‘horizontal’ participation has to be complemented by ‘vertical’ participation from national to local levels.

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3 See-Handbook on Community Training Programs: For Participatory Integrated Social Forestry.
2.0 POLICY MAKING FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NORTHEAST CAMBODIA

This report describes the involvement of the International Development Research Centre of Canada (IDRC), in policy development and action research in Northeast Cambodia, from November 1995 up to September 1998.

In Part I, it will review activities as they related to the larger on-going debates about the character of development of the Northeast. It will record how IDRC, in the beginning through its activities as lead agency of the ‘consultative group’ and later through the work of the ‘Resource Management Policy – Ratanakiri Project’ (RMPR) in developing the Yeak Laom Commune Protected Area, became an active participant in the sustainable development strategy debate. That debate is about what kind of development is best for the Northeast and most importantly, who should benefit from that development.

In Part II, background information about the study site will be presented including:
- Land Areas and Usage
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- Protected Area Status

In Part III, the report reviews activities which took place after IDRC and UNDP/CARERE-Ratanakiri joined forces in July of 1997 up to August 1998, when the Province of Ratanakiri signed a twenty-five year lease with Yeak Laom Commune. The renewable lease gives them management rights and responsibilities over the Yeak Laom Lake and the surrounding Core Zone of the Protected Area.

Part IV will provide some analysis of the key issues emerging from the Yeak Laom Lake Community Management experience. In such a way the lessons learned can be understood, shared and perhaps applied elsewhere.

Part V includes summaries, conclusions and recommendations.

Part VI contains bibliography and annexes.

2.1 The First Seminar

“In August 1995, the international NGO CIDSE CAMBODIA, with assistance from the Inter-Ministerial Committee on the Highland Peoples’ Development Project, chaired by the Ministry of Rural Development, sponsored a two day ‘foundation seminar’ entitled ‘Ethnic Communities and Sustainable Development in Northeast Cambodia’. That international seminar, held in Phnom Penh at the prestigious Government Palace near Wat Phnom, commenced the policy debate over Cambodia’s development of its northeast provinces: Kratie, Stung Treng, Mondulkiri and Ratanakiri.

Experts and academics from the neighboring countries of Vietnam, Laos and Thailand were invited to share their experiences with over 100 participants, including the country’s two
Prime Ministers, First Prime Minister, Norodom Ranariddh and Second Prime Minister, Hun Sen. Numerous senior ministry officials, as well as representative guests from the IO/NGO community, journalists and Highland community members attended.

CIDSE’s initiative into policy development was the result of an internal planning exercise held in early 1994, which elaborated its community development program in Ratanakiri and identified a seminar as one strategy to raise awareness of the critical situation facing the Highland communities. In consultations with International and Non-Government Organizations, the concept of a national meeting on Highland communities was further amplified and expanded. The Ministry of Rural Development and the Inter-Ministerial Committee on the Highland Peoples’ Development Project heartily agreed with the concept and offered their help and assistance in sponsoring the event. The Seminar Coordinator traveled to Thailand, to both Bangkok and Chiang Mai, to contact speakers and resource persons. Dr. Chayan Vaddhanaphuti, of Chiang Mai University’s Social Research Center, was invited to make the keynote address.

As topics and speakers were identified and contacted the original scope and goals of the seminar continued to develop. Interest in the seminar came from many quarters, indicating its topical and timely character. What had begun as a small consultation, grew to a regional seminar, with speakers from Laos, Vietnam and Thailand and a guest list of over 100 invitees. They came from many diverse interests, including tourism, community development agencies, businesses, human rights organizations, senior Cambodian Ministerial delegations and provincial officials, including Governors and Members of Parliament. Key Highland leaders were invited to participate. The country’s two Prime Ministers’ agreement to participate in the event clearly indicated the significance of the seminar and the importance of the Highland communities to the nation of Cambodia.

With these many considerations, the seminar was called to order on 29 and 30 August 1995. There were three objectives set for the seminar:

1. To create understanding for the richness of Ethnic Community culture and its value for national cultural diversity;
2. to share and learn from the experiences of Laos, Vietnam and Thailand; and
3. to develop guidelines for appropriate natural resources management and long-term sustainable development.

For a week, Cambodian and international newspapers, television and radio covered the issues and topics generated by the seminar. Discussions outside of the seminar venue were held in private and public, raising awareness of the Cambodian Highland communities as never before. Seminar organizers met personally with representatives of the First Prime Minister and met directly with Hun Sen and his chief advisers. Both Prime Ministers dynamically spoke of the importance and need to include the Highland communities as part of Cambodia’s multi-cultural society. Also, the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Highland Peoples’ Development Project was for the first time involved in the public policy debate.
Seminar participants made the following recommendations:

1. a land tenure law;
2. a forest management and natural resources law which would protect the fragile ecology of the area;
3. support to and for the cultures of the Ethnic Communities;
4. a tourism policy that would maintain and support the culture and traditions of the Ethnic Communities;
5. national education curriculum development which would highlight the history and culture of the Ethnic Communities; and
6. a coordinated approach to sustainable development in areas inhabited by Ethnic Communities which would proceed step-by-step and include research and social and environmental impact assessments, in consultation and participation with the local Ethnic Communities.

“In order to develop such a comprehensive National Policy, seminar participants recommended the establishment of a National Task Force. It was to be comprised of Cambodian Government officials, International Organizations, NGO's (both international and local) and other interested persons and organizations to support the work of the Inter-Ministerial Committee on the Highland Peoples' Development Project in its consultations and collaborations with the local Ethnic Communities of Northeast Cambodia. In this way, the development of the area was planned to be based upon local knowledge and wisdom, yet benefit as well from the expertise of national and international experts and authorities.”

Thus began the national public debate about development policy in Northeast Cambodia. CIDSE challenged everyone to move forward to implement the seminar recommendations.

In early November 1995, CIDSE approached some of the other agencies then active or interested in development issues in the Northeast, in an attempt to establish the National Task Force, as recommended by seminar participants. As a result, a five-member 'consultative group' was formed, comprising CIDSE, UNDP/CARERE-Ratanakiri, IDRC, Health Unlimited and Oxfam. IDRC Phase I activities commenced with the formation of this group.

2.2 The Second Seminar
The days from February 26 through March 2, 1996 were important for Northeast Cambodia. An international seminar was being held in Ban Lung, Ratanakiri Province. It was entitled: ‘Sustainable Development of Northeast Cambodia’. Over 200 people participated in that landmark seminar involving stakeholders from every sector. The seminar was sponsored by

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the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Highland Peoples' Development and the Ministry of Rural Development, hosted by Ratanakiri Province and organized by the ‘consultative group’ with IDRC as the lead agency of that group. The consultative group members were joined by UNESCO for funding and by Adhoc, the Highland People’s Project and the Ratanakiri Provincial Government for organizing the seminar.

“The consultative group members were working in Ratanakiri in close cooperation with the local communities and local authorities. The main thrust of this cooperation was to respond to the urgent request for up-to-date information and appropriate skills concerning sustainable and equitable development to which communities and authorities have not had access in the past. Information dissemination, local capacity building and participatory planning and management of development were key objectives of their assistance. The seminar was an integral part of IO/NGO cooperation in achieving the objectives of strengthening local development capacity. Included in the pre-seminar activities was a series of village consultations with Khmer Leu (Highland Peoples) leaders, acquainting them with the issues of the forthcoming seminar, to ensure their voice was heard.

The seminar's stated objectives were:

- to create understanding for the richness of Ethnic Community culture and its value for national cultural diversity; as well as for sustainable economic development;
- to discuss concerns and visions for the future of the Northeast region from the perspective of indigenous communities;
- to develop a vision of the sustainable long-term development of the region and for appropriate natural resource management; and
- to formulate recommendations for support to local decision making about, and management of, regional and provincial development.

The seminar was opened on 26 February 1996 with welcoming speeches by Kep Chuk Tema, Governor of Ratanakiri, UNDP Resident Representative Andre Klap and Dr. Hong Sun Huot, Minister of Rural Development and Chairman of the Inter-Ministerial Committee. As at the earlier seminar, the keynote address was given by Dr. Chayan Vaddhanaphuti.

Both First Prime Minister Norodom Ranariddh, in opening the seminar, and Sok An, representative of Second Prime Minister Hun Sen, in closing, reaffirmed the Royal Government's pledge not to allow any investment projects to proceed if they threaten the ‘livelihoods and cultures’ of the Highland Peoples.

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5See-UNDP-HPP Consultancy Report: To Help Build the Capacity of the Inter-Ministerial for Highland Peoples Development in the North-East of Cambodia. By Dr. Chayan Vaddhanaphuti and Dr. William Collins. Please note the name change from the Inter-Ministerial Committee on the Highland People’s Development Project to the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Highland Peoples’ Development. By February 1996 the role and responsibility of the IMC was expanded to include drafting development policy for Northeast Cambodia. This was the result of discussions between UNDP, the Highland Peoples Programme and IMC, which “changed the focus of the Programme” and marked “new directions for the IMC, which would emphasize the leadership role of the IMC in Highland Peoples Development.”
Through a series of plenary presentations and case studies (both foreign and local), issues were presented and debated in group-discussions. Simultaneous translation was available for English, Khmer, Brao, Tampuan and Jorai languages. Group discussions were held in Highland languages as well as English and Khmer.

Issues included:

- Natural Resources Management
- (Eco) Tourism
- Resource Economics
- Sustainable Development of Upland Areas
- Land Tenure
- Women and Development
- Management of Animal Systems
- Non-Formal Education
- Participatory Local Decision Making
- Community Management of Natural Resources
- Environmental Impact Assessment

The seminar ended in the drafting and approval by participants of a proposed national policy and action plan for development in the Northeast, as had been requested by the government.

The draft policy statement called for an institutional structure including the participation of Khmer Leu leaders in the various committees responsible for development planning at the central, provincial and local levels. IO/NGO's were requested to provide technical assistance and facilitation through this structure.

The draft policy statement recommended interim regulations mandating environmental and social impact assessments to be included in the management plans and be required for all resource and other development projects. Provincial Rural Development Committees would be mandated to carry out public consultations to accept or reject development project proposals, based on the impact assessment reports, which developers would be required to prepare.

Immediate action and local capacity building were proposed, to ensure that Khmer Leu communities are able to participate fully in these processes. Participatory research on land tenure systems and demarcation of customary land use boundaries, community forestry, watershed and irrigation management and new technologies to raise productivity of swidden agriculture were planned. The community-based management of the Yeak Laom crater-lake was one feature of the program. Work on health care and non-formal education was ongoing.

The Inter-Ministerial Committee has worked on this policy document since that 1996 seminar. Numerous versions were drafted, discussed and considered. By March 1998 a final version of the policy document had been sent to the Council of Ministers for consideration. The Council met a number of times to deliberate the document. In the final version, the document (see Annex 14.6) does not support recognition of community tenure, only individual titles of five hectares for each family. Within this parcel land one may, if they wish, continue swidden farming, although alternative cultivation practices are endorsed.

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The seminar set the stage for IDRC's Resource Management Policy – Ratanakiri Project (RMPR), which was implemented in June of 1996.

### 2.3 Other Related Activities Which Supported National Dialogue

After the seminar, IDRC continued in its position as ‘lead agency’ of the consultative group by taking the initiative in a number of areas. As it became more apparent that the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Highland Peoples' Development would be the coordinating committee responsible for the drafting of development policy for the Northeast, IDRC stepped up its support to the Committee. In December 1996 RMPR’s Phnom Penh administration moved their office into the Ministry of Rural Development, next to the Inter-Ministerial Committee Secretariat. Telephone services were shared as well as technical advice given to IMC Secretariat staff. That arrangement continued until 30 June 1997, when IDRC shut down its RMPR Phnom Penh administration and operations. Office equipment used by RMPR was donated to the IMC Secretariat. IDRC’s efforts were recognized by other’s as evidenced in the Vaddahanaphuti/Collins Consultancy Report: “There are also other agencies like CIDSE and IDRC which have already worked with the IMC at the national and local levels in arranging seminars, conducting study tours and supporting research activities, especially on environmental issues. These organizations and other relevant agencies could also be enlisted to support IMC both in its national dialogue efforts and in its capacity building efforts to assure that the PRDC is fully aware of the importance of research to identify problems and opportunities and the significance of a forest management strategy which includes major participation of the Ethnic Highlanders.”

In August 1996 IDRC sponsored a Cambodian Policy Makers’ Study Tour to Chiang Mai Thailand. Participants included the Governor of Ratanakiri, Members of Parliament from Ratanakiri and Mondulkiri (both Chunchiets), a member of the Ratanakiri Provincial Rural Development Committee and a representative of the Ministry of Tourism Department of Planning. The visit was coordinated by the Center for Ethnic Studies and Development, at the Social Research Institute, located in Chiang Mai University and headed at that time by Dr. Chayan Vaddhanaphuti. They visited a number of sites including the Mae Chaem Traditional Healers Center, a community-managed forest area, The Mae Chaem Textile Promotion Center, the Mae Chaem District Hospital, the Tribal Research Institute, and the Huai Luk Development Station, a Royal Foundation Project. They also spent time at the Huai Hong Khrai Royal Development Study Center where a Community Integrated Watershed Management Project is located. The participants visited a number of offices and departments of Chiang Mai University and participated in a Forum on Highland Ethnic Minorities in Northeast Cambodia. This experience fueled the imagination of the participants, especially that of the Ratanakiri Governor. He returned to Ratanakiri committed to community based natural resource management. Earlier, in October of 1995, two months after the CIDSE supported seminar, he had established a Provincial Protected Area System of eleven (later one more was added) sites, including the Yeak Laom Commune Protected Area of some 5067 hectares. He now requested IDRC’s help in organizing the community-based management of the area and in establishing an Eco/Cultural Center in the Core Zone at Yeak Laom Lake, which would incorporate a number of the attributes he had seen, and be the centerpiece of his vision of community development.

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8 See-Cambodian Policy Makers’ Study Tour Report by Michael Barton and Kenneth Riebe.
A relationship of mutual support was developed with Bou Thang, Member of Parliament for Ratanakiri. He is a Tampuan and originally from Kachoan Village in Voensai District. He maintains strong links with his past and visits the province often. His views of what is needed for the development of the Highlands and Highlanders carry much weight, both in the province and in Phnom Penh. IDRC tried to expand those views with the exposure study tour to Thailand and in subsequent meetings to discuss alternative strategies of development.

Also discussed was the establishment of a ‘Khmer Leu Association’. This idea had long been a goal of many diverse stakeholders. During the February/March 1996 seminar, it had been broached but Ngy Chanphal, Secretary of State at the Ministry of Rural Development, had vetoed the idea, saying that it was tantamount to a ‘state within a state’. Others were more supportive of the idea, but only on the condition that it would be formed and controlled by Bou Thang. RMPR held discussions with Bou Thang about the issue and found that he had already drafted statutes for a ‘Khmer Leu Development Association’. The Association has the following goals:

1. To build ideas of solidarity and unity to support and implement the policy of the Royal Government to develop society in mountainous areas;
2. to preserve and protect the culture, custom and traditions of the ethnic minorities;
3. to manage and preserve the natural resources and also to develop the potential of the environment at the same time as protect the valuable heritage we have received from our ancestors;
4. to propagandize and educate the ethnic minorities to improve their agricultural productions, handicrafts, trades and animal husbandry for long term objectives and to establish family economies which are based on agriculture, in order to develop rural areas;
5. all activities of the Association are to facilitate the development of the agricultural sector in order to develop mountainous society; and
6. the Association should implement concrete projects in order to develop society in mountainous areas.⁹

Given the nature of politics in Cambodia, one naturally suspects ulterior motives in the establishment of such a body. Regardless, organizations such as these are necessary for the self-empowerment of ethnic Highlanders. The IMC, in a 13 March 1997 version of the Highland Peoples Development Policy Document, suggests as one of its strategies for development, the establishment of such an institution.¹⁰ Unfortunately, the political events of 1997/1998 prevented Bou Thang and others from moving forward with this very important initiative. Most recently, there has been renewed activity in regard to the formation of a Highland Association. The Indigenous Women’s Network, a local women’s mutual support group, has expressed interest in providing outside support. In its revised form, Bou Thang would be Honorary President and other, more locally based Highlanders, would take a more active role. Activities would initially be centered in Ratanakiri.

In January of 1996 IDRC/RMPR coordinated a briefing in Phnom Penh for Justice Michael Kirby, Special Representative of the UN Secretary General for Human Rights in Cambodia, prior to his

visit to Ratanakiri. Justice Kirby highlighted the precarious situation of the Chunchiets, especially concerning their unclear nationality status and lack of land tenure.11

During RMPR’s year of operation the twinning of the International School of Phnom Penh with the Yeak Laom Primary School was discussed and planned. As proposed “the twinning of the schools will enable both the Highlander children and the children from the International Community to exchange information about each others cultures and daily life. Among the objectives was the development of curriculum, which will heighten student awareness of environmental issues, and its effects on the livelihoods of the Highlanders in Yeak Laom Commune. The overall goal of the proposed project was for students at the Yeak Laom Primary School to graduate from Som Dach O Som Dach Mere High School and take an active role in local government decision making in the future. Also, to broaden and enhance the environmental education of students at all three schools, as children from different social and economic backgrounds work and learn together.12

In December 1996, IDRC entered into agreement with CARERE to carry out three sub-projects, including:

- the examination of the socio-economic patterns of swidden agriculture in response to change in Ratanakiri, emphasizing the interaction of market and non-market commodity flows. This work also identified opportunities to enhance women's participation in the resource use and management system (Sub-Project 9604)13
- the examination of the technical, economic, environmental and cultural feasibility of rehabilitating irrigation structures in Ratanakiri (Sub-Project 9605)14
- a regional resource assessment of Northeast Cambodia to identify possible development path scenarios (Sub-Project 9612)15

Other related activities either carried out directly or collaboratively by IDRC/RMPR included:

- preliminary cultural surveys conducted throughout the province to document Highland Peoples’ handicraft traditions16
- an analysis was carried out regarding current information available and future needs for the development planning process in Ratanakiri17
- agricultural development activities including agricultural training and preparation of training material and establishment of agricultural trials18

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12 See-Twinning of the International School of Phnom Penh with the Yeak Laom Primary School and Som Dach O Som Dach Mere High School Ratanakiri, as proposed by Caroline McCausland. Unfortunately, this project was a causality of the July 1997 fighting. Enrollment at ISPP dipped and so did its capacity to fund this enrichment program.
15 See-Natural Resource of Northeast Cambodia, Noelle O’Brien, Kao Por, Ham Kim Kong and Han Poumin, IDRC, February 1997.
• reports and information relevant to promoting sustainable resource management in Ratanakiri were prepared and disseminated\(^{19}\)
• a study on the solid waste management system in Banlung, Ratanakiri was undertaken\(^{20}\)
• mapping customary land use patterns using aerial photographic interpretations\(^{21}\)
• an economic analysis of Non Timber Forest Products (NTFPs) use was conducted\(^{22}\)
• assisted in the translation and dissemination of a report detailing the effects of a proposed oil palm plantation development on indigenous communities\(^{23}\)

\(^{20}\) See-Solid Waste Management in Ban Lung, Ratanakiri, Thomas L. DeArth, Environmental Engineer, January 1997.
\(^{21}\) See-Customary Land Use of Kreung Ethnic Minorities, Jefferson Fox, IDRC/NTFP/East/West Center. 1996
\(^{22}\) See-An Economic Analysis of Tropical Forest Land Use Options, Ratanakiri Province, Cambodia, Camille Bann, Economy and Environment Program for Southeast Asia (EEPSEA) and IDRC, June 1997.
\(^{23}\) See-Effects of Oil Palm Development on Indigenous Communities, NTFP, Sara Colm, 1996.
PART II

3.0 THE STUDY SITE: YEAK LAOM COMMUNE PROTECTED AREA

Situated in Northeast Cambodia, on the left bank of the Mekong River, the province of Ratanakiri is bounded on the north by the border of Laos and to the east by that of Vietnam. Two important rivers, the Se San and the Srepok, cross from east to west. They are separated by a vast basaltic plateau whose average height is around 300 meters. In spite of its moderate altitude, this central region differs in every physical characteristic from the sedimentary plains that surround it. The abrupt change in height seen in approaching the plateau gives this latter a mountainous appearance that contrasts to the uniformity of the low surrounding plains. Contrast between the two types of vegetation is no less striking: the luxury of the dense and semi-dense forests of the high region contrasts clearly with the sparseness of the open forest that extends almost everywhere on the plain.

Human settlement differs considerably, according to the region. With the exception of the riverbanks, the zones of the plains are sparsely populated, the land is not very fertile, and many of the small streams are dry for several months of the year. In contrast, the plateau holds the majority of the indigenous populations inhabiting the province, ethnic minorities that the Cambodians refer to generically by the expression Khmer Leu, that is to say, Khmer from the highlands. Another, more local term, is Chunchiet or ethnic nationality.

Traditional indigenous population settlement has begun to change in recent times. An administrative plan was established for Ratanakiri Province in 1959, delineating it as the 16th province of Cambodia. This territory of 10,782 square kilometers was separated from Stung Treng Province by a decision of the Cambodian government, which made it a distinct khet or province and placed under military authority.
From 1959, efforts were made to develop this region, most notably by the creation of a rubber plantation (King Sihanouk State Plantation) on the plateau. This creation was to profoundly change the region’s economy. Today coffee has replaced rubber as the favored cash crop.

3.1 History
“The Provincial capital was Andong Pich, close to the present day provincial capital of Banlung. It was in this period that the recreational potential of Yeak Laom Lake was first realized. A journal of the period describes the Yeak Laom area as ‘À 400 mètres d’altitude, bénéficiant d’une climat agréable et d’une absence à près complète de moustiques, ce site a une incontestable vocation touristique’. King Sihanouk had a chalet built at the shores of the lake, as well as a road around the lake and rest houses.”

The chalet and these initial infrastructure developments were destroyed by bombing during the 1970 war between the Khmer Rouge and Lon Nol forces. The villagers were relocated to the communal villages at Labang (now in Lomphat District).

After the Khmer Rouge Regime, the people came slowly to settle in their present positions. Between 1981 to 1983, people from north of the Sesan River, who had fled to Laos and Vietnam during the war, were relocated. In those years they were temporarily housed in the Yeak Laom area. In that time there was a large amount of forest clearance for agriculture, and soldiers were responsible for some logging. To this day there are remains of the soldier’s trenches and gun placements around the lake.

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25 See-Prince Sihanouk a Stung Treng et Ratanakiri: Cambodge DÀujourd’hui, NO. 5, Mai 1960.
27 See-Yeak Laom Protected Area Management: The First Steps, Dominic Taylor-Hunt and By Seng Leang, IDRC, June 1997.
3.2 Cultural Significance

"Yeak Laom Lake is an historic and cultural site of the people living in the Northeast. It is a sacred place that we have to protect and any kind of development must respect the culture of the Highlanders and conserve the natural qualities, such as water and forest."28

*Khmer Leu Women at Yeak Laom Lake – circa 1960’s*

The Minister of Environment is not the only person to recognize the special spiritual quality of Yeak Laom. Frederic Boudier, in his ‘Report of a Research Mission on the Theme of Environment in Cambodia’, writes: “The basaltic plateau results from two phases of volcanic flow (J. Fontanel, in Ratanakiri etude du milieu naturel. Grenoble. 1967, page 83 sp.) The first, of Hawaiian type, characterized by fluid lava without explosion or projection, has yielded flows more than a dozen meters in thickness over nearly 200,000 hectares. They are visible primarily in the west, where they accumulate at the foot of granite and granodiorite reliefs. In several places, notably on the road to Taveng District, they crop out under large bare flagstones, rough and cracked. The second more recent phase is characterized by explosive flows of the strombolian and vulcanian type, evidenced by the presence of rhyolitic tuffs dating from the quaternary, thus creating two shapes of original construction: simple cones (more than one hundred, according to Jean Fontanel), and vast fields of scoria. Some of these cones have craters, more or less broad, indeed, even of caldera, of which the most typical is that of Yeak Laom – located east of Banlung – having given birth to a magnificent lake 800 meters in diameter, more than 50 meters in depth, and presenting an almost perfectly round circular shape. These remarkable elements of the plateau’s relief have drawn the attention of the aborigines, since most of the mountains and other clearly demarcated hill forms, have become sacred places, and homes of the spirits of land, waters and forest. These “geosymbols”, considered as points of privileged encounter between the celestial world populated by supernatural entities and the world of humans are, indeed, places not only inhabited by man but also privileged places that protect or at least delimit anthropogenic activity. The low foothills of these mountains are not always spared, and are subjected to the human action of temporary clearing and cropping. Agricultural use of the periphery of the mountain becomes a means by which the society of men comes closer to the superior spirits, while showing their allegiance by becoming ‘guardians’ and ‘masters’ of the location in order to obtain, in return, good harvests, thanks to the spirit’s

28 Mok Mareth, Minister of Environment, as quoted in the Phnom Penh Post, February 23 – March 7, 1996, page 12.
benevolence. The lake of Yeak Laom carries a rich mythology, evoking its genesis and history, and describing the fabulous aquatic beings that live there. It is said that no permanent structures can be established on its banks, just as the surrounding forests cannot be cut because they are the privileged home of the spirits. Populations that neighbor the lake have similarly elaborated a code aimed at preserving fish resources for daily familial subsistence by prohibiting any type of speculative fishing.⁹⁹ These codes have been increasingly ignored in recent years.

These two young boys are from Bunlung Town. They were observed placing their fishing poles about every 50 meters or so along the banks of the lake. They then returned to retrieve them and their catch. They fared well, although the size of the fish in the lake is small. Committee members informed them that only the local community had fishing rights and then let them take the fish home to their families.

3.3 Map of Cambodia

![Map of Cambodia with Ratanakiri Province highlighted]
3.4 Map of Ratanakiri Province

RATANAKIRI PROVINCE
Yeak Laom Lake

Yeak Laom Lake
3.5 Map of Banlung District:

Banlung (Provincial Town)
RATANAKIRI Province

Srok O’Chum

Yeak Laom
Lake

Srok Lumhat

Srok Kon Murn.

Ph3

Ph2

Ph4

Ph1

Phnom

Lape

Gol

Lon

Chet

Katoeng

Chorn Thom

Srok Bar Keo
3.6 Present Day Land Area and Use

[Map of Yeak Laom showing land use categories such as forest, agriculture, settlements, roads, and rivers.]

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Yeak Laom Lake looking west. Although in most areas there is still some good mature growth of trees surrounding the lake, the area to the east was logged during the 1980s. Efforts have been made by the Province to reforest this area, with some success.

The Core Zone of the Protected Area is approximately 300 hectares.

Chree Village is in the background and back further still, the population center of Banlung Town.

The hilly area in the distance is Preah Chol Nipean, one of the other Provincial Protected Areas. It is 536 hectares in area.
3.7 Core Zone Map

Yeak Laom Lake

Crest of Crater Rim
Nature Trail
Core Zone Boundary
Chamcars

Culture and Environmental Centre

Old Road

N

Lipo

National Route 19

Low Village

Car Park
Lapoe and Soel Villages located on Route 19, looking east. The Commune has approximately 1500 residents.

Chree Village looking west. The village is situated between the growing urban center of Banlung and Yeak Laom Lake.

Lon Village is situated on either side of the Yeak Laom Lake access road, from Route 19.

Phnom Village is located in the east of the Commune. Outsiders are increasingly committing village land to commercial agriculture.
3.8 Provincial Protected Area Declaration

In October 1995, Governor Kep Chuk Tema, issued a Provincial Decree creating and establishing a Provincial Protected Area System. The decree originally covered eleven sites (another was later added), including Yeak Laom. (See Annex 14.2).

The actual legal standing of the provincial decree is open to interpretation, as there is at present no national legislation or legal instrument that would allow for the creation, establishment or management of provincial protected areas. Until they are recognized as such by the central government, including the Ministries of Interior and Agriculture and one would assume, the Ministry of Environment as well, their legal status remains in doubt.

A.F. Prins, in his July 1997 report, on Environmental Land and Natural Resource Management/Ratanakiri Province, highlighted some of then present problems associated with the development and management of the Provincial Protected Area System and in particular, Yeak Laom. He pointed out that the single greatest area of dispute has been defining the purpose of the Yeak Laom Protected Area. He highlighted the conflict between development for tourism and recreation and preservation of the site for its cultural and environmental heritage for the benefit of the local Tampuan community. Points of conflict included:

- The boundary issue and whether or not the protected area includes the totality of the commune or just the core zone of the crater lake
- Lack of sustainability for administration and management
- The lack of community participation

Some of these problems have been resolved or just neatly contained. When consensus could not be reached about whether or not the protected area included the entire commune or just the core zone, it was decided to table the issue and concentrate instead on the core zone, where consensus among all the stakeholders could be reached.

With the willingness of the Province to devolve responsibility to the local community, their participation grew as well as their capacity to administer and manage the area. Today, they are highly motivated to increase their ability to control and manage the area. However, the issue of sustainability for administration and management is not yet resolved.

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As to the legality of the provincial decree, there is de facto recognition of its legitimacy, at least at Yeak Laom. On the provincial level there is good community-wide acceptance of the present situation, as long as the local Tampuan community continues to demonstrate its ability to manage the area. The long string of high profile visitors has also consolidated the situation, where the Governor has highlighted the local administration of the area as an example of community-based natural resource management. With the signing of the 25-year lease, (see Annex 11.4) the legality or non-legality of the protected area decree becomes less important, with the lease itself as the most defining legal document. That too, will need to be approved by the central government ministries, but because of the Governor’s close working relationship with those who would be making such a decision, the legality of the lease has a good likelihood to eventually be affirmed.

As for the rest of the Provincial Protected Area system, the other areas continue to suffer from lack of management and care and in some cases, have reportedly been logged.

3.9 Eco-Tourism Development Potential
There have been two papers written about Ratanakiri’s potential for eco-tourism development. Ronald Renard, in a paper presented at the Seminar on Sustainable Development in Northeast Cambodia32, tracks tourism development in Thailand and its successes and pitfalls. He contends that ‘tourism is coming to Ratanakiri as surely as development is and the market economy”. It is only a matter of time and magnitude. A number of tourist agencies have scouted out Ratanakiri as a new tourist site, but to date, only a few organized tours have taken place. Local observers doubt that there will ever be a large number of tourists visiting Ratanakiri, although a substantial number of backpackers may find there way there.

Michael Barton, in paper written in 199633, explores the twin issues of ‘authenticity' and ‘tradition' as they pertain to the eco-tourist market. He argues that Ratanakiri’s Highland communities have already lost much of their ‘authenticity' through years of war and through assimilation into the predominant Khmer culture. Furthermore, the ecological value of Ratanakiri is being destroyed by the continued logging of its standing forests.

Nevertheless, both authors feel that Ratanakiri will see a substantial number of visitors by the beginning of the new century. They both also see the Yeak Laom Lake Area as a catalyst for that development. Both also argue for as much community involvement in that development as is possible, so that local Highland communities benefit from the tourist visitors. This issue is most germane as commonly tourism benefits only the larger companies, such as airlines, hotels, restaurants, etc., and little of the tourist generated revenue benefits local communities.

In a paper about promoting community-based tourism development in Namibia, the authors assess different approaches to community-based tourism, in order to evaluate the extent to which they can contribute to economic growth, improve welfare and equity, empower local people and improve resource conservation. It analyzes three types of up-market lodges and compares them to

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enterprises run entirely by local communities, such as campsites and crafts (Community-Based Tourism Development) (CBTD).

“Economic, financial and social analysis indicates that any enterprise will boost local jobs and growth, but a revenue-sharing mechanism will do more to enhance welfare, and a joint venture can achieve much greater increases in community income, skills and empowerment. A community venture can generate similar benefits to a joint venture enterprise, but on a smaller scale. A joint venture lodge is also most likely to improve local resource conservation by providing significant, widely distributed and resource-related benefits, while also strengthening community institutions and responsibilities. However, community enterprises and revenue-sharing enterprises can also have some effect.

The analysis shows that cash earnings can be significant in the context of poor rural communities, but it also stresses the importance of non-cash benefits, particularly the extent to which a community can control tourist development in their area and the terms of their interaction with tourists. However, there are several factors constraining the financial and institutional viability of enterprises that involve communities. Such enterprises will be more feasible if local skills and institutions are enhanced, if communities have rights over wildlife and other valuable resources, and if mechanisms for information, training and planning are established.

The authors recommend five key areas for policy action:

1. establish community rights over resources and revenues;
2. adapt financial and legal regulations to facilitate, not constrain, CBTD;
3. promote information, awareness and communication;
4. develop the eco-tourism market; and
5. develop institutions, mechanisms and skills.”

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PART III
4.0 FROM POLICY MAKING TO ACTION RESEARCH AT YEAK LAOM LAKE

“The general purpose of the IDRC RMPR (Resource Management Policy - Ratanakiri Project) was to support the choice of a sustainable development path by stakeholders in Northeast Cambodia, through applied research on key issues as identified by those stakeholders, and through the building of capacity in local institutions, at the Provincial and Commune levels, to participate in the research process.”

For IDRC’s part, the resource management debate was about local peoples' participation in the development of environmentally sustainable natural resource management, which includes land and resource tenure issues. The political nature of this work was established during the seminar, - ‘Sustainable Development in Northeast Cambodia’. Prime Ministers and local villagers expressed their opinions publicly to each other, probably for the first time. IDRC”s involvement in Yeak Laom ‘Protected Area’ came out of this discussion about how to devolve management responsibility to local communities.

From left to right: Tranuth Sean-Director of Provincial Department of Tourism, Ken Riebe-RMPR Program Manager, Bou Thang-MP/Ratanakiri Province, Prime Minister Hun Sen, Governor Kep Chuktema and Andrew McNaughton, Senior Resident Program Officer/IDRC-Cambodia.

35 See-Resource Management Policy, Ratanakiri (Cambodia) project proposal.
4.1 IDRC/RMPR at Yeak Laom Lake – Phase I continued

1 March 1997, the day for which IDRC has been working toward for the last five months, arrives. Hun Sen, Second Prime Minister, with a massive entourage including Bou Thang, Teng Bun Ma and other dignitaries, visits Ratanakiri and goes to Yeak Laom Commune where he has built a school. After inaugurating the school he pays a special visit to the Lake where he walks along the path all the way to the Environment and Cultural Centre. Along the way, IDRC has a chance to describe what they had done and explain the importance of community based natural resource management for the long-term sustainability of the Northeast's environment. Hun Sen views the handicrafts, plays the gongs and, as he stands on the pier looking out over the lake, he promises, that as the most powerful person in Cambodia, he will protect the lake and its surrounding environment forever.36

Others have already documented the activities and time consuming effort that was put forth to enable IDRC to play host to the Second Prime Minister.37 That it detracted from research activities and was with little input from the local community was evident. On the other hand, it created a venue for discussion and dialogue, where CBNRM could be described and promoted. Hun Sen's visit commenced a steady stream of high profile visitors. Since then, visitors have included Ung Huot (First Prime Minister), Sar Kheng (Co-Minister of Interior and Deputy Prime Minister), Chea Sim (Chairperson of the National Assembly and President of the Cambodian Peoples Party), Nhim Vanda (Chair of Social Fund Secretariat), Kong Vibol (Chief of Cabinet of HRH, the King), Mok Mareth (Minister of Environment) and Sam Rainsy (a major opposition leader).

PHOTO: Andrew McNaughton, Senior Resident Program Officer/IDRC-Cambodia, describes IDRC RMPR activities to Prime Minister Hun Sen.

The Prime Minister's visit marked the opening of the Environmental and Cultural Centre and gave de facto recognition of the Yeak Loam Protected Area.

36 This consultant’s personal observation.
   -Yeak Laom Protected Area Management: The First Steps, Dominic Taylor-Hunt and By Seng Leang, IDRC, June 1997.
5.0 TRANSITION FROM RMPR TO IDRC/CARERE

The exertion put forth to host Hun Sen laid the foundation for IDRC’s next phase of work. An IDRC planning exercise, held at Yeak Laom Lake in January 1997, developed a list of future activities:

1. Continue the development of Yeak Laom Commune as a model for Protected Areas and Community Management in the region, including
   - Community management planning
   - Environmental awareness education
   - Developing the Yeak Laom Environmental and Cultural Centre as a focus for research and local capacity building

2. Security of Community Access to Natural Resources, including
   - Documenting current land and resource uses
   - Strengthening legal recognition of traditional land and resource rights
   - Tenure rights information dissemination

3. Strengthening Resource Use Decision Making, including
   - Research capacity building within Highland communities and government
   - Awareness raising of the links between natural resource use, environment and culture
   - Developing systems to enable the participation of Highland communities in land use decision making
   - Investigating economic strategies that minimize negative impacts on the natural resource base

Soon thereafter, both IDRC and CARERE felt a need to cooperate more closely:
   - IDRC reached a funding limit for being able to continue operating the “Yeak Laom Commune” Project, let alone replicate successful experiences in other communes, and
   - the CARERE support to local level planning was expanding to cover the entire Yeak Laom Commune by mid 1997, at the same time supporting local level planning in 10 other communes in the province, yet experiencing financial limitations in fielding all necessary technical expertise.

Matching of resources, and a sharing of institutional infrastructure to support activities had become opportune, and the CARERE and IDRC teams started working on a proposal to focus and integrate IDRC activities into the CARERE program, enriching and complementing the program, especially with regard to natural resources management, as well enabling in depth monitoring of the overall participatory development experience.

IDRC/CARERE Community-Based Natural Resource Management (NRM) Planning and Protected Area Management Pilot Project Objective:

‘To assist the populations of local communities in Ratanakiri Province (and especially those in selected CARERE target communes, including Yeak Laom Commune), as part of the

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PRDC/SEILA participatory development effort, to develop and implement models for community-based natural resources and protected area management.  

Following a decision made in March, IDRC/RMPR Ratanakiri administrative offices closed at the end of June and staff numbers were reduced. Remaining IDRC/RMPR staff moved into CARERE. Financial support was kept to a minimum, in response to funding shortages and final completion of a Memorandum of Grant Conditions between IDRC and UNOPS/UNDP. Staff who had been working at the Lake, including representatives from the Departments of Environment, Culture, Tourism and Agriculture, as well as Commune ‘representatives’ (Commune Chief, District Representative), completed their contracts. The Ministry of Environment, Department of Nature Conservation and Protection representative also returned to Phnom Penh.

This reduction in staffing and support proved to be blessing in disguise. Where RMPR had had many expatriate technical advisors and was dependent upon Provincial Departments for staffing at the Lake, there now was opportunity for the program to become ‘community based’. The adage, ‘less is better’, is particularly apt here.

6.0 IDRC/CARERE PHASE II

6.1 Activities
In July a key decision was made. Contingent upon the continued support of IDRC/CARERE, the Provincial Committee agreed to a plan whereby security became the sole responsibility of the Commune, with only one representative from the Banlung District Police, he a Tampuan from one of Yeak Laom Commune’s villages. Keys for the Environmental and Cultural Center, heretofore held by IDRC expatriate staff, were given to community representatives. In August, the first meeting of Yeak Laom’s new community-based staff, including fourteen men and six women was held. Early in September, Provincial Department personnel who had worked at Yeak Laom earlier returned for short-term assignments, to begin training the new staff.

On September 15, elections were held to elect a Commune Lake Management Committee, one each from each of the commune’s five villages, plus one extra woman. Committee positions (Chairman,  

Vice-Chair, Treasurer, Secretary, etc.) were designated and responsibilities and term of office (two years) decided. (See Draft Statutes – Annex 14.5). The next day they were introduced to the Provincial Yeak Laom Committee, as headed by the Governor.

By the end of September, management of the Core Zone of the Yeak Laom Commune Protected Area was firmly under the authority of the Commune Lake Management Committee.

October 1997 was generally cloudless with vibrant blue skies. The early rice harvest was looking satisfactory and the new Yeak Laom Commune Protected Area Conservation and Recreation Committee and staff were busy making money. Over a seven day, Prachum Ben\(^\text{40}\) Holiday period they collected over 500,000 Riels from holiday visitors enjoying the peace, pristine beauty and recreation facilities available at Yeak Laom Lake.

\(^\text{40}\) Prachum Ben is annually celebrated by Cambodians to honor their ancestors. It, along with Chinese New Year and Khmer New Year, is one of the busiest times of the year for visitors to the lake.
Over the next eight months the Committee and staff, with IDRC/CARERE support, carried out a number of activities including:

Natural Resource Management
- The boundary of the core zone of the Yeak Laom Protected Area was delineated and arrangements made for compensation to the affected families
- The Rules and Regulations of the core zone were agreed to by all stakeholders
- A Community Forestry Agreement has been drafted and is pending approval by Provincial Authorities.
- A sanitary waste system for the Core Zone was designed, constructed and implemented by the Committee, with technical assistance from the Department of Environment.

6.2 Achievements

Capacity Building
- Committee and staff have been trained in reporting by a number of trainers including the Provincial Departments of Environment, Tourism, Culture and IDRC/CARERE Technical Advisors.
- The Committee has hosted a Natural Resources Workshop at the Environmental and Cultural Centre as well as other workshops and numerous delegations from IO/NGOs, community groups and dignitaries.
- The Committee regularly reports to the Chief of the Commune Development Committee, who then transmits this report to District and Provincial authorities.
- The Committee has successfully developed and submitted a Commune Development Project for submission to the Commune Development Committee.
- ‘Popular Education’ classes, for community members, were organized and taught at the Cultural and Environmental Centre in collaboration with the Department of Culture.

Local delegation visiting Yeak Laom enjoy an impromptu jam session
Income Generation

- Picnic and recreation areas and facilities were upgraded.
- Income generation activities are on-going, including collection for parking admittance fees, Center admittance and rental, vendor fees, inner tube rentals, aluminum can collection

Recycled cans gain some extra income at 4 cans/100 riels

- A handicraft sales area was planned, constructed and blessed in the traditional Tampuan manner and sales are on-going and involving members of the larger community who pay commission fees to the Committee for the right to sell their handicrafts within the core zone.

Handicraft sales are brisk, with sodas and water as well

- Special events including elephant rides, Prachum Ben, Chinese New Year and Khmer New Year, were planned and staged
- The Committee developed its capacity to make their own receipts and have an officially recognized seal for all its documents
- The Committee reorganized security concerning the building and grounds
- The Committee successfully ended the first fiscal year (31 May) with revenue collection/generation equal to US$497, which is being held in trust by IDRC/CARERE
- The Committee developed a yearly budget covering Committee/staff salaries, costs for
maintenance and operational expenses

7.0 IDRC/CAREERE Phase III (Sub-Project CAREERE/RAT/ENV 9803)

In June 1998, a CAREERE funded Sub-Project with funding totaling US$60,217.40 commenced. The planned goal/objective is to develop the Yeak Laom Conservation and Recreation Committee's capacity to responsibly administer the Core Zone of the Yeak Laom Protected Area including income generation, financial planning and accounting, community-based natural resource management and eco/cultural education activities.

Objective No. 1 is to support the Yeak Laom Conservation and Recreation Committee to develop and implement, with active community participation, a natural resource management and use plan for the Core Zone of the Protected Area that will be part of the Provincial Environment Sector Plan and the overall Provincial Development Plan.

Outputs to achieve this objective are:

- a long term management lease agreement
- community members will have an increased awareness about the inter-relationship between the eco and the livelihood systems and how to sustainably utilize the natural resources of the Core Zone
- the Management Committee will have the capacity to develop and implement, with active community participation, an eco/cultural education program for the Core Zone of the Protected Area, with participation of and tangible benefits for local communities

Objective No. 2 is to develop the management and financial planning capacity of the Yeak Laom Conservation and Recreation Committee. They should be able to support Committee and staff salaries as well as the maintenance of buildings and grounds and other customary costs related to the operation and management of the Core Zone of the Protected Area. Any excess monies would be contributed to a Commune Development Fund.

Outputs to achieve this objective are:

- the Management Committee is able to generate enough income to pay for all costs to administer and operate the Core Zone of the Protected Area as well as contribute to a Commune Development Fund.
- the Committee will be able to prepare management and financial reports

In support of the Sub-Project, a UNV Fieldworker has been hired. To date, Expatriate support has been limited to part-time technical assistance.
In August 1998, a long-term (25 year) contract was signed by provincial authorities giving Yeak Laom Commune management rights over their traditional lands. (See Annex 11.4)

Collaboration with IMC has continued, though on a very limited basis, with other agencies like the Highland Peoples Program providing more direct assistance. The Yeak Laom Lake venue has continued to receive a host of visitors, including the current UN Special Representative of the Secretary General for Human Rights in Cambodia, Thomas Hammarberg and the newly appointed Minister of Rural Development, Chhim Siek Leng. CBNRM has continued to be promoted. The Governor and other Provincial officials have taken an increasingly active role in the national policy debate. The Province now recognizes the project as being part of the overall Natural Resource Management Plan of local communities.

The understanding of the larger community of importance of Yeak Laom as a community project is growing. Community participation has increased. Management capacity is maturing, as training continues. There has been progress in financial sustainability, with new income generation activities promoted. The Lake Committee undertook a Study Tour to the lowlands to visit protected Areas (Kirirom and Ream National Parks) and other tourist sites. Cultural activities have been carried out, including the establishment of a Community Weaving Center, located just outside the crater rim, but still inside the Core Zone. Infrastructure for further income generation has been installed, including solar panels at the Centre. Committee and staff training have been continued.

Although there have been many activities, participation continues to be dependent upon a financial reward (salary). There has been, to date, less collaboration within the CBNRM Sector as each group focuses on his own sub-projects. Some important issues have been discussed, but not taken forward. These include official recognition from relevant Phnom Penh Ministries concerning the Protected Area Declaration and the Core Zone Management Lease. The issue of the continuing presence of the Brick Factory in the Core Zone has been raised, but no plan has yet been officially put forward for discussion. Although, all the stakeholders have agreed about where the Core Zone boundary goes, the actual delineation and demarcation has not yet taken place. The control of the water resource within the Lake has been raised, but the Rules and
Regulations do not cover this issue officially. The project continues to be under pressure to reach financial sustainability.
PART IV
8.0 ANALYSIS OF ISSUES AND STAKEHOLDERS

8.1 Identification of stakeholders and their roles
There are many diverse stakeholders concerned about Yeak Laom Lake and its surrounding Protected Area. They include the local population of Ethnic Tampuan Highlanders, local Cambodians who have obtained land within Yeak Laom Commune, Provincial officials and the Phnom Penh Government. One could also include domestic and international tourists who visit the lake and the IO/NGO’s working in Ratanakiri.

For the local Tampuans, the lake area is a venerable site and a tangible symbol of their history and culture. It is also a major collection area for bamboo and other non-timber forest products. Unfortunately, they are not the only users, with other Chunchiets and Khmer from Banlung Town also harvesting within the Core Zone.

For the local Cambodians who possess land within the commune, the Protected Area status of the commune can be viewed as an impediment to the development of their holdings, with the zones and accompanying rules and regulations hindering, but not stopping the way they use their land for income generation. For some, the rules may impede their access to water and other natural resources within the Core Zone.

Provincial officials are united about the need to conserve and protect the Core Zone of the Protected Area, but may be divided about who should control the Core Zone and who should receive the benefits from it. The Governor’s guiding vision of a community-based program at Yeak Laom often seemed to conflict with the local view of how best to care for the lake area.

For Phnom Penh, the lake and the control of it has been a non-issue, with consensus that it should be conserved for the all the masses to enjoy. What is now at issue is the long-term lease issued by the Governor. It is unlikely that Phnom Penh will officially recognize its validity. Most likely the issue of the validity of that lease will remain with the province. How long there is a political will to allow local people to control such a site remains to be seen.
For the IO/NGO’s working with local communities in Ratanakiri, the lake and its management has become one of the symbolic struggles for recognition of local community land tenure. There is a strong will to continue to support the local community’s efforts at effectively managing the site.

Tourist visitors at Yeak Laom can be divided into domestic and international. For some domestic visitors the lake is simply a picnic area, to which they expect access at a cheap and reasonable rate, with a clean and orderly environment. Others however, recognize its historical and cultural importance. It is a symbol of Ratanakiri for all Cambodians. For many locals, Yeak Laom is also a place to cut bamboo and other NTFPs. They may be opposed to any local management control of these resources.

For most international tourist/visitors the lake area is a pristine example of Cambodia’s natural environment, which is rapidly disappearing. To conserve that environment as well as continue the recognition of local community ownership is most important.

8.2 Provincial Committee vs. Local Committee Management Rights Recognized
The devolution of management rights of the lake to the local committee was a major step in the recognition of community-based natural resource management and community land tenure. Again, the Governor can be credited with this decision. Against some local opposition, he allowed the formation and election of the local management committee. He was able to do this because of the continued support from IDRC/CAREERE, without which such a move would have been impossible.

It is important to recognize the precariousness of that decision. Continued outside support for the Committee for some time into the future will be needed until they have the capacity to effectively administer and manage the area. With the upcoming change in provincial administration it remains to be seen how much political will there is for local community management.

8.3 Rules and Regulations
The rules and regulations were written in consultation with both the local community and provincial authorities. The Province wanted to protect the area for tourism development and thought little about how the rules and regulations would affect future access to the area’s natural resources. For the local community, little has changed. Rules and regulations designate that the local community has continued access to the area’s natural resources. Only those farmers who had chamcars (fields) inside the Core Zone have really been affected.

The real test will come in the future, when the natural resources in the surrounding area are depleted and there is more agricultural development in the buffer zone around the lake. Then the water and other natural resources within the Core Zone will be under threat.
8.4 Core Zone Compensation - Farmers/Brick Factory

As a result of the Core Zone declaration, five local farmers who had chamcars within the Core Zone agreed to move out, if compensated. IDRC/CARERE did just that, providing each farmer with 100,000 Riel to help cover the costs of moving and cutting a new chamcar outside of the Core Zone. All former chamcar owners retain the right to harvest the fruit trees they have planted and cared for.

Still remaining within the Core Zone is the Brick Factory. According to the owner, the land was bought 4-5 years ago for US$1000, from who, it is unclear. Regardless, a land title deed was issued and signed by the Second Vice Governor, Bun Hom Om Many.

The employment generated by the Brick Factory is considerable. It employs approximately 20 people. Of the twenty, sixteen are Chunchiets from the surrounding area. Those working full-time are paid 90,000 Riels per month. In addition, they get three meals a day and assistance with minor health needs. Six of the twenty are women. The owner says they usually work 1-2 weeks and then leave with their earnings. When they are in need of cash again, they return.

The owner says she is willing to move, if given compensation for her original investment. Clearly, there is precedence for such a procedure, but where the money necessary to compensate her (USD1000) would come from is unclear.

What is clear is that a plan for its relocation must be adopted, even if it takes 4-5 years. At present, the brick factory continues to expand its operations yearly, literally cutting into the Core Zone. If local community management can be guaranteed, there is interest by the local committee in putting aside $200 yearly in order that within five years, the local community can obtain the land of the brick factory.

8.5 Management Contract

The Contract (see Annex 11.4) provides for the local administration and management of the Core Zone by Yeak Laom Commune. Its signing was promoted by IDRC/CARERE as an integral part of new funding for the lake. It gives 25-year tenure to the local community, provided that they administer and manage the area effectively. That effectiveness will be reviewed annually by a review committee composed of local community members, IO/NGOs, Provincial Departments and outside evaluators.

8.6 Future Issues:

8.6.1 Water

The area in the buffer zone surrounding the Yeak Laom Lake Core Zone is primarily agricultural. Already there are large commercial agriculture farms. This trend is evident in other parts of the province and even in other parts of the commune. Large areas of land are being obtained by outsiders for commercial agriculture crops such as coffee, cashew nuts, pepper, sesame, etc. As the area around the lake becomes so developed the pressure to utilize the water of Yeak Laom Lake will increase.
8.6.2 Wood
The trees within the Core Zone are protected by the Rules and Regulations and in reality there remain few large commercially valuable trees yet to cut. There appears to be consensus from all stakeholders to protect them. However, as other areas are depleted, these trees may come under pressure. Already many other local ethnic communities are divided, with some members of the community wanting to protect their resources and other members quite willing to assist in their harvesting. It would be naive to think that Yeak Laom Commune will be an exception, especially in light of the current anarchic cutting that is occurring in Ratanakiri.

8.6.3 Bamboo
Bamboo is one of the remaining resources within the Core Zone. Although the rules and regulations call for its management and reserve the resource for the local Tampuan community, in reality many outsiders continue to harvest both the mature bamboo as well as bamboo shoots. It will be a challenge for the local community to control and manage cutting, even that by local community members. Some areas of the Core Zone are already depleted and some species no longer present. Other areas are overcrowded. Clearly a management plan is necessary, but where the will to implement such a plan will come from is unclear.

8.6.4 Commercial Development
It would be naive to think that the lake area can continue to remain as it is forever. There is a strong desire to rebuild the road around the lake, which is presently a walking path. Even the local community believes in the desirability of such a development, arguing that it will bring more visitors and increase revenue generation.

Local Cambodians from Banlung and surrounding areas see the repair of the road as a natural evolution of development as well as a way to better care for the lake area. It may even be seen as a partial restoration of the grandeur of the past.

Interest has been raised by some in locating hotels on the crest of the crater rim, looking down into the lake. While this issue is dormant at present, it may resurface if strong pressure is not continued to preserve the lake area in its present state.

8.6.5 Commune Development Fund
According to long-term planning, if and when the Lake Committee reaches a stage of sustainability, then any extra money will be contributed to a Commune Development Fund. Although it remains highly unlikely that the operation will reach a level of sustainability in the near future (see below), at least in its present incarnation, there exist strong interest on the part of the local committee to contribute to the development of the commune, now in the present. This is motivated by the desire to provide tangible benefits to the local community, so that they will support the work at the lake, which so far has benefited only a few.
9.0 SUSTAINABILITY

9.1 Financial Sustainability
The Yeak Laom Conservation and Recreation Committee has been active now for over a year, since September of 1997. During that time considerable monies have been generated and collected. However, the cost of generating that income has been considerably more than the income itself.

The tables in Annex 14.7 illustrate the Committee/Staff salary support provided by IDRC/CARERE has far exceeded the monies collected. Furthermore, an examination of the continuing costs for building and grounds maintenance and operations and management leaves little money left over for Committee/Staff salaries. Given the present structure of management and staffing it appears that financial sustainability may not be attainable unless income generation/collection increases substantially.

While much has been accomplished in terms of income generation, much of that achievement has been carried out by IDRC/CARERE advisors. Beyond a few Committee and staff, most personnel seem more interested in receiving their monthly salary than in spending time collecting revenues. In part, this can be attributed to the low level of education where many staff is unable to keep concise records of financial transactions. It can also be attributed to an attitude that the agency will pay, regardless of the amount of monies generated.

Another consideration is the amount of time villagers have available to work at the Lake. Ashish John, in a monograph analyzing the activity calendar of local communities, finds that the present work schedule is so full that there is little time to spare, even for the introduction of new activities which would directly increase food security, like pig raising. The benefits of working at Yeak Laom are still so low and long-term, that most Committee/staff have other priorities in their busy days. Most of the women who work at the lake arrive at work at 9:00-10:00 AM, after they have sold their fruits and vegetables in the Banlung market. Staff customarily leave the Lake area at around 4:00-5:00 PM, so that they can harvest vegetables to sell the next morning and to take care of families. Unfortunately, many of the local expatriates prefer the end of the day to go to the lake.

This situation also calls into question the appropriateness of traditional Highlander decision-making structures for a modern community-based market-oriented business. In traditional Highlander society, where decisions and responsibilities are shared, no one person assumes all authority. Therefore, it remains problematic that some decisions and responsibilities will not be acted upon in a timely fashion or not acted upon at all.

Furthermore, the acquisition of wealth (money, in modern-day terms) is not a traditional aspect of Highlander culture. Traditionally, those who have wealth are expected to share with those who do not, whether from inability or lack of motivation. In such a way traditional cultures have survived for centuries. This community solidarity is missing from much of Cambodia and most of the developed world.

For the Yeak Laom Committee and staff this means that salaries and revenues collected should be shared. Although there are a number of staff who do not work as they are supposed to, Committee members are very reluctant to release or even replace them.

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41 See Ashish John, UNV Veterinarian, CARERE Ratanakiri, Research Report-Draft.
A number of times, staff members have borrowed income-generated money to deal with family emergencies. Their capacity to pay back the money is recognizably negligible. Although Committee members may understand the modern market-day principle that those who work hardest get most rewarded, the traditional principle of sharing rewards with the entire group remains the strongest and is most recognized.

To teach people to be market-oriented means to teach them to be selfish, and not share the benefits with those less industrious, whether from inability or lack of motivation. Traditional culture is socialistic and has worked for centuries in its pure state. Now, with the introduction of the market economy and Western concepts of community development, this means of survival is under threat.

Finally, there is a matter of human resources. Of the 21 some Committee/Staff members there is only one or two who are capable of managing the finances in a transparent and accountable way. Others try, but simply don’t have the educational background necessary for the complicated financial dealings that are necessary.

For example: A case of soda (24 cans) costs 36,000 riels. That means each can costs 1,500 riels. If each can is sold for 2,000 riels, that means a total sale of 40,000 riels. Profit is 4,000 riels per case. If, at the end of the day (or week, or month) there remains some cans, those cans remaining must be reported as inventory and given both a cost value (1,500 riels) and sale value (2,000).

At present, there is one person who can understand and carry out this financial equation. He, a Senior Committee member, is paid 60,000 riels per month ($16.21). In comparison, a full-time manual laborer at the brick factory makes 90,000 riels per month, plus food and minor medicines. He cannot afford to spend all his time at the lake, following and reporting upon each transaction. Because he has good market-oriented skills, he is capable of making more money doing private business outside the lake area. He has other family responsibilities. There is no one else to cover this responsibility when he is not present.

It therefore becomes very problematic when trying to generate income from the purchase and resale of items, whether it be soda or handicrafts. And, if it is so problematic, it is better to not attempt to carry out a financial transaction that can’t be properly accounted for.

As in other development activities in Ratanakiri, things will take time. Motivated staff must be identified and trained. Those who are not inspired must be given the opportunity to change their attitudes and behaviors. When the community feels like it ‘owns’ the Yeak Laom Project, only then will these staff will make the necessary choice to either improve their behavior or to find alternative employment.

9.2 Institutional Sustainability
Community knowledge of, interest about and ownership of the Yeak Laom Project is growing. At present, the number of beneficiaries, direct and indirect is still small. Only some Committee members and staff are able to conceptualize the long-term benefits to the community. Within the last year, as the Committee has begun to work more closely and in concert with the Commune
Development Committee and Village Development Committees, that vision of the future benefits has begun to be shared by others.

The challenge is to keep the project viable until some of those long-term benefits are realized by the larger community. Community members must support those who have the capacity to administer and manage the project. Committee members have expressed interest in using some of the revenue generation to build wells in some villages, in an effort to provide tangible benefits to community members now, not just promising benefits in the future. In such a way, community support and participation would be increased and the long-term viability of the project enhanced.

Lake Committee and staff participate in income generation activities. Over 40% of all income earned during the last year of operation came from fees for parking motor-cycles.
PART V
10.0 SUMMARY: (See Annex 14.8)

10.1 IDRC Phase I (15 November 1995 – June 1997)
IDRC Phase I was characterized by its active role as “Lead Agency” of the “consultative group” of IO/NGOs working in Ratanakiri. The project had high-level links to influential policy makers, both in Phnom Penh and in the Northeast, especially in Ratanakiri. The Inter-Ministerial Committee on Highland Peoples Development (IMC) was directly assisted by the project. The 1996 seminar and draft national policy were direct outcomes of IDRC’s activities. Ratanakiri Province, in the person of the Governor, collaborated with IDRC, in putting CBNRM on the Provincial and National agendas. Provincial Departments including Environment, Culture, Tourism and Agriculture were assisted in building their research capacity. IDRC’s research component strongly supported Provincial Planning. Human rights, land tenure rights and indigenous organizations were promoted.

Community involvement in the project however, was limited. As activities were in their initial stages, there was not yet opportunity to extend into the Provincial counter-part structure. Within IDRC RMPR, researchers worked individualistically, following their own agendas.

Program management was based in Phnom Penh so as to influence the policy makers there. But, as a result, management was not effective in Ratanakiri.

Although community participation was limited and there was no real sustainability, it did create a more permanent venue, where community based management could be discussed, continuing the consensus building that had been started during the two international seminars. The visit of Prime Minister Hun Sen in March 1997, was the culmination of months of consensus building activities.

10.2 IDRC/CARERE Phase II (July 1997 – May 1998)
During Phase II collaboration with IMC continued occasionally, with participation in events as both speaker and attendee. The Yeak Laom Lake venue received a host of influential policy makers. CBNRM continued to be promoted by the project as well as by Provincial officials, including the Ratanakiri Governor. The management structure was strongly strengthened with Core Zone Rules and Regulations, Receipts, Official Seal and Draft Community Forestry Statutes. A long-term lease was drafted and discussed at all levels. The Core Zone boundary was delineated and agreed to by all parties.

Although staffing was limited, there was a clearer sense of direction from management and as a result many tangible outcomes were achieved. Cooperation within CBNRM was bettered. Provincial departments continued to be present in activities. Community-wide participation was limited but a strong core of commune members became involved. A Commune Lake Management Committee was elected and staffing was formalized by contracts and a review process. Committee and staff training were commenced. Reporting procedures were established. Security arrangements were revised by the Committee. Popular Education activities were held at the Centre. Revenue generation was commenced, including special events. Picnic and recreation areas were upgraded.
The Lake Committee worked with Provincial Local Planning Process (LPP) and District Facilitators
to develop a Commune Development Project Proposal, as represented by Yeak Laom Lake project.
A CARERE Sub-Project (CARERE/RAT/ENV 9803) was successfully written and approved.

Although there were many achievements, community participation continued to be dependent upon
financial rewards, and as a result, long-term sustainability was in question. Some project activities
were limited, as support staff were not available. Project links with the Commune Development
Committee, the Village Development Committees and the LPP were not well defined. Although the
Lake Committee and staff collected US$497 in the first year of operation, the project was far from
sustainable, as operations and management/administration costs exceeded the amount of money
collected/generated.

10.3 IDRC/CARERE Phase III (Sub-Project) (June 1998 – Present)
Collaboration with IMC has continued, though on a limited basis. The Yeak Laom Lake venue
has received a host of visitors. CBNRM has continued to be promoted. The Governor and other
Provincial officials have taken an increasingly active role in the policy debate. The importance
of the project is now recognized by the Province, as being part of the overall Natural Resource
Management Plan of local communities.

The understanding of the larger community of the importance of Yeak Laom as a community
project is increasing. Community participation has increased as well. There has been progress in
financial sustainability. Cultural activities have been promoted. Infrastructure for further income
generation has been installed. Committee and staff training have been continued.

Although there have been many activities, participation continues to be dependent upon a
financial reward (salary).

Support to the Committee decreased, with the Expatriate Technical Advisor available only part-
time. There has been, to date, less collaboration within the CBNRM Sector as each group
focuses on his own domain (sub-projects). Some important issues have been discussed, but
not taken forward. These include official recognition from relevant Phnom Penh Ministries
concerning the Protected Area Declaration and the Core Zone Management Lease. The issue of
the continuing presence of the Brick Factory has been raised, but no plan has yet been officially
put forward for discussion. Although, all the stakeholders have agreed about where the Core
Zone boundary goes, the actual delineation and demarcation has not yet taken place. The
control of the water resource within the Lake has been raised, but the Rules and Regulations do
not cover this issue officially. The project continues to be under pressure to prove financial
sustainability in a short time.

10.4 COMMUNE LAKE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
Even though not all the commune understands the importance of the project as a Commune
Development Project, the core group, who is strongly motivated to participate, is expanding.
Interest and motivation to learn continues to increase. An increasing number of participants are
able and ready to analyze, adapt and discuss problems.

However, local community capacity is still weak. The majority of staff and Committee have low
educational backgrounds and learning is slow and arduous. The CDC/VDCs are not yet fully aware
of the importance of Yeak Laom as Commune Development Project. The Committee has been
overwhelmed by the number of tasks before them and as a result, some important issues have not been taken forward (see above).

Regardless of these weaknesses, the situation is healthy. Lake management is in place and relatively effective. A long-term vision and basic principles for Core Zone development are under discussion. Awareness of the importance of the project is increasing. The Community is ready to prepare a management plan.

Constraints to these achievements are insufficient technical support for long periods of time and the competition with other daily work (food production and marketing) which hinders active participation by all Committee and staff.

10.5 PROGRAM/POLICY MAKING
The project has been an influential player in the formation of a sustainable development policy for Northeast Cambodia. What began as an opportunity has evolved into a permanent venue for discussions about CBNRM/Protected Area Management. The high level advocacy continues as there is a steady stream of visitors. The example of Yeak Laom has been raised nationally. The Governor of Ratanakiri has become an increasingly strong advocate for community management of natural resources, carrying the message to Phnom Penh.

Although the initial stages of the project were highly opportunistic, they planted the seeds for the development of a long-term practical strategy that has enabled many achievements.

The project has had a considerable impact on critical issues (land tenure, natural resource/protected area management) affecting indigenous people.

11.0 CONCLUSIONS:

11.1 CBNRM/IDRC/CARERE PROGRAM
There has been much discussion about the lack of clarity of this project. It has been described as opportunistic, and in the sense that new approaches needed time to solidify and practical issues to focus on, it was timely. It was born out of an agreement between the Provincial Governor and the IDRC Senior Resident Programme Officer, again emphasizing it's political focus. The Governor is an outsider with a broader worldview than some other members of the Ratanakiri political hierarchy. He believes in principles of participation, community management and land rights for local people. He needed allies with a similar viewpoint, and these he found in international development agencies. He often said in terms of resolving land issues, “If I can't do it in Yeak Laom, I can't do it anywhere”.

When the National Government gave the Macro Painin Company a 1.4 million hectare forest concession, which covered all of Ratanakiri, some creative lateral thinking was required. The Governor's solution was to declare a network of Provincial Protected Areas that would be protected from Macro Painin's chainsaws42. Yeak Loam Protected Area became one of these protected zones with a confused beginning and multiple objectives.

42 See-Provincial Declaration of Natural Protection Sites, Ratanakiri Province Governors Office, 7/10/95.
The size of the area was declared to maximize the area that would be off limits to Macro Painin, and under the control of the Provincial Environment Department. While IDRC took this declared area of 5067 hectares as the basis for setting up a community managed Protected Area, the political will was never there, as some important people in the Provincial political hierarchy already had land inside the area.

The setting up of the Provincial ‘Committee for the Protection and Recreation of Yeak Laom Lake’ was instructive. The chair was given to a Vice-Governor, one of the influential men in the Province, to whom many Heads of Departments owe their allegiance. The vice chair was given to the Tourism Department Chief, not the Environment Department. This reflected the political reality of the debate about how big the protected area should be, as well as how delicate a matter it was to determine who should exploit its tourist potential (read commercial potential) and control the use of its natural resources. The rest of the Provincial Committee was a bulky group of Departments Chiefs. In this way IDRC became embroiled in a provincial power play, and Yeak Laom Lake became central to the debate about how development should proceed in Ratanakiri Province.

While IDRC talked about management zones with Yeak Loam Lake as the core, the Provincial Committee’s focus was on developing tourism activities and protecting the lake only. Protection immediately led to discussions about land encroachment by outsiders. Reports were tabled and discussed, but an official letter from the Governor restricting land expansion inside the commune was held up for months, and in many cases ignored. Likewise the delineation of the larger Protected Area boundary was only agreed to in the end if it would not be used as the official commune boundary. The elected Commune Committee was not permitted any authority outside a limited Core Zone area of 300 hectares. In the end this ‘Core Zone’ is what has become the Yeak Laom Protected Area, while CBNRM work continues in the rest of the commune in the form of land use planning and community forestry.

While the objectives of the IDRC Yeak Laom Project were about empowering local villagers, villagers were often far removed from these Provincial level discussions. The project has only recently become a village-based program and is not yet sustainable. Yeak Laom Lake and the cultural center turned into a sink that absorbed most of the project’s early resources and time. The stories of the spirit of the lake, sucking people into the depths are apt here. The ‘spirit’ of Yeak Laom Lake has attracted much international and national attention. There was much effort put into the preparations for Hun Sen's visit, which was seen as an opportunity to gain high level support for local peoples' participation and management. The lake has hosted a string of high level visitors since, and because it is the Provincial Government's showpiece the possibilities for ‘lobbying’ are obvious.

The role of advocacy and building community participation proved difficult. Working with the Government meant using their staff and not villagers. Only slowly did villagers become involved in working at the lake. Villagers also saw little benefit to their daily lives in activities at Yeak Laom Lake. Presently they are strongly motivated to take over the management of the area but, in terms of revenue generation for the community and compensation for those who work there, it is still not a sustainable operation.

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43 Governors letter
In the beginning, IDRC should have been more clear about how it was going to achieve its’ objectives, in particular in understanding the cultural and political divides they were proposing to straddle. In hindsight it was too much too fast. In the heat of all the politicking it forgot about its’ research role, though much has been learned from the experience. Many community management issues were openly discussed, and it was because of these discussions with the highest levels of Provincial Government there was merit in continuing support to what had been started in Ratanakiri. In a country where there is little procedural process it is necessary to establish transparent practices that everyone follows.

Perhaps the Project at the beginning started as a series of events that, due to the difficulty of the area, could be seen after a while as non-coordinated activities. But if we look carefully, the project at the moment is at the heart of the crossroads between policy makers and the commune as well as at the crossroads between research and development.

The impact of this project has been considerable. Within the CBNRM Sector the Yeak Laom Lake area has been a catalyzing agent, where community consensus could be reached about the management of the land and its resources. The models developed in Yeak Laom Commune were the predecessors to those now being used in O’Chum and OYadav Districts.

UNDP/CARERE Ratanakiri has, in a draft proposal, used this model as the basis for future activities in Ratanakiri. This community-based approach takes the Local Planning Process a number of steps further, and adds community resource analysis and planning at the local level. This approach however, needs to be clearly defined and ‘field tested’ in Yeak Laom. The links between the Commune Lake Project and the CD/VDCs need to be further clarified and support from the LPP institutionalized.

For IDRC/CARERE, what began as an opportunistic activity has become a project with considerable vision and long-term impact. As agents of change, it is important to recognize that there are times when it is appropriate to follow our intuition. The IDRC Senior Programme Officer made a decision, not based on any research or base-line data, but based on his intuition that here was an opportunity that could not be lost. He chose correctly.

11.2 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT POLICY MAKING
The project has made a significant contribution to the sustainable development policy debate. Many of the ideas that were first raised at the two international seminars were later carried out at Yeak Laom. It is a proving ground for advocates of CBNRM as well as a venue where all stakeholders can participate, from national to local levels.

12.0 RECOMMENDATIONS:

12.1 IDRC
IDRC can be judged in many ways. Opportunistic? Yes. But also savvy enough to recognize that the possible long-term rewards might outweigh the risks involved. In this case, it was the right decision. The next question is “Do the long-term benefits warrant continued support? Again, the potential long-term rewards far outweigh any possible risks involved. IDRC should move forward to ensure that the funding is available to carry this key project forward into the next century.
12.2 CARERE
For CARERE, the Yeak Laom Lake Project has been one of its most successful and high profile projects. The lessons learned have been replicated and incorporated into CARERE future planning. But, CARERE must not lose sight of the other lessons of the project. Local capacity is still low and any plan will take time to be understood, implemented and ‘owned’ by local communities. Against the pressure to implement more widely yet with fewer staff, CARERE must make the extra effort to spend time in the field, slowly building community resources. Highly qualified staff is warranted in this continuing endeavor.

The Yeak Laom Lake Project must be more closely integrated with the Local Planning Process (LPP) and the links with the Commune Development Committee and Village Development Committees strengthened.

12.3 PROJECT
The project has many achievements and looks positively ahead to the future. Building local resources and continuing the advocacy of CBNRM are high priorities. As Northeast Cambodia increasingly joins the market place, examples of community-based income generation like Yeak Laom will become more significant. With such opportunities possible, it is important that the necessary human resources are available to support local management. Non-formal Education can play a major part in building the local capacity to benefit from Yeak Laom.

Official recognition from Phnom Penh for the Protected Area Declaration and most importantly, the Core Zone Management Lease needs to be pursued further. Bodies such as the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Highland Peoples’ Development could be enlisted to help in advocacy.

The vision and guiding principles for long-term development of the Core Zone need to be further discussed with the Yeak Laom community and agreed upon. This would include a natural resource management and use plan that would be part of the Provincial Environment Sector Plan and the overall Provincial Development Plan. This would encompass all natural resources within the Core Zone, including water.

An officially recognized plan for dealing with the presence of the Brick Factory must be developed.

The Core Zone boundary must be delineated and marked.

Work with the CBNRM Sector needs to focus on building community awareness about the inter-relationship between the eco and the livelihood systems and how to sustainably utilize the natural resources of the Core Zone. In this way community-wide support for the project will be raised.

In collaboration with the Management Committee, an eco/cultural education program for the Core Zone should be developed and implemented, which would involve active community participation with tangible benefits for the local communities.

Management Committee training should be continued.
The people of Yeak Laom Commune must realize the significance of the Yeak Laom Lake Project for their community. They must try their utmost to field the most motivated staff, to ensure its long-term success.

12.4 POLICY MAKING
The Highland Peoples’ Development Policy is now drafted, with only minor changes expected in the final text. The ‘peoples’ voice was heard and to some extent, listened to. The result is hopefully a realistic strategy, with a broad base of knowledge, understanding and commitment from all the groups involved, and with strong links to successful local initiatives, like Yeak Laom.

Yeak Laom should continue to be a venue, where all stakeholders can express their views on the significant issues facing Northeast Cambodia.
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Note: Many of these documents are available at UNDP/CAREERE Ratanakiri. For more information, contact the United Nations Development Program/CAREERE Ratanakiri or by E-mail at careere_ratanakiri@worldmail.com.kh