

Review of: "“Saving the Forest” with a REDD+ Project: Socio-Ecological Repercussions on Indigenous People in Cambodia"

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Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

This paper offers a good perspective on the lack of effective FPIC and Indigenous involvement in conservation management, bringing awareness to the real challenges faced by Indigenous peoples and local communities (IPLCs) in the western science-focused conservation paradigm.

The strength of the paper is in highlighting the social and cultural barriers created by a lack of meaningful collaboration with IPLCs, who are rights holders to their traditional lands.

Language

Some work is required on consistent terminology so the paper is relevant to international audiences; the inclusion of a glossary could assist. Also, a proof of the paper to ensure all acronyms are explained, i.e., NGO, KSWs, and WCS, the first time they appear.

The author should also reconsider using the term 'peasants'; it would be more beneficial to explain the socioeconomic disadvantages suffered by IPLCs as a result of policy and planning decisions, and the impact of the lack of access to forest resources for IPLCs due to REDD+ programs.

Introduction

More context can be added to the introduction to outline the significance of REDD+ conservation projects to Indigenous people, outlining cultural obligations and impacts. (As above) Some statements in the introduction could be strengthened with references, in particular paragraphs 3 and 4.

Methods

The methods section could include more detail about the study area and cultural landscape of the Bunong people. The methods section could be strengthened by outlining the interview techniques used and the questions asked. There is no reference to ethics approval for the study – this could be problematic as the key findings discussed the lack of due diligence with FPIC – did this study conform to FPIC guidelines? I am also interested in how Indigenous views were interpreted alongside non-Indigenous views?

Results

The results offer only a snapshot of the findings and little explanation of the significance for readers not familiar with the challenges faced by IPLCs. The author could consider expanding on the findings of the thematic, offering Indigenous-led solutions on the way forward. Potentially creating a series of detailed papers focused on the issues raised, instead of one paper on the overarching findings.

This is an important case study that will help others who are hoping to empower IPIC in the land and sea management space, as well as offer a case study for policy makers to develop more responsive and innovative policy. This paper has the potential to be an important truth-telling piece for the international audience and could benefit from successive rounds of review.