

# 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

The aim of this study is to examine the subsequent implications of state-sponsored conservation mechanisms on the quality of life (e.g., sovereignty and rights) of an indigenous population in a given territory under the conservation of NGO's jurisdiction. It focuses on a REDD+ program approved by the government and managed by the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) for more than a decade in the Mondulkiri Province of Cambodia. The study is based on the hypothesis that fundamental indicators associated with human rights and indigenous sovereignty are little respected, and even on certain occasions outright flouted, by some international conservation NGOs and the national authorities supervising them.

While the research adopted field ethnographic surveys carried out between November 2022 and April 2023 to examine the fate of the indigenous people living in and around a conservation area, the methodological framework is terse. Could this be fleshed out to make the study replicable?

The findings and discussions are interesting. Human rights violations against indigenous people in and around conservation areas are widespread in developing economies; thus, the findings of this study provide significant insights for learning and developing strategies for the participation of vulnerable communities such as indigenous people who depend on natural resources for their livelihood. However, insightful as the findings may look, it is essential for a publication of this nature to describe how the anonymised field data and responses were analysed to arrive at these findings. A catalogue of the anonymized responses may be useful for other researchers who would want to replicate the study in their jurisdiction.

The conclusion is heavy on the seeming failure of conservation efforts in the study area, given the current dysfunctional nature of communities in the study area. It would be valuable to provide a perspective on ways for addressing and respecting social safeguards in the study area - an essential component of any REDD+ program.