

# 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 project is relevant, and may prove important, in relation to exploring what are the repercussions on Cambodian indigenous people from a REDD+ project to protect the forest, particularly in a country with authoritarian government, as explored and researched by Dr. Bourdier elsewhere.

The paper is good as an account of situations that seem controversial in the light of what is going on in the community after the conservation project was installed in the territory of interest. Overall, the feeling is that the project is contrary to the interests of the communities, and there is no way to change this as the project has been running for over a decade already.

The following are suggestions to make some improvements to the paper according to the goal of the research.

The abstract should summarize the findings and not continue the discussion. Some of the background included in the abstract can be relocated to the introduction or the discussion.

In the introduction, consider reshaping it to include, if convenient:

- A brief history of Cambodia's policies on resource use and conservation, to show change through time. What is the structure of environmental governance? What is the relation between conservation and development in Cambodia?
- Brief description of the civil society in Cambodia, with emphasis on indigenous groups (\*).
- Benefits perceived by national authorities versus indigenous people.
- Brief history of REDD+ projects in Cambodia. Are there other REDD+ projects in the country? What are their outcomes?
- Brief description of WCS as an NGO, projects conducted in Cambodia, results, etc. (\*)
- Management of REDD+ projects by NGO's, and insertion/relation with the government and its conservation and social policies.
- Purpose/goals/hypothesis of the project.

(\*) These two suggestions may be included in the methodology, instead, as a framework for the study.

In the methodology,

- The geographical area of interest is mentioned briefly and with not much detail. What percentage of the province is dedicated to human activities? How many and what percent of the territory is under protected areas? Combine a description of the area and the period of time when the surveys were conducted. Consider including a map of the NE region of the country (with an inset of Cambodia's territory to show the location of Monduliri province), and mark the location of the protected areas and the 22 villages included in the REDD+ project. This will give geographical context to the study.
- Clarify what was studied. Was it the indigenous people's perceptions of the project? Or, was it the NGO running the project?
- Is 100 interviews a good sample size, or is this not relevant? How were the village members and the conservation protagonists chosen? Any possible graphic way to summarize some valuable information about these informants?
- What instrument did you use to obtain the information? Were the questions different for village members and the conservation protagonists? Will the instrument be included as an annex in the final version of the paper?
- Describe briefly the way the information gathered was clustered, structured, and compartmented on those ten themes. How did you decide on the themes?

In your findings and discussions section:

- Consider separating the data into two major sources, as you mention at the beginning of this section: data extracted from the personal narratives and information/data reinforced by the literature review. Since the title of the paper is suggesting that you are studying the point of view of the indigenous people, the information they provided should be the highlight of the paper. You can then include the information not sourced in the interviews, say the literature review reinforcing the information provided by the indigenous people -as well as all the knowledge that you have on Cambodia's situation- as a second part in each of the themes, or condense it as part of the discussion.
- You say that the themes emerged from the practical experience of the villagers, but in the methodology, you mention that the study is using information provided by village people and conservation protagonists, and mention examples of informants from each group. How is the information provided by each group used and summarized in the paper if the themes emerged from the experience of only one of them?
- How do the themes relate to each other? Are some of them causes and others results, consequences, or effects of the causes? Is there a graphic way to show the themes and visualize that possible relation?
- Which ones of the themes express/show more the perceptions of the indigenous people? Which ones show the perceptions of the conservation protagonists? Which ones are based on the literature review?
- Finally, is there a single good thing from the REDD+ project, or is everything negative as suggested in the paper?

Conclusion

- It seems to be part of the discussion rather than a conclusion.
- What can be concluded based on the analysis you made of the responses of the villagers and the conservation protagonists?
- What would you say are the main repercussions of that REDD+ project on the indigenous people of the NE region of

Cambodia?

- Any suggestion on how this can be remediated?

Formatting

- There are some citations in the text and in the references in boldface. Is there a reason for that?
- At the end of the second paragraph of the conclusion, a number seems out of place.
- The last paragraph of the discussion is in italics, while the rest of the paper is not.

Maybe a follow-up project can be to figure out how the indigenous people survive the pressure from the REDD+ project, since they are restricted in their daily activities related to the protected areas (not allowed to gather timber, or even grass...).