



Tropentag, October 6-8, 2009, Hamburg

“Biophysical and Socio-economic Frame Conditions
for the Sustainable Management
of Natural Resources”

Challenges in Integrating Biodiversity Conservation and Local Development: A Case Study of Ang Trapeang Thmor (ATT) Protected Area in North West Cambodia

DOMINIC TAKU TASSA¹, MYLES OELOFSE²

¹Faculty of Life Sciences, University of Copenhagen, Forest and Landscape, Denmark

²University of Copenhagen, Department of Agriculture and Ecology, Denmark

Abstract

A common approach to protected area management efforts in developing countries is to address the problem of maintaining local economic development whilst conserving biodiversity by applying the Integrated Conservation and Development Projects (ICDP) approach. The ICDP approach seeks to offer sustainable alternatives to traditional methods of conservation management. The central assumption behind ICDP is that local people and their livelihood practices are the most important threats to the biodiversity, and thus, diversified local livelihood options and local community participation will reduce human pressure on biodiversity.

Ang Trapeang Thmor (ATT) is a protected area in North-West Cambodia, which was designated in 2000, and covers an area of 12650 ha consisting mainly of a large reservoir, and serves as habitat to the highly endangered *Sarus crane*. Eight villages border the area. This study focuses on the conservation and management of ATT crane sanctuary and its surrounding areas in light of an ICDP. The study investigated how the designation of the ATT as a protected area has affected the livelihoods of the people in two villages bordering ATT.

The findings revealed that the designation of the protected area has had a very negative impact on the livelihoods of the villagers. Restrictions to access and user-rights to land and management of resources around the area resulted in the loss of a large proportion of agricultural land, thus severely jeopardising most villagers' primary livelihood. The loss of agricultural land combined with a boom in cassava prices led to encroachment and cultivation of cassava by villagers into a state forest East of ATT. Conflicts arose between the studied villages and several other downstream villages over irrigation and the control of water resources. The general perception of the local populations regarding ATT is unsurprisingly negative (88%). This is probably because the local populations passively participate in the management of the protected area and due to the lack of understanding of the aims of the conservation project.

This case demonstrates the difficulties in finding the balance between conservation and development and the importance of sufficient level of participation of local populations for the success of ICDP projects.

Keywords: Biodiversity conservation, community participation, conflicts, livelihoods, natural resources, *Sarus crane*, natural resource!

Contact Address: Dominic Taku Tassa, Faculty of Life Sciences, University of Copenhagen, Forest and Landscape, Tasingegade 29 , 4 - 323, DK 2100 Copenhagen, Denmark, e-mail: dominictaku@yahoo.ca