CAMBODIA BACKGROUND PAPER ON STRATEGIES FOR ADDRESSING THE SOCIAL, ENVIRONMENTAL AND ECONOMIC IMPACTS OF ILLEGAL LOGGING AND FOREST PRODUCTION TRADE

By: Cambodia Government Group

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Cambodia lies between latitudes 10° and 15° North and longitudes 102° and 108° East, with an area of 181,035 km² sharing borders with Thailand, Laos and Vietnam. The population in 1996 is estimated as 10.7 million with an annual growth rate of about 2.6%. Forests represent a valuable natural resource for the economic development of the country. Over the last five years, a substantial forest industry has been developed, providing employment and tax revenue. Some 85% of the population are farmers who depend on agriculture for their subsistence. Furthermore, the environment functions of forests to conserve soil and regulate water flow are critical for the provision of potable water and for the irrigation systems on which Cambodian agriculture depends.

There are 7 National Parks, 10 Wildlife Sanctuaries, 3 Protected Landscapes and 3 Multiple Use Areas covering 18.8% of the total land area. All protected areas have experienced some degree of logging. In the majority of cases, logging operations involve armed gangs. There is little public understanding of the status and concept of protected areas or national parks. Most of the protected areas are remote, access is difficult, security is risky and areas covered are generally large. Indeed, controls of protected areas remain primarily with armed groups. Some of the protected areas have valuable commercial species. This, coupled with proximity to international borders or the coast, make them particularly vulnerable to unauthorized exploitation.

The long-term objective of our Community Forestry Management Programme is to make local communities self-sufficient in meeting their needs for fuel wood, poles and posts, non-wood forest products and construction timber. Our aim is to satisfy the wood and non-wood products needs of rural communities through empowering and implementation of sustainable forest management practices by local communities. The RGC is preparing a Community Forestry Strategic Plan with the assistance of NGOs and a Social Forestry Sub-Decree would be declared soon which would have adequate provisions for promoting peoples' participation in community forestry management. Further, the ADB will also be assisting us in the preparation of social forestry policy and sub-decree.

The RGC had the intention to use the Concession Policy in the fight against illegal logging, a practice employed with success in other countries. We have over four million hectares of forestlands under Concession Management. The proper management of concession forests is very vital to the sustainability of our forests and socioeconomic advancement of our people. We are tightening up the regulation and control of concession management and as a result twelve concessions with a total area of over two million hectares have been cancelled, and there are marked improvements in the implementation of technical guidelines in all the concessions. The concessionaires have a role and responsibility in protecting the forests under their charge from illegal felling, wildlife poaching and encroachment. A draft sub-decree on Establishment of Forest Concession Management Planning, and Implementation System, to control and regulate the concession operations, is reviewed before adoption by the Council of Ministers. The ADB will assist us in performance review of concession contracts from mid-June 1999.

According to recommendations of the joint study by the World Bank, UNDP and FAO in 1996, the RGC engaged four high levels of international consultant firms, with World Bank assistance, to study more in depth various
aspects of the forestry situation and make recommendations. The completed studies are:

- Forest Concession Management  
  FORTECH (completed Dec 1998).
- Legal Counsel  
  WHITE & CASE (completed Apr 1998).
- Log Monitoring and Enforcement  
  DAI (completed May 1998).
- Forest Policy Reform  
  ARD, Inc. (completed May 1998).

Since the beginning of the government's second mandate, its commitments towards eliminating anarchic felling and improving forestry management, have been explicitly expressed in three of the RGC's declaration and policy statements.

On the law enforcement aspect, the RGC has made a valiant effort in the past to crack down illegal activities in the forest and at the same time has focused attention on sustainable management of the forest resources.

The undaunted action of the RGC, strongly supported by the General Commander of the Armed Forces, has resulted in almost 95% reduction in illegal felling, and the efforts are being, continued. The small-scale illegal operators, particularly the ox-buffalo cart owners, account for the remaining 5%.

Having witnessed the strong commitment and actual activities of the RGC, the World Bank and other organizations are facilitating the RGC's initiative to organize this symposium with the following objectives:

1.2 Objectives

- To review the social, environmental, and economic impacts of illegal logging and forest products trade in the Mekong Basin Countries.
- To identify the underlying causes of illegal logging and forest related crimes.
- To engage representatives of national governments, business, interests local communities, NGOs, and International experts, in review of alternative law enforcement strategies and to develop recommendations both for national and collaborative regional action.

The challenge of sub-regional cooperation stems from the fact that the national interests tend to prevail over sub-regional ones. Sub-regional collaboration is meaningful and justified only, if it provides all participating countries benefits, which they would not by acting individually. Coordination of activities with Trans-boundary impacts may generate significant benefits. In general, regional collaboration should concentrate on issues where regional linkages are real and strong, and forestry certainly qualifies as one issue.

2. SOCIAL, ENVIRONMENTAL AND ECONOMIC IMPACTS

In addition to the constrains of past instability and inaccessibility of many forest areas for security reasons, there is a lack of public and awareness of social, environmental and economic costs of illegal logging and forest crimes and of the inevitably negative consequences of government failure to tackle them.

2.1 Social Impacts

Social impacts cover negative costs of illegal logging and forest products trade such as:

- Ineffective forest concession management and illegal logging will deplete the forest resource, Especially non-wood forest products for the livelihood of local community.
- Due to the anarchic logging, the forest resource will be destroyed rapidly, meanwhile several forest based industry, which provide permanent employment and social security for many rural households will close down.
- Siltation caused by large-scale illegal logging is depleting fish stocks, which are another source of subsistence and income for rural households.
• Forest lands encroachment, slashed and burned for Agriculture and land settlement are the causes of deforestation, which lead to social impacts.

2.2 Environmental Impacts

Environmental impacts include, how illegal logging encourages encroachment into protected areas, deforestation loss of forest bio-diversity and especially wildlife, increased soil erosion, sedimentation, and conversion of some forest lands to non sustainable agriculture. The following are some examples to illustrate these impacts:

• Illegal trade in endangered wildlife species is depleting wildlife resources and foreclosing future options for sustainable eco-based tourism

• Excessive logging in upland watersheds contributes to accelerated soil erosion and exacerbates down stream flooding. Disruption of stream flow adversely affects down stream agriculture.

• Large-scale forest burning associated with illegal agribusiness and plantation based operations contributes to greenhouse gas emissions.

• Illegal logging and forest road construction accelerate conversion from forest to shifting agriculture, villages settlement, land encroachment and agribusiness resulting in loss of biodiversity and reversion of forest to impoverished sites which take many years to recover.

2-3 Economic impacts

Illegal logging timber trade and wood export do not only result in loss of a significant national revenue, but also in additional requirement for more financial resources in the future to rehabilitate degraded forest resource and restore the affected infrastructure, caused by deforestation.

3. UNDERLYING CAUSES OF UNDESIRABLE FORESTRY ACTIVITIES

The key issues described below are the main causes of forest illegal activities, due to weakness in forest law enforcement and other constraints in forest concession management in Cambodia.

3.1 Weakness in Current Forest Laws and Law Enforcement

Prevailing laws decree on Forestry Management need revision in order to provide a good basis for forest conservation and management. The laws are not intensively enforced, and inconsistent to the present forest management tendency.

• DFW is the competent agency responsible for implementation of the forest laws, but has no any support or means or facilities for detection, preservation and suppression of forest violations. Its competency in legal aspect, compared with the large-scale duties in the forestry sector, especially in forest law enforcement is limited. Most forest violations are supported by armed gangs, as such the forester from a civil institution has no power to suppress them effectively.

• The lack of awareness and knowledge of laws and legal procedures for suppression of forestry violations by the forestry institutions are also the main constraints in forest law enforcement.

3.2 Weakness in Forest Concession Management

The failure of Royal Government of Cambodia to deal with the forestry issues is not unique to Cambodia alone in the world. Many industrialized and developing countries also have some similar issues in their national forest policy. The following are the main issues in Cambodia:

3.2.1 The Forest Concession Allocation

• Cambodia is one of target sources of timber supply in this region. Since the opening up of investment policy of the RGC, Cambodian forests have been under greater pressure from the neighboring countries for wood supply and wood trade, since to their forest resources were depleted.
Inadequate coordination of forest industry development with the capacity of forest resources and non-limitation of forest industry investments resulted in failure of the management of forest concession allocation.

3.2.2 Lack of Effective Concession Forest Management Planning and Regulatory Framework

- Past forest management and planning processes do not provide clearly defined technical guidelines for long-term sustainable management. DFW lacks harvesting code of practices for implementing forest concession management that is needed as basis for planning monitoring and evaluating the harvesting operation. At the meantime, also lacks good capacity of human resources of foresters to fulfill their duties of controlling, monitoring, evaluation all the harvesting operations at the fields.

- There is no clear legislative or regulatory provision that require large concession holders to assume the responsibility for protecting forest land and for eliminating timber theft or other violated forest activities within their concession areas.

- The large concessions have not demarcated the boundaries, which have resulted to failure in controlling and monitoring the illegal activities in concession areas.

3.2.3 Constraints of Security and Accessibility

In the past, the security was a main constraint in the failure of forest concession management. The difficult accessibility into forest areas also resulted in foresters not fulfilling their duties.

3.2.4 Lack of responsibility Companies

- Most forest concession companies that come to invest in Cambodia are non-professional. They have no awareness of forest management practices and leave the responsibility to their unqualified subcontractors to operate illegally inside or outside the concessions.

- Some foreign companies access in forest concession as middle traders illegally collect logs by providing money to local people for logging inside and outside forest concessions.

3.2.5 Log Collection in Forest Concessions

- Many non-professional wood companies, especially from neighbor countries threw money to local people to cut trees and illegally collect the logs from them, inside or outside the concessions. These activities resulted in the existence of old log problems that the RGC tried to ban many times in the past years.

- These practices affect the sustainability in Forest Concession management, which caused failure in adhering to the annual allowable cut after coupe inventory and trees enumeration which, have been completed in operational planning.

- These illegal old logs resulted in a secondary quota system from which originated most of the illegal processed timber products and the illegal trade.

3.2.6 The involvement of local community in forest land use

- There are no restrictions on local communities to harvest non-timber forest products for traditional uses for their livelihood. But the excessive illegal logging and uncontrolled forest concession management described above has resulted in loss of forest resources for long term needs with disturbance to the water source for downstream use and other adverse environmental impacts.

- The involvement of local communities in allocating forestland for various uses will be improved with the forest policy reform.

3.3 Weakness in Current Revenue Collection System

- Removal of logs without royalty payment and traded illegally trade is the main cause of failure in the revenue collection system.

- At the same time, the past log royalty was low, in comparison to the international market price. But now,
RGC has realized this issue and increased the royalty to correspond with appropriate international market price (US$54/m$^3$).

- DFW lacks a system for collection of subsidiary forest taxes and collection of fines on timber and non-timber products that are marketed in the provinces. Sometimes, the particular taxes are being collected for provincial interest.

### 3.4 Weakness in Forestry Institution

- DFW lacks qualified staffs for effective forest management. Short-term and long-term training should be provided to upgrade for capacity building of the staff.

- For law enforcement practices, DFW not only need strong and powerful Forest. Monitoring and Suppression Units, but also require the means and facilities for promoting activities effectively.

### 3.5 Weakness in the management system of Protected Areas

- The Royal decree on "Protection of Natural Forest Areas" in 1993 designated more than 3 million hectares as Protected Areas under the Ministry of Environment. Illegal forest activities have taken place almost everywhere in the protected areas.

- The protected areas, which have been established, are not well managed and protected. The regulatory framework on management, protection and conservation of Protected Areas has not been enforced as well as in other forest areas.

- Absence of demarcated boundaries of Protected Areas on the ground has resulted in timber theft by illegal loggers and or by concession logging, operations nearby.

- There is little public understanding of the status and concept of protected areas or national parks. Most of the protected areas are remote, access is difficult, security is risky and areas covered are generally large. Sometimes controls of protected areas remain primarily with armed groups. This, coupled with proximity to international borders or the coast, make them particularly vulnerable to unauthorized exploitation.

- Freshwater flooded forests provide many important ecological functions and are important for the livelihood of a large proportion of Cambodian's population. Due to fast growing of population rate, big demand for agriculture land may lead to failure in its protection and management. There is an urgent need for a greater understanding of the role of flooded forests in the ecosystem in order to develop sustainable management options

- Mangroves help to stabilize shorelines and protection from storms thereby reducing the risk of erosion. They also protect adjoining ecosystems such as sea grass beds and coral reefs. The current degradation of mangrove areas is mainly due to fuel-wood harvesting, charcoal production and intensive shrimp farming in Koh Kong Province and conversion for fuel-wood and conversion to salt farms in Kampot Province.

- Cambodian mangrove forests have become a source of high quality charcoal production for Thailand.

### 3.6 Illegal Log and Sawn Timber Export

#### 3.6.1 Illegal export to Thailand

DAI concluded that a high percentage of illegal logs and sawn wood from the western and northern regions of Cambodia goes to Thailand. For example in 1997 illegal sawn lumber exports were estimated at something between 400,000 and 900,000 cubic meters. They accounted for 93% of all illegal log exports from those regions.

Most of illegal log exports from the western region are transported by road from Koh Kong, Posat, Battambang or Bantey Mean Chey. Most of the sawn wood exports enter Thailand through the port of Kalaphanda. In the northern region, sawn wood and logs are loaded across the Thai border at many illegal-crossing points between Poipet and Mekong River.

Many illegal loggers have been accessing into the forest areas of Koh Kong province and other parts along the Cambodia - Thai border. Those people practice illegal cutting and sawing by chainsaw, and illegal export by
boats to Thailand. These bad activities rapidly contribute the widespread forest destruction and provide local people with this lesson.

3.6.2 Illegal export to Vietnam

DAI analyzed the extent of illegal trade with Vietnam by region. The high percentage of the illegal log production from the forest of eastern region covering parts of the Ratanakiri, Mondulkiri and Kratie provinces goes to Vietnam. For example in 1997 DAI estimated that over 30 percent of all illegal logs export from Cambodia amounting to some 300,000 cubic meters were exported to Vietnam. The main illegal export route is via Rt. 19.

Logging areas north and South of Rt. 19 and Virachey National parks are served by smaller roads and illegal crossing points. Logs crossing the border in Ratanakiri are taken to processing facilities in central Vietnam or to the port of Qui Nhon from where they are exported or shipped to other Vietnamese ports. The Eastern region also exports logs and sawn wood from Kampong Cham/Kratie/Mondulkiri border area into Vietnam along Rt. 13 (Chey Klaing, Keoseima, Snoul) and by rivers.

3.6.3 Illegal export through Laos

There were illegal exports of timber from Stungtreng province via Domkralor through Laos destined to other countries. The reason of routing this illegal export is that Thai government restricted import of illegal timber from Cambodia for sometimes that lead The Timber Companies to find other border crossing to obtain their timber.

4.STRATEGIES AND POLICY OPTIONS FOR ENHANCED EFFECTIVE LAW ENFORCEMENT

The issues discussed below give special emphasis to strategies and policy adoptions by RGC and activities implemented that are most pertinent to containment and eliminating of illegal logging and law enforcement.

4.1 Government Policy Commitment to Forest Management and Conservation

The following decisions reflect the commitment of the Royal Government to forest management and conservation:

- To halt logs collection, logs trade licenses and transportation permits for all types of anarchic timber, except only the legal logging, in the forest concessions, and the local supply of timber to be met from legal logging in forest concessions.

- Review all forest concession agreements and cancel the non-performing agreements, and those that have not complied with the terms and conditions of the agreements.

- To reinforce the ongoing concession to add more processed chains to enhance the value added to timber products and for upgrading of labor skills.

- To assure effective forest management the RGC has prepared a Special Law on curbing illegal forestry activities, and a Sub-decree on forest management and conservation with a strong legislative basis, that are being reviewed before submission to the Council of Ministers and National Assembly for approval.

4.2 Forest Law Enforcement Strategy

The recommendation of the four WB assisted forestry studies that were competed in 1998 (Forest concession management, Legal review of concession contracts, Log control and monitoring and Forest Policy) will be the main conceptual basis for the improvement of forest management in Cambodia. They provided a number of outputs such as:

- The technical guidelines on forest concession management systems and Cambodian logging code of practices;
- Review of forest concession agreement;
- Logs monitoring and law enforcement formulation and;
Forest policy outline for many subjects in the sectors such as the local communities rights in forest land use, forest taxation policy, forest industry and logs trade policy, social forestry and land use allocation policy etc.

Following these recommendations a number of initiatives are in progress by the RGC to implement the recommendations:

- To follow up the decisions on forest policy reform the RGC has immediately issued the declaration No. 01 dated 25 January 1999 about the strategies on forest management and eliminating the forest anarchy, with details for implementation. The declaration has been widely publicized and well extended to all levels at the center and the provinces.

- A suppression campaign against forest violation has been created and operated during, the first quarter of 1999 at all provincial levels in the country by DFW (MAFF), strongly support by General Commander of CRAF and the provincial authorities. These strategies and successful activities have resulted in reduction of almost 95% of illegal logging and these efforts are still continuing to completely halt the small-scale illegal activities. The suppression of forest violation includes confiscation, destruction and burning of illegal wood and equipment, closing down illegally operated sawmills, wood handicrafts, sawn-timber depots and wildlife trading depots. The above successful results of RGC strategies on forest anarchic elimination has resulted in a favorable turning point for the improvement of forest resources management, which was a failure in the past.

- Followed up the Government policy commitment on forest management and eliminating the forests anarchic activities. DFW (MAFF) has developed a draft special law on forest violation and suppression, to deal with all types of forest violation including corruption in forestry sector, the suppression procedures with heavy penalties and fine. This draft special law will be submitted for approval soon by the National Assembly.

- ADB Project Preparation Technical Assistance (PPTA) will draft a new forestry legislation, which will comply with the RGC's forest policy. It is expected that this new forestry legislation will provide transparency including the rights on forest land uses, the forestry administration, forestry development planning, forest management, forest protection, forest conservation, forest harvesting, forest trade, forest revenue and forest penalty with heavy fine.

- To strengthen the forest violations monitoring and suppression unit of DFW, a preliminary study supported by World Bank has been completed. A project proposal titled Forest Crime Monitoring and Reporting has been developed and funding is solicited from donors. The project will create a Forest Crime Monitoring Unit DFW and will provide means and facilities for the implementation Of forest law enforcement including detection, prevention and suppression of forest violations.

4.3 For Concession Management

RGC's overall goal is to establish a framework for sustainable forest management on the basis of a permanent forest estate, technically, socially and environmental sound, land allocation, rigorous enforcement of forest management regulation and allocation of responsibility among private sector and local communities.

4.3.1 Concession Contract Performance Review

RGC has evaluated the performance of concession obligation and revoked the agreements of 12 forest concessions covering 2,173,046 hectares. The 22 remaining concessions covering 4,739,153 hectares have been reinforced to improve the implementation of the technical guideline on sustainable forest management.

4.3.2 Forest Land/Forest Concession Allocation

- A clear Land use policy should be enunciated and the capacity for National land use planning developed and established.

- Follow up WHITE & CASE studies, RGC is reviewing the performance of concessions and have revoked the agreements of twelve concessions due to non-compliance with the agreements. These forest areas are being reclassified as protected forest.

- It has been recommended that RGC should adopt the revised forest concession, allocation procedures based on principle of transparent competitive bidding and increased royalty.
4.3.3 Forest Concessions Management and Law Enforcement

- Forest concession would be managed for both sustainable timber production and preservation of biodiversity and other environmental and social needs to meet the requirement of local communities.

- The concessionaires have a role and responsibility in protecting the forest under their charge from illegal logging, wildlife poaching and land encroachment. Guideline for timber theft management plan should be prepared and implemented.

- A Cambodian forest harvesting code of practices have been developed and submitted to the RGC for implementation. A draft sub-decree on establishment of forest concession management planning and implementation system to control and regulate the concession operation is being reviewed before adoption by the RGC.

- The ADB PPTA will assist the RGC in performance review of forest concession contracts.

- To strengthen the Forests Violation Monitoring Unit in Department of Forestry and Wildlife frequent spot checking of logging operations, ground or air surveillance to detect illegal activities, mapping of illegal log locations and using a strict certification for log accountability will be pursued.

- Introduction of rewards-and incentive payments for competent officers and the communities for reporting timber theft, and for enforcement and violation suppression.

- To enforce that the concession holders have responsibility to accomplished their following duties in forest concession management:
  - Forest inventory and boundaries demarcation,
  - Forest roads system construction and preparation of long terms strategies management plan (10-20 years),
  - Annual operation plan, timber theft prevention plan, adherence to best management practices and forest code of practice and for apprehension of illegal logging, and other forest violations within their concession areas.

- Training subcontractors on technical guidelines to improve the responsibility of sub-contractors in their professional job.

- Upgrade the capacity of foresters in charge of forest concession management in their responsibility in conducting technical field works, monitoring, controlling and evaluating the joggling operations done by concessionaires.

- Formulate an acceptable work plan for forest concession management and logging operation, in order to facilitate the concessionaires in accomplishing the planned work schedule.

4.4 Forest Revenue Reform

- The forest revenue system should promote sustainable forest management, maximize revenue collection, reduce incentive for illegal activities and promote efficient wood processing.

- Following the above criteria, Royal Government of Cambodia has increased the concession royalty to 54 US$ per M³.

- It is recommended to revise the forest revenue system that will incorporate a presumptive timber export tax and rescinding tax exemptions of forest enterprises.

4.5 Forestry institutional Development

- To establish transparent, predictable and accountable systems for control and management of forest resources the RGC should invest in strengthening the institutions, and developing human resources.
• Give high priority in implementation of national forestry development programmes; forestry law enforcement, good governance and management of existing national forest resources, and in conducting forestry research for the development of forestry sector. Royal Government of Cambodia should invest the Department with the exclusive and overall authority over the forests, the forestland and the forest staff.

• Department of Forestry and Wildlife needs to strengthen its institutional and human resources capacity through short-term and long-term training and provision of adequate facilities to accomplish the required tasks. Overseas technical assistance is also needed.

4.6 Involvement of Local Communities

• Royal Government of Cambodia started the Community Forestry programme with the objective of meeting the timber and non-timber products needs of rural communities through empowering and implementation of sustainable forest management practices by local communities.

• Royal Government of Cambodia is preparing a community forestry strategic plan and a community forestry sub-decree, which would have adequate provisions for promoting people’s participation in community forestry management. It would provide the local communities with rights to use forestland use and also involve them in land allocations.

4.7 Securing Highest Level Government cooperation

• The leaders of Mekong Basin countries should vocally commit to law enforcement and to eliminate illegal logging and corruption.

• Unequivocal support should come form the highest level of Government to eliminate forest illegal activities supported by collaborative government initiatives of Thailand, Vietnam and Laos.

• Collaborative action by governments of Thailand, Vietnam and Laos to support the above, especially through more effective monitoring, tax collection on timber imports, and apprehension of illegal operators and transporters of forest products.

4.8 Regional Collaboration in Law Enforcement

• Willingness of Government of Thailand, Vietnam and Laos to introduce strict border crossing and port of entry controls, monitoring incoming forest products based on strict certification for log and sawn timber accountability.

• Increase cross-border air and ground surveillance.

• Joint agreement between the countries of the region to adopt common approaches to standardized reports and process for law enforcement, case tracking systems, reward and incentive programs to report timber theft and resource damage.

• Agreement in principal on the scale of penalties for timber theft and associated forests crimes.

• A regionally developed public awareness raising campaign to alert the general public to the social, environmental and economic costs of illegal logging and forest related corruption and mobilize public involvement in reporting on timber theft and illegal trade in endangered wildlife species.

4.9 International Support for Law Enforcement

Ratification of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) and the Convention on bio-diversity and other international legal convention by the Mekong Basin Countries.

International financial support for strengthening of Department of Forestry and Wildlife and law enforcement mechanism summarized above.

International aid that will assist in reducing heavy dependence by local communities on non-sustainable illegal logging to a lower, but sustainable level of allowable cut. Since many local communities will be adversely affected, it is necessary to develop compensatory development programs provide social services and to create
alternative employment opportunities in the most heavily affected areas.