

2016

Community-Based Eco-Tourism

Case Study

Performed at Koh Dambang, Sambo District, Kratie province

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OVERVIEW

Community-based ecotourism is a form of ecotourism that emphasizes the development of local communities and allows for local residents to have substantial control over, and involvement in, its development and management, and a major proportion of the benefits remain within the community. Community-based ecotourism should foster sustainable use and collective responsibility, but it also embraces individual initiatives within the community.

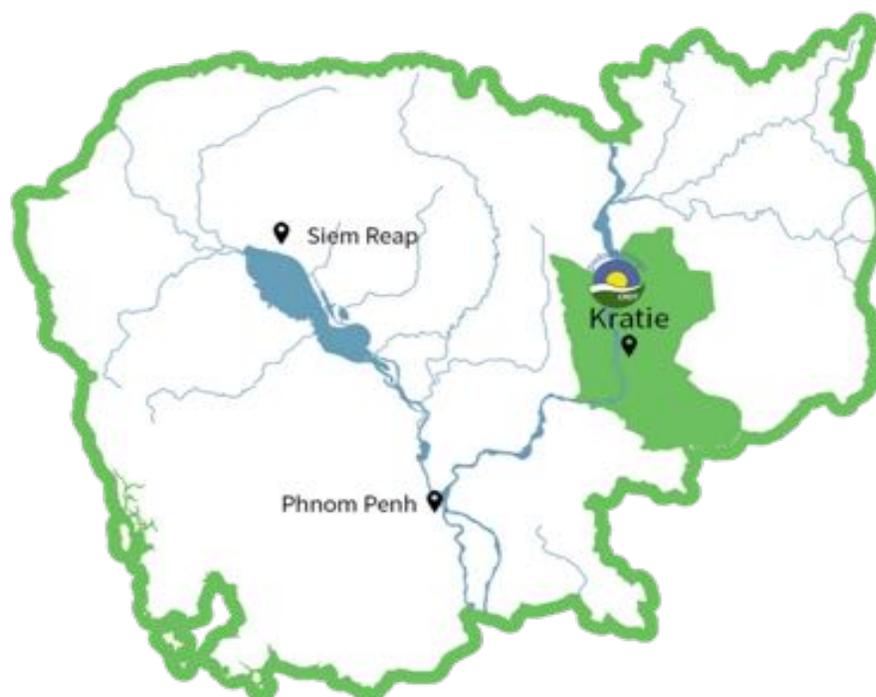
With this form of ecotourism, local residents share the environment and their way of life with visitors, while increasing local income and building local economies. The Cambodian Rural Development Team is creating this kind of activities in rural Cambodian communities to provide new incomes to the beneficiaries. After some trainings (bookkeeping, cooking, ...), CRDT provides materials to the beneficiaries to install the guest rooms. Then, its social enterprise, Cambodian Rural Discovery Tours, can take tourists and groups for a stay in the rural Cambodian communities. This allows the remote communities to host tourists, to increase their income, but also to receive some help from the tourists. A lot of young people indeed like to help the villagers to farm or to build fences, toilets, etc.

CRDTours is a tour operator specialized in offering unique travel experiences in the provinces of Kratie, Stung Treng, Mondulkiri and Ratanakiri. The tours support CRDT's projects and the rural villages through visits to community-based tourism sites.

This case study explores the impact of the community-based eco-tourism on the life of one of the project's beneficiary, Ms. Sam Raksmeay.

LOCALISATION

This case study takes place in Koh Dambang, a village located on an island in Sambo district, Kratie Province, Cambodia. This village is a remote area, only accessible by boat. This community based eco-tourism has been established in 2014, and 5 homestays are hosting tourists in this area, which represents 16 eco-tourism members among the 32 families living there. Different projects have been implemented by CRDT in this area such as the installation of toilets, rain water collectors, home garden, chicken pen, etc.



MS. SAM RAKSMEY'S EXPERIENCE

A case of successful management of an eco-touristic project



Ms. Raksmeay's family activities are farming and livestock raising

Mrs. Sam Raksmeay, 38 years old, lives in Koh Dambang, in Kratie province. She has three children, two boys and one girl. After getting married in 1986, she and her husband started farming activities as ways to build their small family. With support from the children, Raksmeay leads in the growing of rice, livestock and cash crops such as pig, chicken, rice and vegetable while her husband spent most of his time catching fish for eating and sale. The two activities became the main income sources of Raksmeay's family.

She is concerned about the recent decrease in fish stock

However, with the recent decrease in fish stock in the Mekong River the family income is not stable anymore, and Raksmeay is always worried about her family future. *"My husband can earn \$20 to \$30 a day in good season of fishing, from October to December, but it couldn't happen every day. While looking at rice farming, it is challenged by irregular rainfall. My family spends a lot of money in food and health care. Before, we didn't earn enough to support our living"*, explained Mrs. Sam Raksmeay.

CRDT has trained people in the communities on various tourism and hospitality skills

From 2014 to 2016, with funding from USAID, CRDT introduced another eco-tourism project in Koh Dambang as an alternative income for the community. With support from CRDT, the communities were trained on various tourism and

hospitality skills such as cooking, housekeeping, and waste management so that they can provide homestays to tourists while they come to visit the community. For a long term success, the project has been connected to CRDTours, a local tour operator specialized in trips along the Mekong river and in the North East Cambodia. CRDTours commits to bring more tourists to visit Koh Dambang to reach the target of at least 100 visitors in the first year.



Ms. Raksmei and her husband

Mrs. Sam Raksmei was very excited to start a business as homestay service

Among the thirty households living in Koh Dambang, five of them were selected to provide homestay service in the community. *“To start the homestay service, the project team helped to set up some basic facilities at my house such as toilet, bathroom and rainwater collector. Six months ago the project provided my family with 2 mattresses, 5 pillows, and 5 mosquito nets for me to start welcome tourists*

to stay in my house”, she said. “I am so excited to start the business as community based eco-tourism which I have never heard it before. What it came to my thought was I would generate income to support my family”, she added.



Guestrooms in the homestay

The family situation changed since they are a homestay

Her homestay can hold up to 6 tourists per night. She had welcomed tourists to stay and cooked local food at her house three times already. *“My family situation changed since we have homestay at our house. I can earn more money besides farming, raising chicken, and fishing. We are now saving some money for future family expense. With my family we have good relationship with all the tourists that stayed at our house. They are good people. I do like them. They sometimes helped doing farming, and learn the local lives of remote people”,* she stated with a big smile on her face. Since the start of homestay service, she hosted 18 guests and earned \$76 from it. 15% out of her income went to community fishery fund to be redistributed to fishery committee, other \$30 spent on family needs such as food and medicine, the rest is saved.

Ms. Raksmei plans to help her community thanks to her new income

“I will work hard to provide good services for tourists. I really want them to remember our community when they go back home. Of course, I won’t forget to help my community. I plan to use the fund from my eco-tourism activities for some of the community’s activities. I would like to thank CRDT and CRDTours for creating eco-tourism in Koh Dambang” concluded Mrs. Sam Raksmei.

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