

# Governing climate change? Adaptation policies, sustainable development and local resilience in Cambodia

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Figure 1. Map of Cambodia.



Nations 2013

## AIM

To gather in-depth knowledge of how International and National-level climate change adaptation policies impact Cambodia's marginalized rural groups for more inclusive climate change policies.

## CAMBODIAN CONTEXT

- Agriculturally-driven post-conflict country (colonization and civil war) with Least Developed Country status.
- Rapidly-developing economy and resource-rich frontier: the engine of development occurs through macroeconomic growth via foreign direct investment and resource extraction. Role of private sector prioritized.
- Predominately poor, remote and rural population reliant on natural resource base.

- Numerous environmental and social challenges: poverty, low levels of formal education, human rights abuses, corruption, landlessness and environmental degradation.
- Climate change, threatening agricultural production (GDP), water resources and health framed as an urgent issue often solved through a narrow technocratic and neoliberal approach. Social science perspective lacking.
- Adaptation action hindered by post-conflict institutions with insufficient capacity and financial constraints. Public awareness about climate change is limited. Many communities sit at the technological frontier.
- Shifting development paradigm of increased role of private sector & intervention 'ownership.'

- Significant potential to create **new processes of inclusion and exclusion** can result from interventions bringing new opportunities for obtaining power and resources.

## GUIDING CONCEPTS

### DISCOURSE

Climate change adaptation is largely dependent on the way the issue is framed and which knowledge is valued, produced and diffused through discourse and practice.

- What knowledge claims are in production and how are these are linked to the power relations that sustain them?
- Can adaptation be solved through new technologies – the dominant discourse - when intervention outcomes are interlinked with a complex array of social factors?
- What is the role of local knowledge and innovation?

### 'SOFT' ISSUES

Community participation and elite capture are well-researched subjects, yet climate change research and interventions often do not take this knowledge into account. How can interventions benefit from this knowledge and experience?

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

How do International climate change discourses shape National-level climate change policy in the research areas? How do these policies enhance or undermine local maneuvering space, adaptation strategies and thus local resilience?

Sub-questions:

1. What 'hard, discreet climate change adaptation solutions are promoted and how well do they adhere to the tenets of poverty alleviation and sustainable and inclusive development?

2. What is the role of the private sector and 'base of the pyramid' adaptation solutions? Are innovative partnerships formed? If so, how are risks distributed?
3. What are the implications of adaptation interventions for local communities regarding access to or redistribution of land and resources? Are new, competing claims placed on land and resources? If so, do they lead to exclusion and sources of conflict?
4. Are the climate change adaptation solutions implemented in the research areas contributing to or undermining adaptive agency and local community resilience?

## MIXED METHODS

Meso-level analysis as well as the ability of the research to uncover 'soft' issues (quality of participation, power relations) requires qualitative and quantitative methods:

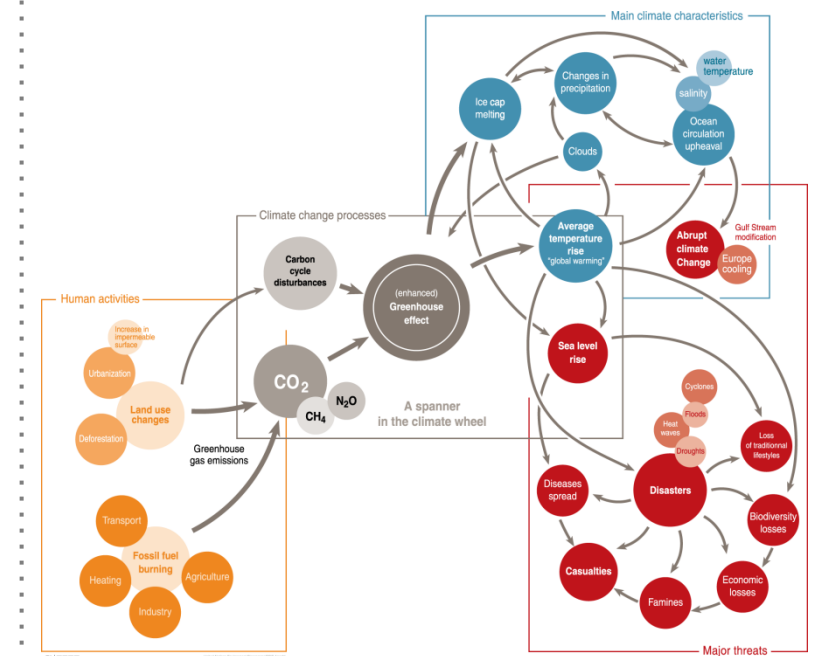
- Desk research
- In-depth interviews
- Focus group discussions
- Problem tree exercises
- Household-level questionnaires

## SITE SELECTION

The following methodology will be used to select the research areas and sample:

1. A portfolio of adaptation interventions is being compiled through secondary data sources and organized by key threats (e.g., agricultural production, water quality/availability) and stakeholder involvement (government, NGO, private sector).
  1. Similarities in geography, key threats and the adaptation intervention (e.g., drought and crop adaptation).
  2. 'Hard' technology implementation.
  3. Where the impact of climate change-related hazards is most significant.
2. Research areas will be selected from the portfolio based upon:

Figure 2. Climate change: processes, characteristics and threats.



UNEP 2005

## SIGNIFICANCE

Within and outside of academia, increasing attention has been placed on climate change adaptation and the necessary information and solutions that help create climate-resilient communities. Yet limited research exists, particularly in Cambodia, on two fronts: 1) how discourse-inspired interventions relate to the local reality, and 2) the interrelation between three different scientific debates: climate change and its interventions; community participation and power issues in development; and conflict–environment interrelations.

Figure 1 courtesy of Nations Online Project: <http://www.nationsonline.org>

Figure 2 courtesy of UNEP: [http://maps.grida.no/go/graphic/climate\\_change\\_processes\\_characteristics\\_and\\_threats](http://maps.grida.no/go/graphic/climate_change_processes_characteristics_and_threats)

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