

REDD+ AND TENURE SECURITY OF COMMUNITY FORESTRY: A CASE STUDY
OF ODDAR MEANCHEY COMMUNITY FORESTRY REDD+ PROJECT IN
CAMBODIA

Thuon Ratha, GPSS, ID 47-116827
Advisor: Professor Yamamoto Hirokazu
Co-Advisor: Associate Professor Motoharu Onuki

ABSTRACT

Tenure security is important for successful implementation of Community Forestry. Firstly, it is the most effective incentive for local communities to invest time and resources in forest management. Secondly, tenure security includes clear and enforceable exclusion rights given to the relevant communities. While the number of CF establishments in Cambodia has been increasing, many of them failed to obtain legal tenure rights from the government. For instance, only 94 out of 420 CF establishments in Cambodia obtained legal tenure rights from the government in 2010.

In 2008, the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) endorsed a project that links CF programs with the Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation-plus (REDD+) program called Oddar Meanchey Community Forestry REDD+ Project (OMCFRP). This project is being implemented in 13 CF areas with the main goal to enhance carbon storage and sequestration in natural community forests. Noticeably, securing tenure rights for participating CF groups has been put as the top project activity to reduce risk, to promote the project to the carbon market, and to optimize the efficiency of project activities.

Previous studies have shown that the OMCFRP helped accelerate the legalization process of CF tenure rights. However, a literature review revealed that that boundary conflicts have occurred in 10 out of 13 CF groups after the tenure legalization. In addition, the result of a feasibility study in five CF groups showed that three of them perceived their community tenure security (CTS) as being weak, one group perceived their CTS to be at medium level

and another group perceived their CTS to be strong. However, none of the previous studies discuss in detail about the situation of CTS after the tenure legalization.

Therefore, this study aims to further investigate tenure security of participating CF groups of the OMCFRP and find out how to strengthen community tenure security. The main goal is to provide recommendations for how to strengthening CTS of CF groups which will contribute to both CF and REDD+ implementation. There are three specific objectives include 1) to estimate tenure security of CF groups after the tenure legalization 2) to figure out factors perceived to characterize CTS at each specific level and 3) to identify key factors that make tenure security of CF groups different.

Both primary (focus groups, individual interviews, and key informant interviews) and secondary data collection methods were adapted in this study. Perceptions of CF committees' members and key informants from relevant institutions were used to estimate the tenure security of CF groups. The ordinal scaling (ranging from very weak to very strong) was used for evaluating their perceptions. The evaluation of members of CF committees' perceptions on their CTS was conducted through focus groups and individual interviews. On the other hand, the evaluation of key informants' perceptions toward CTS was conducted through key informant interviews. These methods (especially focus groups method) were not only used for evaluating people's perceptions but also for explaining the reasons why they perceived CTS at a specific level. Remarkably, this study targeted only communities where the perceptions of CTS expressed by CF committee members and key informants were the same, in order to find the factors perceived to characterize CTS at different levels and key factors that make the difference of CTS.

The comparison of CF committees' members and key persons' perceptions toward CTS showed that they had different perceptions toward tenure security of 5 out of 13 CF groups. Nevertheless, they had same perception toward tenure security of eight CF groups.

Among those eight CF groups, five groups were perceived to have weak CTS, one group was perceived to have medium CTS and two others were perceived to have strong CTS.

The comparison of the factors perceived to characterize CTS of the five CF groups at a weak level showed that the existence of conflict caused by military encroachment into CF areas is a common factor perceived to cause weak CTS. The military weakens CTS in two ways both through 1) interference of military in the utilization of CF tenure rights and 2) through an indirect impact on tenure security as the CF's internal capacity to defend tenure rights against violations by outsiders is weakened. The factors perceived to characterize medium tenure security of a CF group are 1) originally weak internal capacity, 2) existence of mild tenure conflict, 3) lack of cooperation and support of local authorities and 4) lack of financial and legal support from relevant stakeholders for protecting and enforcing CF tenure rights. On the other hand, the common factors perceived to characterize strong tenure security of the two CF groups are 1) nonexistence of tenure conflict, 2) strong internal capacity to defend tenure rights and 3) strong cooperation and support from of authorities for protecting and enforcing CF tenure rights.

The comparison of common factors perceived to characterize CTS at each level found two factors that make the difference of CTS which include 1) the existence and seriousness of tenure conflict and 2) CF's internal capacity to defend tenure rights. The conditions of these two factors are distinct at different levels of CTS. There was no tenure conflict reported in the two CF groups perceived to have strong CTS while a CF group estimated to have medium CTS reported a mild tenure conflict and the five CF groups perceived to have weak CTS all experienced serious tenure conflict. Regarding to the condition of CF's internal capacity, CF groups perceived to have strong CTS self-reported and was evaluated by most of the key informants that they have strong internal capacity to defend tenure rights. Nevertheless, internal capacity of CF groups perceived to have medium and weak CTS was reported to be

originally weak and weakened by the military. Therefore, two main critical issues should be focused on in order to strengthen CTS of CF groups. These are addressing existing tenure conflicts and strengthening CF's internal capacity to defend tenure rights.

Key words: REDD+, Community Forestry, Tenure Security