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Non-Timber Value of Forest Resources at the
Community Level and A Conceptual Framework for
Sustainable Forest Management -
A Cambodian Case Study

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the requirements for the degree of
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ABSTRACT

Non-timber forest products have been playing a significant role in the life of the indigenous people such as the Tampuen ethnic group of Yeak Loam commune of Ratanakiri province. Despite the fact that the indigenous people have been relying on the forest for their subsistence level of survival for centuries without having actually destroyed the forest, they have become a common target of criticism for forest depletion due to their traditional practice of shifting cultivation and collection of non-timber forest products. Moreover, little information is available regarding the value of non-timber forest products since government attention has been focussed on timber value over the past decades, which is believed to have contributed to Cambodia's rapid forest degradation. The study addresses this by looking at the value of non-timber forest products to Yeak Loam communities, the dependence level of the local communities on the forest, the existing forest management institutional set-up, roles and practices of major stake-holders, Cambodia's property right status and the applicability of community forestry within the Cambodian context. This was achieved via a village-level interview at Yeak Loam commune, village-level meetings, and national level consultation with relevant government and donor agencies. It was found that 100% of the interviewed households were familiar with Yeak Loam commune forest since they were born in the area, and have been relying on the forest for non-timber forest products and rice production for most of their life. At least 92.7% of the Yeak Loam communities' total yearly income depends on the forest (i.e. non-timber forest products 43.8% and rice production 48.9%). The total annual value of non-timber forest products to Yeak Loam communities is estimated to be 309,461,426 riels (or US\$77,365). In other words, sustainable management of the forest is not only important for Cambodia but also for the indigenous communities since they have few alternative options other than relying on the forest. It is felt that community-based forest management can be a potential solution in this regard. The overall conclusion drawn from this study is that it makes socio-economic sense to preserve Cambodia's forests, in particular, in the provinces where indigenous people have been living for generations.