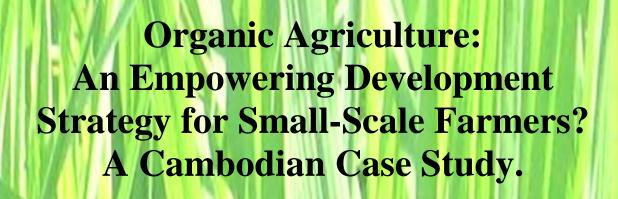
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A thesis presented

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

Degree of Master of Philosophy in Development Studies

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Abstract

This thesis explores claims that organic agriculture may be an empowering development strategy by investigating the impacts of conversion to organic farming systems on the lives of small-scale farmers in Cambodia. The thesis interrogates the diverse uses and abuses of the term _empowerment' in development rhetoric and argues for an empowerment model that is derived from farmers' self-defined concepts of development. This model was used to conduct a qualitative case study involving semi-structured interviews and focus groups with members of organics initiatives in seven diverse Cambodian communities.

Results indicate that many farmers in all communities felt that their most important objective was not only to achieve food security, but to be able to grow sufficient rice to feed their family. Farmers joined the organics initiatives primarily to improve their health and reduce the cost of farming inputs. As a result of joining the initiatives, all farmers (including both certified and non-certified organic farmers) felt they had improved their health and food security. Most farmers also increased incomes, created stronger family and community ties and felt they had more control over their livelihoods. These benefits were not, however, distributed equally amongst individuals or communities. Very poor and isolated farmers could not generally access benefits. The three main factors that determined the impact of the organics initiatives on farmer empowerment were identified as: the individual's level of resources, the strength of the farmer group, and the policies and values of the supporting organisation.

The implications for future initiatives are, firstly, the tremendous potential for farmers and wider rural communities to benefit from organic agriculture as a development strategy. However, this study also shows that if organics is to be viable for low-resource people, it may be necessary to promote both resources and techniques in organics initiatives. Also, a focus on building strong relationships both within the farmers group and linkages with local and wider stakeholders may enhance long-term sustainability of organics initiatives.

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Abbreviations

ADB Asian Development Bank
AFA Asian Farmers Association
AFN Alternative Food Networks
ANT Actor Network Theory

ANU Australian National University

AUSAid Australian Government Overseas Development Agency

CEDAC Centre d'Etude et de Developpement Agricole

Cambodgien/Cambodian Centre for Study and Development in

Agriculture

COrAA Cambodian Organic Agriculture Association

DFID UK Department for International Development

DK Democratic Kampuchea (Pol Pot's political party)

EM Effective Micro-organisms

EU European Union

FAO Food and Agriculture Organisation

FFS Farmer Field Schools
FSR Farming Systems Research
GAD Gender and Development
GCC Global Commodity Chain
GDP Gross Domestic Product

GMO Genetically Modified Organism

GTZ Deutsche Gesellescha für Technische Zusammenabeit (German

federal Development Agency)

IDRC International Development Research Centre

ICS Internal Control Systems (peer review inspection process for organic

certification)

IFAD International Federation of Agricultural DevelopmentIFOAM International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements

ILO International Labour Organisation
IMF International Monetary Fund

INGO International Non-Governmental Organisation

IPM Integrated Pest Management

IRRIInternational Rice Research InstituteJICAJapan International Cooperation Agency

MDG Millennium Development Goal
MFI Micro-Finance Institution
MoC Ministry of Commerce
NAP Natural Agri-Products

NEDC Network of Eco-agricultural Development Cambodia

NGO Non-Governmental Organisation
OFNZ Organic Farm New Zealand

ODI Overseas Development Institute UK
PDA Provincial Department of Agriculture

PRA Participatory Rural Appraisal

PRK People's Republic of Kampuchea (Government established following

1997 constitution)

PRSP Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper

QOL Quality of Life

RGC Royal Government of Cambodia

SDC UK Sustainable Development Commission

SOP Systems of Provision

SRI System of Rice Intensification

UNCTAD United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

UNDP United Nations Development Programme

UNESCAP United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the

Pacific

UNHDI United Nations Human Development Index

US United States of America

WED Research group on Wellbeing in Developing Countries

WFFS World Forum for Food Sovereignty

WHO World Health Organisation
WID Women in Development
WTO World Trade Organisation