

# **REPORT**

## **Ecotourism Development and Management Models in Cambodian Protected Areas**

*Submitted to:*

**The World Bank**

**To Support the Preparation of  
Sustainable Landscape and Ecotourism Project in Cardamom  
Mountains and Tonle Sap Landscape**

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## List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

ADB	:	Asian Development Bank
AHP	:	Analytical Hierarchy Process
ASEAN	:	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BDC	:	Biological Diversity Convention
BPAMP	:	Biodiversity and Protected Areas Management Projects
CBET	:	Community-based Ecotourism
CBNRM	:	Community-based Natural Resource Management
CDC	:	The Council for the Development of Cambodia
CF	:	Community Fishery
CF	:	Community Forestry
CI	:	Conservation International
CPAs	:	Community Protected Areas
CRDT	:	Cambodia Rural Development Team
DAI	:	Development Alternative Inc.
DANIDA	:	Danish International Development Agency
DoE	:	Department of Ecotourism
ELC	:	Economic Land Concession
ESIA	:	Environmental and Social Impact Assessment
EUF	:	Environmental Users Fee
GEF	:	Global Environmental Fund (GEF)
GHF	:	Global Heritage Fund
GIS	:	Geographic Information System
ICDPs	:	Integrated Conservation and Development Programs
IUCN	:	International Union for Conservation for Nature
L&L	:	Live and Learn Environmental Education
LWD	:	Life with Dignity
MAFF	:	Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries
MB	:	Mlup Baitong
MCDA	:	Multi Criteria Decision Approach
MoC	:	Ministry of Commerce
MoCFA	:	Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts
MoE	:	Ministry of Environment
Mol	:	Ministry of Interior
MoT	:	Ministry of Tourism
MRD	:	Ministry of Rural Development
NCCMD	:	National Committee for Coastal Management and Development
NGO	:	Non-Governmental Organization
NP	:	National Park
NTFP-EP	:	Non-Timber Forest Product Exchange Program
NTO	:	National Tourism Organization
PAs	:	Protected Areas
PATA	:	Pacific Asia Tourism Association
PES	:	Payment for Ecosystem / Environmental Services
RGC	:	Royal Government of Cambodia
SCW	:	Save Cambodia's Wildlife
SD	:	Sustainable Development

SDC	:	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SLC	:	Social Land Concession
SNV	:	Netherland Development Agency
UNDP	:	United Nations Development Programs
UNEP	:	United Nations Environment Programme
USAID	:	United States Agency for International Development
WB	:	World Bank
WCS	:	Wildlife Conservation Society
WWF	:	World Wildlife Fund for Nature

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## 1. Cambodian Ecotourism Landscape

### 1.1. Emergence of Ecotourism Development in Cambodia

Ecotourism has been defined and conceptualized over the years by various researchers and policy-makers; however, in short it can be summarized as “the travel to fragile and pristine areas, usually protected, with the objective of causing low impact and at a low scale. It helps educate the visitor; it provides funds for environment conservation; it directly benefits economic development and sovereignty of local communities, and it promotes the respect for different cultures and for human rights” (Honey, 1999). It is noticeable that ecotourism differs from the “Nature tourism” as this last one is the tourism based on visiting natural resources, but it doesn't necessarily involve conservation or sustainability. This is the kind of tourism that exists currently in many natural areas, including within some outstanding Protected Areas (PAs), without the establishment of a plan, or the promotion of conservation measures.

Ecotourism and its subset, community-based ecotourism (CBET), which emerged since the 1990s and were strongly advocated in 2002 via the Quebec Declaration of Ecotourism Year, are often deliberated as integrated conservation and development programs (ICDPs) to implement global and national sustainable development (SD) strategy, especially in developing countries such as Cambodia (Boo, 1990; Honey, 1999; Weaver, 1998; Brown, 2002; Dowling & Fennell, 2003; Brosius, Lauwenhaupt, & Zerner, 2005; Gimmire & Pimbert, 1997). Commencement of the early ecotourism project in Cambodia can be traced back to as early as mid-1990s when Cambodian government began embracing democracy and becoming a signatory country of the 1992 Biological Diversity Convention (BDC). The first national election in 1993 opened a new era for Cambodian history after nearly three decades of political turmoil and internal civil war (1960s-1980s). Cambodia commenced a journey of transformation towards becoming a modern state, and embraced a new global paradigm – sustainable development (SD). This included scrupulously encouraging the decentralization and democratization of traditional top-down government responsibilities in all sector to more localized societies (Royal Government of Cambodia's Rectangular Strategies Phase 1, 2003-2008; Ken, S.R, Carson, T, Riebe, K, Cox, S & Kaschke, von E. 2005). However, as a post-conflict country, Cambodia was obliged to make difficult choices about what and how specific SD imperatives would be addressed.

Economic growth, poverty alleviation, social equity and ecological conservation are intricately linked in Cambodia. Ecological conservation is one of the most significant priorities since the country's environmental problems are detrimental due to continuous transitions in political and economic systems that persistently exploit its rich natural resources. The government's conservation strategies started with the establishment of an exclusive system of protected areas (PAs). Cambodia has had an existing PA system since 1925, but it had been inactive during the three decades of civil wars. A Royal Decree of His Majesty the Former King Norodom Sihanouk in 1993 permitted the Ministry

of Environment (MoE) to renew this system, and since then the National PA system falls under the mandate of the MoE. In addition, a growing number of fish sanctuaries and protected forest areas have been set up through the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF). Recently, the Sub-Decree N° 69 (on the Transfer of the Protected Forest, Forest Conservation and Production Forest Areas, and Economic Land Concessions between the MAFF and MoE) has designated the MoE the sole jurisdiction to manage and conserve all PAs and supervised all types of community-based natural resource management processes. Presently, Cambodia has a total of 65 PAs including National Parks, Ramsar sites, Protected Forests, Protected Landscapes, Natural Heritage sites, Multiple Use Areas, and Wildlife Sanctuaries.

Re-establishment of the PA system was only a prerequisite to conservation. The system's effectiveness and efficiency remain problematic as the country still faces numbers of challenges in terms of technical and financial capacities to manage these PAs. As well, to ensure that democracy is well rooted in Cambodia, the government has taken steps to ensure that all people, especially those local communities who reside within and adjacent to the PAs, have the right to development and access to resources. Consequently, the government also promote democratic and decentralized management of natural resources for participatory endogenous development as part of SD policies (Ken, S.R, Carson, T, Riebe, K, Cox, S & Kaschke, von E. 2005, Neth, 2008; Neth, Rith and Knerr, 2008; Rith, Williams & Neth, 2009 Rith, 2010). Noticeably, within the existing PAs, there are 34 Community Protected Areas (CPAs) and numerous other Community-Based Natural Resources Management (CBNRM) areas such as Community Forestry (CF) and Community Fisheries (CFi), etc Ken, S.R, Carson, T, Riebe, K, Cox, S & Kaschke, von E. 2005. Particularly, since the mid-1990s, ecotourism and CBET development have frequently been employed as a self-financing mechanism or sustainable financing mechanism for Cambodia's PAs, as well as those participatory conservation and endogenous development in CBNRM sites throughout Cambodia (Neth, 2008; Neth, Rith and Knerr, 2008; Neth, Rith and Pellini, 2012).

Nevertheless, the country's contemporary economic and socio-political systems have not yet been readily supportive of such a conservation philosophy. Many newly established PAs are understaffed and underfinanced, while most PA managers and the available staffs are not technically well-informed and wholly cognizant of PA management and challenges. As well, urgent needs for survival and improvement in the standard of living of rural communities make them unprepared and unable to quit the exploitation of nature and to embrace conservation. This also brings into attention the issues of community capacity and readiness. It is realized that destitute rural communities rarely possess needed resources or the ability to meaningfully participate in either conservation or development. Empowerment arises as a core tenet to assist the underprivileged groups to gain control over their fate. Such empowerment is dependent on external support and mediation in the early stages of development in order to prepare local communities to fully participate in conservation and to further the development cycle. Therefore, to develop ecotourism and CBET in this context, initial intervention programs

and assistance in both funding and technical capacity must be provided to enable structures for ecotourism and CBET initiatives.

## 1.2. Cambodian Ecotourism Goals and Purposes

In this line of thought, ecotourism and CBET has also been considered a core element of enterprise-based conservation strategies, which has been part of international intervention strategies in developing countries such as Cambodia for many years. In fact, Cambodian ecotourism has been employed to foster decentralized natural resource management via CBNRM and market intervention (Neth, Rith, Williams, 2015; Rith, 2010; Rith, Williams and Neth, 2009; Neth, 2008). The active involvement of global donors and international institutions in environmental management (including ecotourism) and protected areas in Cambodia has assisted in the transmission of preservationist ideas; paradoxically that a preservation narrative coexists alongside a neo-liberal discourse that promotes the introduction of market-oriented strategies through reliance on ecotourism to ensure that conservation pays its way. In particular, ecotourism and CBET are promoted as a strategy to secure conservation and promote development for all levels of society from local communities through to the Cambodian state.

Over the year, ecotourism and CBET development in Cambodia has shown remarkable improvement in quality among certain well-established sites, as will be indicated through the continuous achievement of national and international awards of best practices concerning both environmental contribution, local livelihood enhancement and good service performance (**Section 3.1**). Additionally, quantity of ecotourism and CBET projects have increased rapidly over the last decade. In his inventory of ecotourism and CBET projects in Cambodia for the Netherland Development Agency (SNV) since 2007, Men claimed that there are approximately 36 ecotourism and CBET projects being developed under the CBNRM and ICDP schemes (Men, 2007). Currently, according to the Department of Ecotourism (DoE), MoE, the number ascends as high as 146 ecotourism sites (59) and CBET sites (87) all over the country (MoE, 2019). Unsurprisingly, ecotourism sites are mostly situated in PAs or a global natural heritage site or an ecologically significant zone, where there are pristine and highly significant and abundant of ecological systems and natural resources.

On top of this, ecotourism development goals are usually associated with: 1) conservation of the pristine or distinct environment (i.e., in PAs settings); 2) financing conservation through externalization of management cost; and 3) provision of alternative livelihoods to local residents; and 4) stimulation of the national economic development (Neth, Rith, Williams, 2015; Rith, 2010; Rith, Williams and Neth, 2009; Neth, 2008). It is widely accepted that the natural assets in these areas and the need to protect them are universally acknowledged while national economic development and the livelihoods of dependent communities need to be addressed urgently. Hence, interventions in the form of ecotourism or CBET are both ideal and convenient for all: 1) ecotourism and CBET development enables the tourism industry to expand its



frontiers and to diversify national tourism products; and ideally 2) revenues from ecotourism and CBET projects allow the local communities to meet their livelihood needs and the local government to better manage its natural assets while stimulating national economy.

### 1.3. Cambodian Ecotourism Actors and Strategies

Accordingly, ecotourism development in Cambodia has been observed to have derived from two major strategies: 1) an international intervention strategy for ICDPs via CBET development; and 2) an economic development strategy – large and small-scale private enterprise-based ecotourism development.

#### 1.3.1. Ecotourism as International Intervention Strategy

Initially, being an international intervention strategy, ecotourism and CBET in the developing context is a collaborative effort. This situation is due heavily to the complexity of tourism development and the conservation requirement as much as the rural communities' naivety and lack of necessary resources. In addition, stakeholder collaboration is essential for successful operation and management of community tourism. It is critical that tourism planning and implementation engage a wide range of local and external stakeholders. Ecotourism and CBET projects have been developed based on two underlying models (Lash & Austin, 2003 cited in Rith, 2010 and Neth, Rith and Williams, 2012). They are the conservation/NGO model (Figure 1.1) and the government agency/industry association model (Figure 1.2). These strategies and development models were employed explicitly during the intervention stage only with specific purposes to enable the local communities to manage and operate ecotourism / CBET by themselves after a period of time, especially when all enabling environment is adequately in place to support them. According to the data obtained from DoE/MoE (2019), currently there are 87 CBET sites fall under this first strategic category.

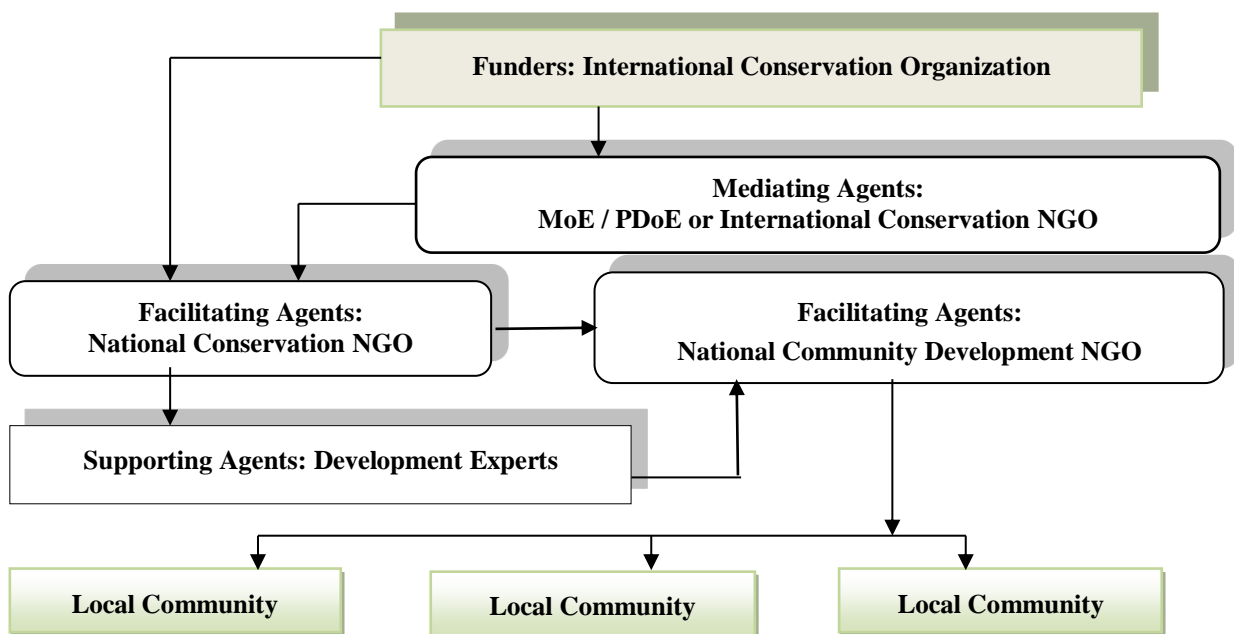
The “**Conservation/NGO Model**” projects have been the earliest ecotourism/CBET projects developed in Cambodian PAs. The projects are usually funded by an international biodiversity or world heritage funders or the banks, such as the World Bank, World Wildlife Fund for Nature (WWF), Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), Conservation International (CI), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), Global Heritage Fund (GHF), Global Environmental Fund (GEF), etc. The fund is transferred to three types of facilitating agents, such as:

- the MoE and their subordinate Provincial Department of Environment (PDoE/MoE) (if ecotourism project is to be developed at the National Park level);
- to an international conservation NGO in Cambodia (i.e. WWF, WCS, IUCN, CI, FFI, Wildlife Alliance, Wild Aid, etc.) that then contracts a local conservation NGO such as Mlup Baitong (MB), Save Cambodian Wildlife

- (SCW), Live and Learn Environmental Education (L&L), Non-Timber Forest Product Exchange Program (NTFP-EP); and
- directly to the national conservation NGOs, etc. (see **Annex 1** for list of CBET sites located in PAs and CPAs, and their funders/mediators).

Frequently, the national or local L/NGOs that received funds for ecotourism / CBET development from either international NGOs or donor agencies has mostly expertise in local conservation issues, but may not have experience with community development or CBET. In situations where limited experience exists, these NGOs hires consultants or partners with a national community development NGO such as Cambodia Rural Development Team (CRDT), Life With Dignity (LWD), etc., to implement the project (see **Figure 1.1**).

**Figure 1.1. Conservation NGO Model**



Source: Rith, 2010; Neth, *et al.*, 2012

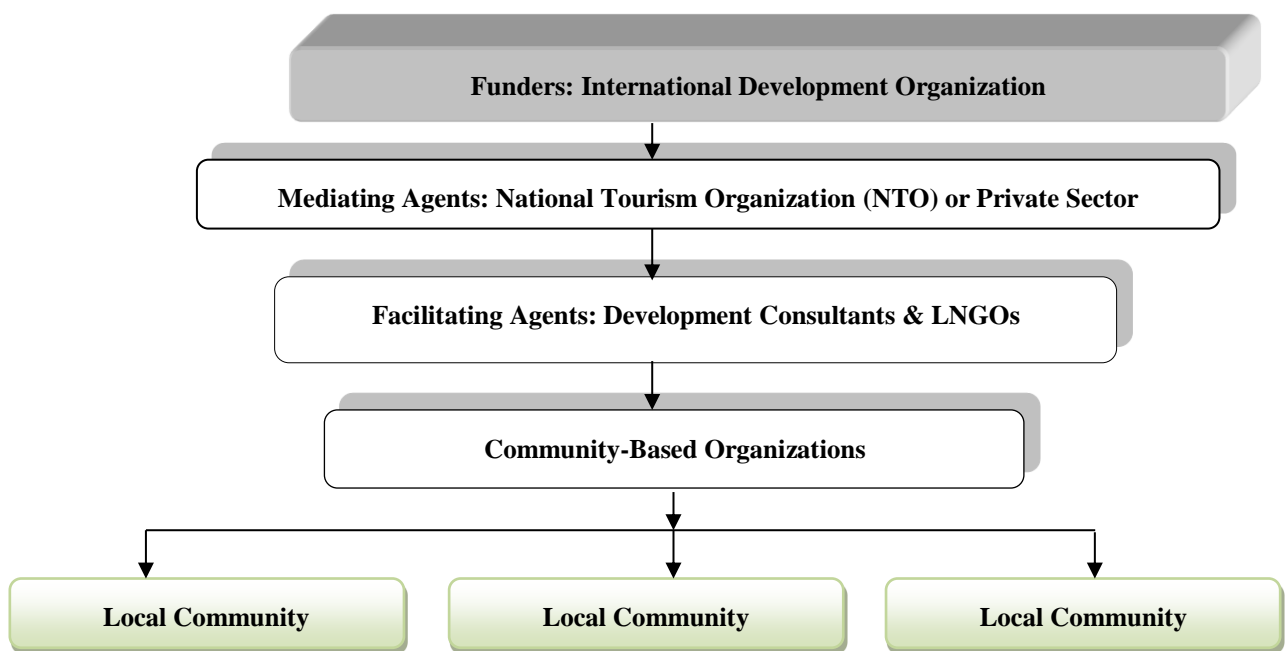
The “**Government Agency/Industry Association Model**,” projects were found in the later period, mid-2000s decade. The project fund, typically in the form of a grant or loan, originates from an international development funder such as SNV, United Nations Development Programs (UNDP), United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA), Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) or banks such as World Bank (WB) and Asian Development Bank (ADB), who provided funds to - a national tourism organization (NTO), which is Ministry of Tourism (MoT) and private companies such as Development Alternative, Inc. (DAI) and SwissContact, etc. in order to implement ecotourism initiatives.

The NTO did not implement ecotourism or CBET project directly; it normally provides fund to local NGOs (i.e. MB, CRDT, etc.) and hires local or foreign community development consultants to support these NGOs to facilitate CBET

development intervention with local communities in a specific CBET site (**Figure 1.2**). Refer to **Annex 1** for list of CBET sites located in PAs and their funders/mediating agents.

Moreover, the most frequently mentioned partnership model during the intervention phase involves a combination of three categorical partners (Rith, 2010; Neth *et al.*, 2012). Observers rarely find a government agency or civil society group who work independently with the local community. For legality and legitimacy reasons, there is normally an inclusion of the third partner; the community collaborates with both relevant government institutions and appropriate civil society groups. The diversity in the application of this model depends on which party initiates the project and who gains stronger roles and responsibilities. In this model, the initiator typically becomes the main implementer and cooperates closely with the local community to provide financial and technical support in order to achieve their common and negotiated goals.

**Figure 1.2. Government Agency/Industry Association Model**



Source: Rith, 2010; Neth, *et al.*, 2012

Specifically, ecotourism and CBET projects are situated in PAs, CPAs, CF or CFI, where Cambodian laws require the developers (i.e. local communities in case of CBET development) to register the site prior to commencement of ecotourism or CBET projects; therefore, the associated implementing agents have usually worked closely with mandated ministries, either MoE or MAFF. Nowadays, with the enforcement of Sub-Decree N° 69, all CBET projects within the PAs are required to work under guidance of the MoE. On the one hand, the MoT and its subordinate Provincial Department of Tourism (PDoT), who is mainly mandated for tourism marketing and promotion, capacity building in relation to hospitality, etc. are often included by the MoE and implementing NGOs in the development of CBET although it is organized under NGO

Conservation Model. On the other hand, in Government Agency/Industry Association Model, the MoT or NTO have frequently collaborated with the MoE and relevant PDoE, as well as experienced L/NGOs to implement ecotourism/CBET projects in order to ensure legal access to needed ecotourism/CBET resources within PAs or CBNRM sites and effectiveness and efficiency of funding.

Furthermore, inter-sectorial, inter-ministerial and inter-regional collaboration and partnership has often been encouraged as Cambodian tourism development and destination management is intricately linked and comes under mandate of multiple ministries, private sector, development partners and civil society group. For example, the MoE and the MAFFs have ample authority over development of tourism taking place in coastal, river-based, forest-based zones and particularly PAs, while Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts (MoCFA) and its now subordinates APSARA Authority and the National Authority for Preah Vihear are supervising and regulating tourism management in the heritage sites and cultural/historical destinations. For example, with financial support from ADB, the Cambodian government together with Thailand Authority of Tourism formulated the Ecotourism Master Plan for two key provinces in the Northeast of Cambodia – Ratakiri and Monduliri – in 1999-2000 (MoT, 2001). There are various cross-regional ecotourism projects such as the Mekong Tourism Development Project (MTDP) supported by ADB through the MoT and implemented by MB, CRDT and various other conservation and community development NGOs, the Biodiversity and Protected Areas Management Projects (BPAMP) supported by the WB (*ibid.*) through the MoE and implemented by PDoE in collaboration with local NGOs and PDoT, etc. The Pro-Poor Sustainable Tourism project of SNV was supporting the MoT to prepare national ecotourism strategies and monitoring mechanisms (Men, 2007). At present, the MoT and the MoE are supporting and regulating CBT/CBET development, and collaborating to finalize the Ecotourism Policy for its future successful implementation.

### **1.3.2. Ecotourism as Economic Development Strategy**

Additionally, the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) considers tourism as a vital tool to help rebuild the country's economy and enhance global political, cultural, and economic integration. The long-term interest of the RGC is to expand tourism in an environmentally and socially sustainable manner. Therefore, ecotourism and CBET have come forth as the priority development strategy for tourism sector and economic development in general. Cambodia has firmly come more and more to the foreground of regarding ecotourism and CBET as a possible tool for enhancing sustainable development in rural and remote areas. Ecotourism and CBET is expected to provide long-term economic growth, sustainable local livelihoods (especially in terms of food, job, income, health, and life security) to natural resource rich but economically poor rural communities, while at the same time preserving natural and cultural resources which are under increasing pressure of resource commoditization and exploitation (Neth *et al.*, 2012; Neth and Rith, 2014).

Through its Ecotourism Policy (2019-2030), Sub-Decree on the Establishment and Functioning of CBT issued in 2012, and the currently designed ASEAN CBT Standard, the MoT envisages CBT / CBET to help transform Cambodia to be a high quality touristic destination with high competitive advantage regionally and globally. The RGC has incorporated concepts of “Green Gold” or “Green Development” into the development of its ecotourism policy with a belief that ecotourism could contribute to: (1) enhancement of environmental governance; (2) stimulation of local economy, especially distribute income to the rural poor; (3) increase in national revenues and foreign exchange; (4) community empowerment and participation; and (5) socio-cultural development (MoT, 2012). This alignment has drawn attention from local governments or sub-national administrations (at commune/Sangkat level), the private sector in the country and internationally, and open new opportunities for ecotourism investment as an economic development strategy in the form of large and small-scale private enterprises or association and cooperative. According to DoE of MoE, the number of both large and small-scale ecotourism development in PAs presently has reached 59 projects (MoE, 2019).

Ecotourism and CBET development initiated and self-funded by the private entity has no precise development pattern or model. Large scale development project (more than 10 hectares) has to register with other government bodies, such as the Ministry of Commerce (MoC) and the Council for the Development of Cambodia (CDC) in the form of 50-99 year ELCs and required to conduct environmental and social impact assessment (ESIA) to be approved through inter-ministerial meeting and finally to gain Environmental Agreement from the MoE prior to development commencement. Data concerning specific year in which each concessionaire enter into contract with the RGC, their specific contract terms, etc. are not usually subject to public scrutiny and access. Contemporary large-scale ecotourism projects of this category in Cambodia reached 15 projects (see **Table 1.1**).

**Table 1.1: List of Large Scale Ecotourism Enterprises within PAs**

No.	Company	Land Area (ha)	Duration (Year)	Location
1	Union Development Group Co., Ltd.	36000	99	“Botum Sakor NP” Koh Kong
2	SOKIMEX Investment Group (Sokha Hotel)	18987	99	“Bokor NP” Kampot-Preah Sihanouk provinces
3	A2A Town (Cambodia) Co., Ltd.	2000	70	“Kirirom NP” Kampong Speu
4	A2A Town (Cambodia) Co., Ltd.	7668	70	“Kirirom NP” Kampong Speu-Preah Sihanouk provinces
5	Yee Jia Tourism Development Company., Ltd.	3300	70	Preah Sihanouk NP (Ream), Preah Sihanouk province
6	Royal Group Co., Ltd.	1408	90	Preah Sihanouk NP (Ream), Preah Sihanouk province
7	Evergreen Success and Asia Resort Development Co., Ltd.	1480	99	Preah Sihanouk NP (Ream), Preah Sihanouk province
8	SINOMEXIM Investment Co., Ltd.	4280	80	Botum Sakor NP, Koh Kong province

9	Sok Kong Import Export Co., Ltd.	2200	90	Preah Soram Rith-Kosomak "Kirirom" NP, Kampong Speu and Preah Sihanouk provinces
10	JW (Cambodia) Eco Holiday PET, LTD	5000	50	Botum Sakor NP, Koh Kong province
11	Kirirom Ecotourism Investment	20	50	Preah Soram Rith-Kosomak "Kirirom" NP, Kampong Speu
12	CAM-AG Import Export Co., Ltd.	4350	50	Kulen Promtep Wildlife Sanctuary, Oddormeanchey
13	MDS Thmor Da EZ Co., Ltd.	2265	70	Somkos Wildlife Sanctuary, Pursat province
14	Celestial Star Limited Company	406	50	Koh Thmei "Ream" NP Preah Sihanouk province
15	HTTH Island Investment Co., Ltd.	1668	50	Koh Thmei "Ream" Np Preah Sihanouk province

Source: MoE (2019)

Besides, Cambodian laws and regulations concerning PAs also permit the MoE to provide concession land under 10 hectares to investor for ecotourism development and other purposes that contribute to conservation courses and does not harm the environment. Therefore, there are approximately 44 small-scale ecotourism projects being developed within PA territory by private local and international enterprises with permission from the MoE (See **Table 1.2.**). Similar to the case of large scale ecotourism concession, specific data concerning the smaller scale ecotourism project are only not open to public.

**Table 1.2: List of Small Scale Ecotourism Enterprise within Protected Areas**

No.	Company	Land Area (ha)	Duration (Year)	Location
1	SBPH Engineering and Construction	2.30	50	Ream NP, Sihanouk province
2	Emeril Sen Resort Co., Ltd.	9.60	50	Ream NP, Koh Thmei island, Preah Sihanouk province
3	Hill & Beach Resort Co., Ltd.	9.60	50	Ream NP, Koh Thmei island, Preah Sihanouk province
4	Natural New Island Resort Co., Ltd.	9.80	50	Ream NP, Koh Thmei island, Preah Sihanouk province
5	Sea Bridge Investment Co., Ltd.	9.60	50	Ream NP, Koh Thmei island, Preah Sihanouk province
6	Sea Bridge Investment Co., Ltd.	0.66	50	Ream NP, Koh Thmei island, Preah Sihanouk province
7	Joy Island Entertainment Co., Ltd.	8.36	50	Ream NP, Koh Thmei island, Preah Sihanouk province
8	Natural New Island Resort Co., Ltd.	9.38	50	Ream NP, Koh Thmei island, Preah Sihanouk province
9	Sea Bridge Investment Co., Ltd.	9.78	50	Ream NP, Koh Thmei island, Preah Sihanouk province
10	Hill and Beach Resort Co., Ltd.	9.66	50	Ream NP, Koh Thmei island, Preah Sihanouk province

11	LCGFX Investment Co., Ltd.	8.38	50	Ream NP, Koh Thmei island, Preah Sihanouk province
12	Emeril Sen Resort Co., Ltd.	9.52	50	Ream NP, Koh Thmei island, Preah Sihanouk province
13	JET's Group Co., Ltd.	9.98	50	Preah Monivong NP (Bokor), Kampot
14	Mrs. Heang Kunthei	9.66	50	(Anlong Khmeng Leng) Kampot
15	Racing Corporation	9.65	50	Keb NP, Keb province
16	Racing Company	9.65	50	Keb NP, Keb province
17	CKK Investment Co., Ltd.	9.73	50	Keb NP, Keb province
18	H.E. Sear Rethy	9.95	50	Keb NP, Keb province
19	JET's Group Co., Ltd.	9.95	50	Te Teuk Pos, Kampong Speu province
20	Our HS Convenience Co., Ltd.	9.83	50	Te Teuk Pos, Kampong Speu province
21	UID Development Co., Ltd.	9.97	50	Te Teuk Pos, Kampong Speu province
22	Mrs. Sut Sothet	9.85	50	Te Teuk Pos, Kampong Speu province
23	Joy Island Entertainment Co., Ltd.	9.94	50	Cardamom Mountains Biodiversity Corridor, Preah Sihanouk province
24	Natural New Island Resort Co., Ltd.	9.86	50	Cardamom Mountains Biodiversity Corridor, Preah Sihanouk province
25	Sea Bridge Investment Co., Ltd.	9.81	50	Cardamom Mountains Biodiversity Corridor, Preah Sihanouk province
26	Hill and Beach Resort Co., Ltd.	9.80	50	Cardamom Mountains Biodiversity Corridor, Preah Sihanouk province
27	LCGFX Investment Co., Ltd.	9.91	50	Cardamom Mountains Biodiversity Corridor, Preah Sihanouk province
28	Emeril Sen Resort Co., Ltd.	9.87	50	Cardamom Mountains Biodiversity Corridor, Preah Sihanouk province
29	Mr. Sarom Radi	5.75	50	Keb NP, Keb province
30	Mr. Pov Ponnarak	1.75	50	Keb NP, Keb province
31	Mrs. Thong Danet	9.80	50	Ream NP, Koh Thmei island, Preah Sihanouk province
32	Mrs. Seng Socheta	9.90	50	Ream NP, Koh Thmei island, Preah Sihanouk province
33	Mr. Ho Sethivon	9.80	50	Ream NP, Koh Thmei island, Preah Sihanouk province
34	Mr. Chhem Phan	9.73	50	Koh Thmei island, Ream NP, Preah Sihanouk
35	Mrs. Heng Malen	6.13	50	Koh Thmei island, Ream NP, Preah Sihanouk
36	Mrs. Chan Sok Cheng	10	50	Southern Cardamom Mountains, Koh Kong province
37	Mr. Ly Sen Serey	10	50	Southern Cardamom Mountains, Koh Kong province
38	Mrs. Teub Chan Theoun	10	50	Ta Ngol Mountain, TaTai Wildlife Sanctuary, Koh Kong province
39	Mrs. Teub Chan Theoun	5.39	50	Koh Moul, Peam Krasob Wildlife Sanctuary, Koh Kong province
40	Mrs. Heng Sokhen	10	50	Koh Moul, Peam Krasob Wildlife Sanctuary, Koh Kong province
41	H.E. Chheoung Sokuntheavy	10	50	Kbal Preah Waterfall, Mondulkiri
42	H.E. Chheoung Thean Keat	10	50	Kbal Preah Waterfall, Mondulkiri
43	Her Excellency Lav Sokhuy	10	50	Kbal Preah Waterfall, Mondulkiri
44	H.E. Chheoung Thean Seng	10	50	Kbal Preah Waterfall, Mondulkiri

Source: MoE (2019)

Furthermore, from site assessment field visits jointly conducted by the WB's ecotourism expert and officers from the MoE and the Ministry of Rural Development (MRD), there are also a few other ecotourism and CBET projects registered recently (over the last decade) with relevant Provincial Hall (e.g. Beung Pearaing CBET in Siem Reap and TaTai Krom CBET in Koh Kong). The Ministry of Interior (MoI), within its legal framework of Decentralization and Deconcentration (D&D), has also registered some CBET development projects in the form of Community Association or Community-Based Organization (e.g. Chi Phat CBET and Areng CBET) if the local communities have included CBET development in their Commune Development Plan (CDP) and/or Commune Investment Plan (CIP). Funders for MoI registered projects vary depending on the site's location; it may be from conservation or economic development donors. Usually, those CBET projects registered with the MoI (and to some extent with other mandated ministries) received fee waiving from the MoT with regard to their annual license payment.

## **2. Ecotourist Arrivals and Ecotourism Receipts**

### **2.1. Tourist Arrival in Cambodia**

With its abundant natural resources together with unique and authentic cultural, archeological and historical heritages of national and global significance as major tourism attractions, contemporary Cambodian tourism sector is developing at a remarkable scale and scope. The number of tourist arrival has increased around 9% to 10% between 2013 to 2017 (MoT, 2018). In 2013, Cambodia received approximately 8, 518,753.00 domestic tourists and 5, 127,567.00 International tourists. Notably, the number climbed steadily over the last 4-5 years and reached 5,011,712.00 international visitors and 10,642,081.00 domestic tourists in 2016 and to 5,602,157.00 international visitors and 10,864,368.00 domestic tourists in 2017 (MoT, 2018). Among many, the two major purposes of international tourists to Cambodia were holiday and business. Most of them were from Asia and the Pacific (77.1%), ASEAN (48.6%), and Europe (15.1%). The total tourism revenue in 2016 was USD 3,212 million; the amount has increased to USD 3,638 million in 2017 (MoT Annual Statistical Report, 2018).

Tourists and visitors alike travel to a diversity of destinations and attractions in Cambodia; however, ecotourism sites – especially in coastal and mountainous destinations – are also among the most important destinations after cultural and archeological zones (i.e. Angkor Complex / Park), which is the country's iconic destination. According to Ministry of Tourism's statistical report collected at international entry points to the Kingdom of Cambodia (2017), ecotourism market is also on a remarkable rise. Among the large number of tourists visited Cambodia in 2016, there were around 66,334.00 international tourists and 510,381.00 domestics have visited ecotourism sites. In 2017, international tourists visiting ecotourism destinations and attractions increased around 8% accounted for 71,697 visitors, but domestic tourists decreased to only 497,651 (MoT, 2017).



**Table 2.1: Tourist Arrivals and Receipts in 2016-2017**

Cambodia		2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Tourist Arrivals	Domestic	8,518,753	9,004,437	9,678,992	10,642,081	10,864,368
	Int.	5,127,567	5,612,267	5,799,427	5,011,712	5,602,157
Ecotourist Arrivals	Domestic	407,551	444,918	720,463	510,381	497,651
	Int.	60,501	60,031	63,031	66,349	71,697

## 2.1. Ecotourism Revenue in Cambodia

Unlike, the overall revenue from the general tourism sector in Cambodia, revenue from ecotourism has not been available to the public or not been properly recorded yet (**see Table 2.1**). Number of visitors to private ecotourism sites and associated revenue are sadly inaccessible or seemed to be inaccurate. Revenues from a few CBET development sites were recorded by the management committee (MC) of the community-based organizations (CBOs) or the mediating NGOs and reported to DoE/MoE (**see Table 2.2.**). Yet, some of these data have not been consistent with the data collected by the ecotourism expert group during this recent study (which may also due to different data collection period).

Ecotourism sites that freely avail the information concerning their ecotourist arrivals and revenues to DoE/MoE and ecotourism experts include: 1) Chi Phat, 2) Chambok, 3) Chrok La Eang Waterfall, 4) Peam Krasoab, 5) Prek Thnout, 6) Beoung Ka Chhang, 7) Phnom Chreav Waterfall, 8) Chi Ouk Boeung Prey, 9) Thmor Rong, 10) Anlong Svay, 11) Dong Plet, 12) Reaksmey Phum Pi Kiri Beoung Kra Nhak Community, 13) Areng, Koh Sralau, 14) Samros Tek Thleak Chay 12, 15) Mondul Yorn, 16) Tmatboey, 17) Prek Toal, and 18) Kampong Phlok CBET sites. From these few examples, it is noticeable that (eco-) tourists visited the highly ecological significant sites (i.e. sites with iconic natural resource such as elephant, giant ibis, or sites that are nationally highlighted as having important species or ecological systems), as well as CBET sites with close proximity to Phnom Penh capital with basic preparation and services more than others (within a day trip timeframe). Interviews with these CBET chiefs revealed that number of ecotourist arrivals to CBET sites has increased about 25% from 2017 to 2018. However, ecotourism revenue for the 18 CBET sites in 2018, which notably increased approximately 10% in 2017, has decreased in 2018 due to reduced number of international ecotourists, natural disasters at certain CBET sites, and reduced number and expenses from domestic visitors.

For example, Chi Phat CBET, which is situated in remote area of Koh Kong province, in heart of densely forested Cardamom Mountain with abundant of wildlife, pristine waterfalls and scenic views is one of the most visited CBET sites that has also received large amount of revenue. Chi Phat received about 3,395 ecotourists in 2017 and 2,583 in 2018; (eco-) tourists spent the average daily expense of approximately USD 23 per visitor. It was reported that the number of tourist arrivals to Chi Phat decreased slightly in 2018; yet the amount of

revenue contrastingly increased from USD 158,379 in 2017 to USD 163,396 in 2018.

Another noticeable case is Chambok CBET site. Chambok site is situated in CF area in the fringe of Kirirum National Park (NP) and shares various attractions with this NP. However, the main attractions of Chambok is a 30m waterfall and a meager deciduous forest with limited amount of wildlife. Chambok is highly visited due to its easy access and close proximity to Phnom Penh capital as well as its properly developed necessary services (i.e. guide, accommodation, transport and food and beverage, etc.). The average daily expense of ecotourists to Chambok is lower than that in Chi Phat (only USD 13.3 per visitor / tourist), but the visitation is higher. In 2017, there were around 12,650 ecotourist arrivals and the number climbed slightly to 12,707 ecotourists in 2018. Chambok CBET site could generate proximately USD 53,950 revenue in 2017, but decreased dramatically to USD 12,688 in 2018 due to a disaster (i.e. flashflood caused by a collapse of Chamkar Ter Dam in the upstream area) that overturned its entire major attractions (i.e. the 30m waterfall) and made it dangerous for tourists to visit the site for a lengthy period of time.

**Table 2.2: Tourist Arrivals and Revenue in CBET Sites**

No.	Site	Ave. Daily Expense (USD)	Tourist Arrival in 2017	Tourist Arrival in 2018	Income 2017	Income 2018
1	Chiphat CBET	23\$**	3395	2583	158,379\$	163,396\$
2	Chambok CBET	13.3\$*	12650	12707	53,950\$	12,688\$
3	Chrok La Eang Waterfall CBET	10\$**	121788	91193	54,277\$	26,008\$
4	Peam Krasob CBET	14.64\$**	75314	95575	61,072\$	87,965\$
5	Beoung Ka Chhang	15\$*	476	160	2,350\$	473\$
6	Anlong Svay CBET	5\$*	3000*	5000*	15,000\$	25,000\$*
7	Dong Phlet CBET	62.56\$**	164	91	10,261\$	3,600\$
8	Phnom Chreav Waterfall	25\$**	1800	23831	750\$	5,286\$
9	Reaksmey Phum Pi Kiri Beoung Kra Nhak CBET	13\$**	10040	4730	1,250\$	3,875\$
10	Areng CBET	40\$*	884	802	35,360\$	11,958\$
11	Koh Sralau CBET	10\$*	700	250	7,000\$	25,000\$*
12	Samros Tek Tleak Chay 12	40\$*	20*	0	800\$	N/A
13	Preak Thnot CBET	N/A	30288	91666	7,727\$	20345\$
14	Mondol Yorn CBET	32.6\$*	158	48	290\$	176\$
15	Tmatboey CBET	39\$*	279	322	27,000\$	14,190\$
16	Tmor Rong CBET	N/A	15794	19894	3,075\$	7,257\$
17	Prek Toal CBET	110\$*	1,184	1,029	130,240\$**	113,190\$**
18	Kampong Phlok CBET	30\$*	N/A	10,000*	N/A	300,000\$**

**Notes:** \* = Data requested from CBET Representatives by researcher

\*\* Researcher's estimation based on site-specific data

### **3. Best Practices and Challenges of Ecotourism and CBET Development in Cambodia**

#### **3.1. Best Practices of Ecotourism Development**

Ecotourism and CBET development in Cambodia have been recognized for its contribution to assist the RGC in achieving its SD and poverty alleviation purposes and goals as stated above. Particularly, it promotes participatory environment governance, raises awareness concerning conservation among relevant stakeholders, endorses local economic stimulation and endogenous development, enhance institutional arrangement and human capacity development.

Private ecotourism enterprises and CBET sites that are mushrooming in Cambodia at present have been repeatedly reported in local and some international news and media to have enhanced Cambodia's attractiveness and competitive advantages in the tourism sector and increase notable number of visitors and investors to Cambodia. In fact, it has remarkably contributed to diversify Cambodian tourism products from concentrating on cultural and archeological heritage destinations as well as to enrich authentic and unique local and natural experiences. Currently, literature concerning performances of private ecotourism resorts is limited yet; there is however a recent assessment conducted by the MoT, "Model Tourism Resort Award," offering 26 medals to both ecotourism and non-ecotourism resorts in Cambodia based on three distinguished criteria: 1) best resort management, 2) good environmental consideration, and 3) extensive information dissemination, well safety performance, and high tourist satisfaction (MoT, 2018).

Literature on performance of small-scale intervened CBET development is in contrast abundant (Rith, 2010; Ken, Huy, Bradley & Yin, 2005; Rith, Williams and Neth, 2009; Men, 2005; Rith, 2006; Kok, 2008; Mendoza, 2006; Tieng, 2016; Va, Lay & Chhum, 2007; Pen & Rith, 2009). First, the establishment of ecotourism sites and CBET is praised for its rigorous stakeholder and community engagement effect through concerted effort of multi-stakeholders, which in turn resulted in more development of enabling frameworks for conservation and development, awareness of environmental issues, improved participatory governance of natural resources, as well as strengthen local institution and human capacity to carry out endogenous development tasks at the local level. The involvement of community members is strongly expressed due mainly to community cooperation and solidarity. By enhancing the success of community development, all members are encouraged to work collectively to share the fair responsibilities and accountable benefit. Thereafter, meaningful participation in community development process is able to assist members and villagers realize the collective advantages rather than individual needs. Community participation is able to assist community understand how to resolve the dispute or conflict in a proper way within the community.

The promotion of endogenous development through enhancement of partnership and opportunities for increased income generation is another renowned best practice of ecotourism and CBET sites in Cambodia (Va, Lay & Chhum, 2007; Tieng, 2016; Pen & Rith, 2009; Scoth & Nhem, 2018; Lonn, Mizoue, Ota, Kijisa & Yoshida, 2018). Building partnership with the private sector or NGOs to promote the site for tourists' visit and for conservation purpose has been done through the network, relationship, and communication between community, tourists and other third sectors. This connectivity brings more opportunities to local community and enable them to be more self-reliance and self-sufficient via improved human capital (Scoth & Nhem, 2018). At the same time, diversified income through operating tourism services (i.e. homestay, food and beverage, guide, transportation, souvenir, renting services, etc.) also contributed to improving communities' living standard, while minimizing livelihood-based farming and livelihood-based external migration (Tieng, 2016; Scoth & Nhem, 2018; Lonn, Mizuoeb, Otac, Kijisa & Yoshida, 2018).

Environmental awareness, education and conservation is inspired to community members, relevant stakeholders and visitors alike in some ecotourism and CBET sites through concerted effort of donor and government agencies and facilitating NGOs (Va, Lay & Chhum, 2007). Due to the participation in trainings provided by supportive NGOs or government agencies, community members and villagers are able to realize the greater benefits of natural resources to their community as a whole. Furthermore, the appreciation of nature and responsible activities had motivated visitor to conduct no activity that may harm the environment and biodiversity. Consequently, there is an increase in understanding about the significant of environmental conservation that lead directly to self-regulation related to conservation, non-destructive ownership of forest and attitude change toward forest land.

In addition, increased capacity for management and leadership through local institutional organization is significantly mentioned as one of the best practices of ecotourism and CBET development (Rith, 2010). As most of ecotourism site and CBET in Cambodia is primary facilitated by NGOs, management structure, role, responsibility, agenda, management and development plan are assisted by them to ensure the effectiveness of community performance. Moreover, community leaders and members receive the capacity building program that enable them to accomplish the management tasks, practice leadership in the community and sustain ecotourism and CBET management and development. The local youngsters are also encouraged to learn professional skills to upgrade themselves to get professional occupation in hospitality and tourism sector not only in community but also in broader environment.

Over the last two decades, such best practices have been widely reflected through the government agencies and relevant international entity's various certification and award presentation programs. For instance, Thmat Boey ecotourism site gained the **"Equator Prize"** in 2008 for its contribution to preserve rare bird and other habitat in Kulen Promtep Wildlife Sanctuary. Chambok CBET – which is the second eldest CBET destination in Cambodia – has been one of

the most successful CBET sites in terms of remarkable tourist reception, significant tourist receipt, enhanced community welfare and socio-economic development. Chambok has been selected for a German **“To Do! Award”** in 2013. Then, it has been awarded **“The National Geographic World Legacy Award 2017”** by National Geographic Partners in collaboration with ITB Berlin, Germany. Reception of this award means Chambok CBET is well-recognized in terms of community engagement, active participation from villagers and community members in managing resources and developing community. At the national level, it has also been awarded a number of times by both the MoE and the MoT for being a CBET Model and its contribution to environmental conservation, decentralized natural resource governance, and promotion of non-distractive livelihoods. In 2018, the MoT offered a **“Community-Based Tourism Model Award”** to 7 CBET sites including Chambok, Chi Phat, Kampong Phlok, Banteay Chhmar, Stung Areng, Peam Krasoab, and Tmat Boey CBET.

### 3.2. Challenges of Ecotourism Development

Despite its significance and remarkable contribution as mentioned above, review of recent literature and interviews with various PA managers and officers, CBET community chiefs and ecotourism researchers indicating that development of ecotourism and CBET in PAs also pose numerous challenges to Cambodian government, relevant policy-makers and developers. One of the biggest challenges of ecotourism in PAs is that the system of PA management is somehow conducive to large-scale development or spontaneous and impulsive actions. The PA Law states that the purpose of parks is to protect places of natural scenic beauty while simultaneously promoting their public health, recreational, and educational uses. With such objectives, measures to facilitate PA use are abundant. Presently, there is an outburst of infrastructure development in large and small-scale ecotourism sites, such as parking lots and road systems, tollways, wildlife watching towers, suspended bridge, resort hotels, mega luxurious tented camp, recreational facilities, etc. within PA boundaries in order for tourists to enjoy the scenery and panoramic views, to accommodate large group of tourists, and for them to enjoy both ecotourism and recreational activities in natural settings. Such mega development initiatives may have large economic contribution, but may also severely harm the environment. Uncomfortably, Cambodia at present has only overriding *“Laws on Environmental Protection and Natural Resource Management 1996,”* *“National PA Strategic Management Plan for 2017-2030,”* *“National PA System Strategic Management Framework 2014,”* and current *“Draft Environment and Natural Resource Code of Cambodia (which also include ecotourism code),”* but only a few PAs have their own specific management plan, proper zonation with extensively recognized land demarcation in place to guide and regulate ecotourism initiatives and activities within the PAs (although many privately own ecotourism sites are declared to be in the PA's buffer zone and/or sustainable use areas).

The second challenge of ecotourism in PAs, particularly in large ecotourism site, is dealing with the problem of overuse or over carrying capacity. Ecotourism in Cambodian NPs is frequently confused with nature-based tourism and

cluttered with mass tourism that is characterized by high concentrations of tourists at certain times of the year—most notably weekends and national holidays to certain natural attractions and CBET sites with a predominant number of day trips. Large visitor numbers are usually blamed as the causes of environmental problems such as the erosion of trails, destruction of vegetation due to over-parking, trampling and selling of attractive plant species for home-garden decoration, problems related to waste disposal and water pollution due to inadequate toilet and sewerage facilities, and emissions from automobiles. In many ecotourism attractions, the “traffic jam”—not only of cars, but of people, who must queue for turns to see a certain nature tourism attraction or to use toilet facilities—is an aspect of overuse that leads to the deterioration of the quality of the nature experience. Overuse results from a combination of factors, the biggest of which is the lack of mechanisms to effectively regulate use as mentioned in the first point. The need to control, or regulate, the number of tourists who enter a PA site has not fully been recognized due to severe need of ecotourism revenue. Easy access makes it virtually impossible to restrict visitor numbers, although attempts have been made in certain areas to limit the entry of privately owned vehicles. However, the fact that many of the ecotourism attractions in Cambodian PAs are owned/managed privately by company through ELC agreement, or by local communities through CBET registration makes regulation difficult and fee collection impossible.

The third challenge is the notable lack of human capital and financial resources allocated for appropriate PA management. The total number of MoE staffs/rangers assigned for PA is to a large extent inadequate yet. Many PA management and rangers are often insufficiently prepared for ecotourism development within the PA; they have mostly been trained in forestry and conservation strategies such as patrolling, addressing forest crime and preventing forest fire, etc. Consequently, they are not entirely equipped to manage ecotourism use of PA, nor are they trained in participatory approaches to PA management (with participation from private ecotourism enterprises, NGOs or local communities that develop CBET in PA boundary). This challenge couples with the absence of specific management plan in most PAs with operating ecotourism projects mentioned in the first challenge have exacerbated the challenge of overuse since private ecotourism enterprises and local CBET communities have virtually freeride of ecotourism initiatives and activities. On the other hand, the issue of human and financial capital shortage have also limited the regulatory and monitoring action that enable some private enterprise to take advantage of the situation by not fulfilling the agreement with the government concerning concession ecotourism land (e.g. some enterprise just kept the land for private use and did not take any or adequate development initiatives to actually make ecotourism business viable and contributive to environmental conservation and social development purposes).

The fourth challenge, limitation of coordination among the different stakeholders, is typical of the vertically divided Cambodian administration system, where there is little communication between agencies/stakeholders.

Lack of coordination leads not only to redundancy but can hinder comprehensive management of natural resources in ecologically fragile areas. As stated earlier in **Section 1.3**, ecotourism development projects/investments are normally endorsed or authorized by the NTO/MoT, the MoC/CDC or the Mol in PA areas with pristine and distinct natural resources that fall under jurisdiction of the MoE and MAFFs, as well as other authorities such as The National Committee for Coastal Management and Development (NCCMD). The management of these various PAs is observed to be uncoordinated, leading the various stakeholders to frequently obstruct and criticize each other and to deny each other's rights. For this matter, some private ecotourism enterprises and CBET communities developing within or adjacent to PA boundary and use PA resources as ecotourism attraction have also limited interaction and/or collaboration with relevant PA management, which hinder PA authorities to effectively enforce PA regulations and conduct proper monitoring action.

The fifth challenge, closely related to the limitation of coordination, is that ecotourism development, especially CBET sites in Cambodia has been primarily led by the donor agencies, civil society group and the private sector as stated in **Section 1.3**. Government agencies such as the MoE, the MAFFs, the MoT, etc are all responsible for providing policies and institutional support for ecotourism in PAs; however, it is only recently that governments have begun to work toward providing substantial support. Support and incentive has so far been focused on providing awards for best practices (as stated in **Section 3.1**), promoting ecotour and considering guide and interpreter training, as well as accreditation programs for some basic CBET products and services, in order to respond to nongovernment sector-led ecotourism and CBET development. Nonetheless, such support has been scarce and conducted mostly with encouraging support from external donor agencies and mediating NGOs. This infrequent support sometime also results in distancing government agencies from local CBET communities, which consequently made regulatory or monitoring tasks difficult and directly lead to the sixth challenge as described below.

The six challenge is dealing with the sudden increase in demand for diversifying ecotourism experiences in certain PAs and the corresponding proliferation of CBET sites with limited quality of services (e.g. guide, transport, accommodation, food and beverage, etc.), improperly developed products with little regards to the natural environment and uniqueness of place, meager quality of amenity infrastructures, limited access to market, etc. One of the biggest causes for visitor dissatisfaction and environmental impacts lies with low quality and inappropriately designed products and services in many CBET sites. For example, guides in CBET area are frequently migrants to an area or youngster, which often results in their insufficient knowledge of the area's natural resources, eco-systems and local wisdom, making it difficult for them to provide in-depth information on local culture and environmental practices to tourists. Even if a guide is well-informed, he or she is often not adequately trained in the appropriate skills to provide information in an engaging manner. Safety is also an important issue, particularly in ecotourism activities that verge on adventure tourism (which is usual characteristic of activities encouraged

currently in many CBET sites). Recently, accidents resulting in the deaths of tourists on guided nature tours (e.g. in Chrok La Eang) have been highlighted by the media, leading to heightened concerns about safety. Grave incident, adverse negative impact, dissatisfaction have been results of poor quality of guide, inappropriate design of attractions and other services without proper attention to uniqueness of place, environmental management system or risk prevention and management, etc.

Last but not least, as typical of contemporary rural Cambodian society, quality of basic infrastructures required by visitors to even ecotourism and CBET sites (i.e. accessibility, accommodation, food and beverage, etc.) are minimal and often below acceptance even for down-to-earth ecotourists. This is often reported to be results of donors' ecotourism and CBET development agenda. It is well-known that funds for ecotourism and CBET sites are mostly channeled to institutional arrangement, coordination and certain capacity building, but infrastructure construction or renovation are often beyond the scope of small CBET development project. It is expected that the government will provide support in such needed infrastructures. Appropriate market strategy and mechanism to target the right market segment and access to the profitable market share remain limited or absent in many CBET sites. This made some CBET communities to receive less visitors and thus less revenue from ecotourism or CBET to achieve the project objective concerning livelihood improvement and stimulation of local economy. Observably, some CBET communities abandoned the project after external support and intervention finishes; while some others transformed themselves into mass tourism site, starting to develop convenient but somehow inappropriate infrastructures and amenity (e.g. regardless of zoning plan, some communities build kios and allowing food consumption in the major attractions within environmentally sensitive areas or constructing road/ path /parking lot within prohibit areas, etc.) in order to attract larger market interests to expand scope of their revenue. This sometime allows them to accommodate more recreational tourists who arrived in big buses, but lead directly to the problem of overuse as stated in the second challenge above.

#### **4. Ecotourism Development and Management Model**

##### **4.1. Setting the Stage for PA Ecotourism Management**

The following discussion asserts that under the current system and framework of PA management, enhancing best practices identified above and addressing challenges promote strengths and opportunities that assist in setting the stage for the development of ecotourism and CBET across Cambodia. By doing so, policy-makers, decision-makers and planners may effectively address the existing challenges to ecotourism in PA and, at the same time, contribute to meeting the objectives of ecotourism development.

As shown earlier, the institutional arrangements set up to deal with CBET development have increased stakeholder participation and representation, as well as unified conservation efforts by coordinating the diverse stakeholders



involved. The multi-stakeholder institutions set up in PAs through ecotourism and CBET schemes have resulted in the development of some guideline and overriding environmental management plan that hold the keys to more sustainable CBET development in PAs. As much as possible, existing institutions should be strengthened or built upon instead of creating new ones, at the same time properly addressing the existing ‘‘lack of coordination’’ issues among overriding government institution that are responsible for current ecotourism or CBET initiatives. Setting up an institutional mechanism to ensure the distribution of CBET benefits for PA management and community development is something that could be effectively accomplished with proper institutional backup, in the form of regulations or ordinances.

The self-regulations by ecotourism enterprises or by-laws in the acknowledged CBET sites have positively impacted the conservation and protection of resources in and around PAs, raised the awareness of both local communities and tourists, and ensured that visitor experience is high and socially and environmentally responsible. Because these rules were developed by CBET communities and private enterprise themselves, they have also served to increase their sense of belonging and ownership with respect to conservation and ecotourism.

In Cambodia, the current system of PA management relies much on self-regulations or community level by-laws for conservation, because the authority of the MoE to enforce regulations in the PA’s ecotourism and CBET development remain limited given its understaffed condition and limited financial and technical capacities. The provision of more government support to CBET communities and ecotourism enterprises to create and strengthen self-regulations in the future would make it possible for them to deal more effectively with some of the challenges that exist in PA ecotourism and CBET sites.

The importance of increasing knowledge of PA managers and staff, local people, and tourists, and of building capacities of local people and authorities to effectively manage ecotourism has been noted since the World Ecotourism Summit 2002. Capacity-building training could be specifically aimed at building the ecotourism management skills of all relevant stakeholders and the entrepreneurial and creativity skills of local people and PA authorities, to assist them in dealing with the diversifying needs of ecotourism. Programs to educate tourists on conservation and ecotourism, so as to increase environmentally and socially responsible action, would partially address the non-institutional aspects of overuse.

Strong partnerships have positively contributed to conservation by incorporating the interests of different stakeholders in creating plans and establishing organizations dedicated to CBET development. The importance of forging partnerships is an aspect of PA management well recognized worldwide, as is evident from the stream of declarations, statements, and policy documents produced particularly since the 6<sup>th</sup> World Congress on National Parks and Protected Areas in 1992. Taking this one step further, in order

to effectively deal with the challenges facing ecotourism and CBET in Cambodia's PAs – including issues of overuse and / or over-exploitation, low quality products and services, lack of access to market, limited coordination – partnership building needs to be extended to include strong partnerships among local people, between CBET and other stakeholders, and among private enterprises. Forging partnerships between CBET communities and private ecotourism enterprises and those with authorities and mandate in the PA and ecotourism sector – mostly the MoE and the MoT – would result in reduced conflict and increased cooperation between them and the sharing of traditional knowledge and political will. This would be an instrumental force leading to more economic development and environmental conservation. Strengthening partnerships between CBET communities and private enterprises and market actors in particular, is necessary to increase access to market and make ecotourism business more viable and profitable. Creating partnerships among CBET communities and ecotourism enterprises, as well as between them and PA management, would decrease competition and make cooperation between service providers possible, thus enabling the introduction, legitimization, and acceptance of standardization, certification or accreditation programs for service providers in order to raise quality of products and services and ensure more socially and environmentally responsible products and services.

Importantly, the issues concerning shortage of regulations and legal frameworks such as specific master plan (or just a management plan) for some PAs and guidelines of ecotourism development in PA context to orient ecotourism and CBET initiatives that currently result in overuse / over-exploitation, inappropriate designs, lack of environmental management plan and risk and crisis management systems have to be addressed urgently. Needless to say, forging of partnerships, institutional arrangements, establishing and enforcement of regulations and ordinances, and capacity building for relevant stakeholders are not mutually exclusive. In fact, a combination of these factors, or the four factors collectively, could work to address most of the challenges that exist in PA ecotourism development.

#### **4.2. Proposed PA Ecotourism Development and Management Models**

According to the above discussions concerning aspects that strengthen the positive contribution of ecotourism / CBET development while minimizing the negative impacts obtaining from both literature review and interviews with relevant stakeholders with regards to best practices and challenges, five distinguished and overriding models for ecotourism development and management are proposed to be conducted in the context of PAs. They include: 1) CBET enterprise; 2) private ecotourism enterprise; 3) CBET community partnership with the private sector; 4) CBET community partnership with PA management; and 5) Private enterprise partnership with PA management. However, applicability of each of these models to a specific site, organization / stakeholder involvement in each particular model, business model and guidelines are not in the scope of this study yet. The subsequent section will

provide an overview of the models, how they are deemed applicable and which aspects need to be further taken into consideration for detailed guidance and regulation.

#### 4.2.1. CBET Enterprise Model

Most of the existing CBET sites in Cambodia were the results of international intervention strategies using either “Conservation Model” or “Government/ Industry Model” during the intervention stage when development funds were provided. Yet, after a certain period of time, which differed from one site to another, facilitating agents (e.g. LNGO and external ecotourism expert) withdrew their support and delegate all further development and management responsibilities to CBOs / CBET community. Usually, after this graduation period, CBET communities had to act as community enterprise running its own business under co-management governance structure where MoE or MAFF (prior to 2018) play the roles as monitoring agent. However, even after a lengthy period of intervention from facilitating NGOs, entrepreneurship skills for ecotourism management have not adequately improved among local communities that have to handle business management in the form of community enterprise.

Therefore, strengthening the current CBET development and further nurture its entrepreneurship aspect is a must-do task to support this model. An enterprise-based approach to a CBET initiative is in support of entrepreneurship to achieve sustainable development. As most CBET communities have legally registered with either the MoE or MAFF, they have privileges to solely operate and manage CBET business based on previously agreed upon environmental/forest management plan. Three main criteria identify a CBET enterprise: (1) local community ownership of the venture; (2) full community involvement in the venture’s operation and management; and (3) the community as the main beneficiary of the initiative.

**Regulatory Requirement:** It is necessary relevant regulatory frameworks are soundly introduced to local communities in order to address PA management and conservation needs, as well as community development needs. Despite the right to operate and manage CBET on their own, the community enterprise will also need to comply with following regulations and mechanisms:

1. Develop the guideline and M&E toolkits for the development and management of CBET sites in PAs or CBET sites using PA resources for their ecotourism operations;
2. Encourage and facilitate the registration of CPA and CBET (as a sub-management of CPA or a sole management by itself) to operate CBET services within PAs;
3. Develop standardization and accreditation or certification mechanisms for CBET operation in and around PAs (using PA resources as core attractions);
4. Conduct regular trainings and M&E of CBET operation by PA authority;

#### 4.2.2. Partnership between CBET Community and Private Enterprise

Appropriate engagement with the private sector can benefit CBET community. Realistically, the community may not have all the resources and skills necessary to run an effective CBET project. It makes sense to work with the private sector and private operators when they are able to 'fill a skills gap' or offer services in a cost-effective way. Private sector partners can provide capital, business and marketing skills and a client base to complement community assets including land, labor and local knowledge. The benefits obtained from encouraging such partnership include: 1) greater security for CBET managers than short term funds from philanthropic and donor agencies; 2) better position for CBET managers to undertake market research and marketing to ensure there is a market for the offering CBET experience; 3) better access to skills and funds needed for diversifying and unique ecotourism or CBET experiences while complying with PA's regulations and guidelines or master plan.

While such partnership may be helpful, it has to be promoted cautiously. Private firms can be particularly helpful to existing CBET communities when it is conducted prior to ending of donors' support and NGOs' facilitation. It may also be promoted for the newly established CBET sites at an early stage with facilitation from a third party, particularly mandated government agencies such as PA authority. Notably, multiple stakeholder engagements and collaborations, rather than dyadic relations, are argued to better promote the sustainable development of CBET. It is sometime argued that the objectives of commercial viability and community development for CBET sustainability cannot be successfully addressed by dyadic partnerships. For instance, joint venturing between a CBET and a tour operator can significantly leverage for market access for CBET, but their ability to contribute to community well-being is still in doubt. Likewise, an NGO's facilitation of a CBET project, aimed at community empowerment and other noneconomic priorities, might unsuccessfully offer market-ready products. The potential benefits of collaborative linkages, combined with the dual objectives for CBET long-term success, advocate for CBET collaborative approaches that involve a wide range of stakeholders.

Partnership between private enterprises and local communities of the developing countries currently occur in four models:

1. A private lodge or resort built in CBET land but operated privately and voluntarily share a mutually agreed upon portion of their revenue with the CBET community.
2. A joint venture lodge / resort as a partnership between a private investor and the local community. A private investor builds and operate the lodge / resort, but in a contractual relationship with the CBET community, which makes a recognized contribution to the enterprise in return for a share of the financial and other benefits.
3. A marketing partnership with tour operator. Tour operators are considered essential because of their market expertise and experience; they act as facilitators, marketing intermediaries, and product

development advisors for CBTE development. The poor marketing capability of the local entrepreneurs, exacerbated by the remoteness and limited resources of the entrepreneurship, challenges the CBET to market their business independently. Therefore, partnering with tour operator increase synergy for ecotourism and CBET enterprise. Example of tour operators that used to partner with CBET communities appear in not-for profit and semi-profit social enterprises (e.g. Osmose and Saray Association, YMCA, CRDTour, Sam Veasna Center, etc.) and CBET networks (Cambodian Community-Based Ecotourism Network), etc.

**Regulatory Requirement:** Clear “Contractual Arrangements” and taking time to develop a shared understanding of the type and level of service expected will help to ensure the relationship is satisfactory for both parties. This can include discussing with private firms the objectives and philosophy underpinning a CBET project and ensuring both parties have a shared understanding of values and corresponding modes of operating. For example, if the community is hoping to promote conservation through their CBET venture, it is important that any private sector partners commit to respecting this goal and working in a way that will promote, rather than compromise, this objective.

#### 4.2.3. Private Ecotourism Enterprise Model

Private ecotourism enterprises are essential in order to achieve the goals of conservation through ecotourism. Presently, an existing model is the sole management of lodges, luxury tented camps or resorts in the PAs, which is usually established through a concession system. It is one of the most extended ways of tourism industry participation, and may contain several forms of compensation to the government, such as environmental fund, social development fund, reversion clauses upon the buildings or improvements made, the payment of a fee (not just limited to Environmental User Fee – EUF, or Payment for Ecosystem Services – PES), the obligation to hire staff from the local communities, organizing training courses, etc. In a situation of full ecotourism development, private enterprises and tourism industry will become one of the most important defenders of PAs, and this process should be fostered by establishing adequate mechanisms for the communication and cooperation between PA management and tourism operators.

**Regulatory Requirement:** The following mechanisms will need to be established and put in place to regulate initiatives and performances of the private enterprise in order to ensure that the set goals are achieved as planned:

1. Develop management frameworks in the forms of guideline, M&E mechanisms and associated supports (i.e. task force, supporting infrastructure, financing strategy, M&E toolkits, etc.) for the development, management and operation of ecotourism enterprises / services in PAs;
2. Provide information on and regulate development of uses of proper and responsible ecotourism infrastructures and facilities, as well as products (attractions, services, amenities, and activities) in PAs; and

3. Ensure regular communication and consultation with concerned private ecotourism enterprises on and enforcement of relevant legal, policy, and regulatory frameworks and advices of the MoE and PA management (and other responsible bodies, i.e. MoT and MAFF) by ecotourism concessionaires operating in PAs and by external travel and tourism companies;
4. Introduce sustainable PA management awareness raising measures to ecotourism concessionaires and other travel and tourism industries as well as encourage and incentivize them to adopt sustainable procedures (including also 3Rs practice in waste management, energy efficiency, and water resource management) for their businesses in PAs;
5. Promote sustainability standardization, certification and accreditation schemes that encourage responsible and sustainable entrepreneurship among concerned private enterprises;
6. Raise and acknowledge the profile of socially and environmentally responsible investment issues within ecotourism concessionaires and other concerned tourism industries;
7. Develop PA ecotourism destination or hub management office / body to improve the cooperation and coordination among all key stakeholders and with travel and tourism companies;

#### 4.2.4. Partnership between CBET Community and PA Management

It is acknowledged that PA conservation and community development are linked. In Cambodia, the initiatives to design and implement ICDPs, which are usually grounded to link PA's biodiversity conservation and community wellbeing improvement of the community dependent mainly on PA resources, are widespread and conducted in different forms of co-management and benefit sharing mechanisms in principle. Yet, in actual practices, they often lack communication, collaboration and coordination, and PA management enforcement and easily lead to conflict of interest and mismanagement of land and natural resources within PA boundaries. CBET community is often empowered to use the reclassified land of PA through social land concession (SLC) mechanism in order for them to work coherently and effectively as a social fence to help conserve and protect PA resources while enjoying the long-term coexistence between community conservation and socio-economic development using those resources to attract international funds and foreign exchange through a diversity of ecotourism activities.

**Regulatory Requirement:** It is urgently needed that a rigorous and practical CBET community-PA management partnership model is soundly introduced to address both PA management and conservation needs as well as community development needs. In order for such a partnership model to be effective and successful, the following issues need to be taken into serious consideration:

5. Develop the guideline and M&E toolkits for the development and management of CBET sites in PAs or CBET sites using PA resources for their ecotourism operations;

6. Encourage and facilitate the registration of CPA and CBET (as a sub-management of CPA or a sole management by itself) to operate CBET services within PAs;
7. Formulate a contractual agreement between CPA/CBET community and PA management for CBET operation, resource decision-making and planning, benefit sharing based on equity considerations, and co-management;
8. Develop standardization and accreditation or certification mechanisms for CBET operation in and around PAs (using PA resources as core attractions);
9. Provide capacity building programs and acceptable hard ecotourism infrastructure to CPA/CBET community;
10. Conduct regular trainings and M&E of CBET operation by PA authority;
11. Encourage joint marketing and promotion, joint product development and diversification as well as joint trainings with other responsible bodies (i.e. MoT and MAFF); *and*
12. Encourage and facilitate active support and involvement from local government, especially village and commune authorities in the areas.

#### **4.2.5. Partnership between Private Enterprise and PA Management**

This could also be considered as a public-private partnership model in which the public sector is mainly represented by PA management under the jurisdiction of the MoE whilst the private sector refers to first and foremost the small scale and large scale ecotourism enterprises or the so-called private concessionaires operating ecotourism in Cambodian PAs and to general tourism and ecotourism industries (i.e. travel and tourism companies) bringing tourists to PAs on a single or multiple visit purpose. Such a partnership model is vital and supportive of sustainable ecotourism development on the one hand and is conducive to sustainable PA management on the other hand. However, the partnership framework should be seen within the context of balancing public interest, PA conservation and protection interest, local interest, and market interest and should focus on equity and access to all stakeholders in planning and policy making for sustainable ecotourism.

**Regulatory Requirement:** The following mechanisms are much needed in order to support the existence and success of this partnership models:

8. Develop PA ecotourism destination or hub management office / body to improve the cooperation and coordination among all key stakeholders and with travel and tourism companies;
9. Develop management frameworks in the forms of guideline, M&E mechanisms and associated supports (i.e. task force, supporting infrastructure, financing strategy, M&E toolkits, etc.) for the development, management and operation of ecotourism enterprises / services in PAs;
10. Ensure regular communication and consultation with concerned private ecotourism enterprises on and enforcement of relevant legal, policy, and regulatory frameworks and advices of the MoE and PA management (and other responsible bodies, i.e. MoT and MAFF) by

- ecotourism concessionaires operating in PAs and by external travel and tourism companies;
11. Facilitate regular information exchange between private enterprises, PA authority of MoE and other key stakeholders (including local communities and authorities and other responsible ministries / authorities) in order to help the private ecotourism industry develop more sustainable ecotourism operations and products in PAs;
  12. Introduce sustainable PA management awareness creation measures to ecotourism concessionaires and other travel and tourism industries as well as encourage and incentivize them to adopt sustainable procedures (including also 3Rs practice in waste management, energy efficiency, and water resource management) for their businesses in PAs;
  13. Promote sustainability standardization, certification and accreditation schemes that encourage responsible and sustainable entrepreneurship among concerned private enterprises;
  14. Raise and acknowledge the profile of socially and environmentally responsible investment issues within ecotourism concessionaires and other concerned tourism industries;
  15. Provide information on and regulate development of uses of proper and responsible ecotourism infrastructure (including also sewage treatment plants), facilities, and products (attractions, services, amenities, and activities) in PAs; *and*
  16. Facilitate multi-stakeholder engagement from other responsible agencies in joint marketing and promotion, in joint product development, and in joint planning processes.

### **4.3. Mechanisms for Implementing Proposed Models**

Ecotourism and CBET initiatives have been encouraged, coordinate and developed by various stakeholders including the donor agencies and NGOs, as well as the private sector. We should, however, stress the idea that it is essential that the responsibility and the control of ecotourism activities in PA setting (incl. CPAs, CFs or CFi) be strongly regulated by the PA authority or management. Current situation seems to be far from ideal; we find massive tourism in PAs and with a lack of management of such ecotourism in order to channel it so that the conservation of the resources is assured (we need to notice that when –massive tourism is mentioned, it is not an excessive number of visitors that is meant, but an inadequate or inappropriate use of the PA).

Despite a great potential, ecotourism in PA in Cambodia is just at the beginning of development stage. Most of activities are spontaneous without specific products and target visitors. There has been no investment in advertising, researching the market and technologies serving ecotourism. Both contents and manners of organizing ecotourism in PAs actually belong to ecotourism-oriented nature tourism. As it happens in other parts of the world, tourism in Cambodia will end up playing an important role in PAs, and these will, for one reason or other, end up needing the financial contribution that ecotourism can generate. Since this conservation-tourism binomial must work in a regulated context, such as PA, ecotourism development guidelines should obviously be



established. These guidelines will, in the end, constitute a fundamental part in the concept of ecotourism, and their final objective will be the creation of an ecotourism industry, with all its characterizing features.

PA authorities and the MoE have the responsibility to maintain data bases and information systems that relate physical environment to biodiversity. Geographic Information Systems (GIS) are particularly useful in supporting planning, since they incorporate the data upon a spatial base. PA authorities play a role in monitoring and regulating ecotourism and CBET ventures.

CBET managers and eco-entrepreneur need to become familiar with relevant policies and procedures and work with the PA authority to some extent in order to comply with the necessary standards. This necessitate the "Contract of Service" or "Contractual Agreement" between a tour operator or a private investor and a CBET community to be signed with a signature and seal of the PA management or authorities or the MoE. Given that it is only the governments (and neither the tour operator nor the development agency or NGOs) who can monitor the community or private sector in the implementation of the contract.

### ***Creating economic incentives for conservation***

Several fundraising systems are available to promote biodiversity conservation starting from the tourism industry and entrepreneur. The methods to increase tourism incomes vary from direct payment to indirect rates and taxes upon goods and services related with tourism. According to examples from similar context (Gacia-Herrera, ND & Weinberg, Bellows, & Ekster, 2002), revenue generating mechanism may include, but not limited to the following:

#### ***Entry fees for PA***

The main goal of a PA management is the conservation of biodiversity, even though some expenses derived from public use also exist, such as the construction and maintenance of infrastructure: paths, sanitation, lodging, etc., which are added to the needs in monitoring, research, and wildlife management. Most economists working in the realm of nature conservation-tourism speak up for a pay per user system to cover the management and protection costs of natural areas. Such funds may be obtained through fees for park use or annual permits. In some cases, they are not feasible, especially in large natural areas with few visits, since the management itself of the charging system may cost more that the income obtained.

#### ***Commercial licenses***

The pay per user principle should be extended to commercial operators, through license fees and a realistic leasing and concessionaire charging system, following a market analysis. For instance, the exclusive rights for certain operations within PA boundaries can be offered to the private sector through an auction.

### ***Furnishing goods and services***

The goods and services offered in the PAs should operate on the basis of assigning net income to conservation measures. The marketing of products and services specifically associated with ecotourism could help fundraising, through educational programs, consulting services, books, videotapes, paintings and photographs.

### ***Indirect taxes***

Funds for environmental protection may be obtained from taxes upon materials used in outdoor recreational activities and ecotourism, such as equipment for camping, fishing, diving and similar articles. The use of a tax per bed can also be considered. Tourists usually understand it as a component of their tourist package.

### ***Earmarking***

An important principle that must be observed is that of maintaining the goal of the funds obtained from ecotourism. They should be specifically assigned, with the purpose of establishing and maintaining natural environments. People are frequently willing to support conservation causes if some guarantee is given that their money will really be spent on these programs.

### ***Donations***

Donations from the public may be sought through fundraising for specific causes. A classic example is the use of some kind of sponsoring or symbolic adoption of animals, be it for conservation programs or for rehabilitation in centers. Certificates, badges, and other identification reinforcing systems may be used. This requires that tourists be able to make direct contributions to specific sites. The industry can generally be an important source of donations. Corporations frequently make significant contributions to reinforce their corporate image and publicize their engagement with Nature conservation

### ***Depositing bonds***

Bond deposits may be introduced for the private operators who offer routes in PAs, or build and manage infrastructures. They are useful in evaluating the environmental damage caused, so that the necessary rehabilitation will always be covered. The usual contract is a capital or financial guarantee that will remain in the PA management's hands as a condition for each valid license.

#### **4.3.1. Examples of Implementation of Ecotourism and CBET Hubs**

In many parts of the world, ecotourism society or knowledge hubs play a key role in supporting CBET and ecotourism. With regards to collating and disseminating knowledge about best practice ecotourism management and

linking different groups that might benefit from sharing experiences and lessons learned. CBET knowledge hubs and organizations can assist by providing information, facilitating learning and connecting communities with private operators and government agencies.

**Example 1 – Community Based Tourism Foundation of Papua New Guinea.** The foundation was founded in 2004 to facilitate the development of CBT in Papua New Guinea (PNG). It is intended to be a not-for-profit organization, operating under a formal constitution. The overall goal of the foundation is to work in partnership with PNG Tourism Promotion Authority and tourism industry stakeholders to promote CBT as an income generating activity for the rural PNG population. It aims to act as an umbrella organization for CBT in PNG, responding to requests for assistance from people interested in operating CBT ventures. However, the foundation is currently experiencing funding constraints which inhibits its full function. Countries with emerging economies, limited infrastructure and many competing community development interests that require funding commonly share such constraints. Ideally the Foundation seeks to provide technical advice, and support in monitoring and improving quality standards in the sector, conduct promotional campaigns, coordinate local operator associations in each province and provide an information and referral service for travel agents and travelers looking for destinations in PNG. In 2005 the Foundation was funded through grants provided by the Tourism Industry Association Grants Program. The Foundation promotes their role and services through their website at [www.cbtf.org](http://www.cbtf.org).

**Example 2 – Working together to promote CBT in Thailand.** Thailand CBT Institute Thailand Community Based Tourism Institute (CBT-I) was established in 2006, and lies under the umbrella of the Thailand Research Fund (TRF) Regional Office, based in Chiang Mai, Northern Thailand. CBT-I was founded based upon the conviction that tourism can be a tool for community development and the knowledge that for rural tourism to be sustainable, community members must participate in and benefit from tourism development. CBT-I is a partnership, which unites the knowledge, skills and experience of two Thai organizations, which have worked for many years supporting Thai communities to develop small-scale tourism programs, appropriate to their own cultures and environments. The Thailand Research Fund Regional Office CBT team worked for five years assisting community members to undertake their own community-based research projects, utilizing simple research tools to find their own answers about if and how to develop tourism in their communities. This work has built the knowledge, skills, and self-confidence of community members across the country, celebrated traditional cultures, supported local rights, contributed towards more sustainable natural resource management, and led to the development of Thailand's largest network of CBT/CBET communities. The CBT-I teamwork extends across the country, covering diverse cultural and natural environments. CBT-I aims to further their goals by stimulating greater support for CBT among stakeholders in rural Thai tourism and inviting them to contribute towards a higher quality Thai tourism industry which values cross-cultural learning, sharing and respect, recognizes community stewardship of local resources and allows local people greater opportunities to participate in

defining the direction of tourism development in their own communities. To achieve this, CBT-I is working with local communities, the Thai government, NGO's, academics and selected tour operators with a commitment to sustainable, responsible tourism.

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