

STRENGTHENING CAPACITY FOR ENVIRONMENTAL LAW IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC: DEVELOPING ENVIRONMENTAL LAW CHAMPIONS TRAIN the TRAINERS PROGRAM

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Environmental Issues in Cambodia

by

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The Cambodian people depend heavily on the **environment** and **natural resources** for their livelihoods, and **environmental sustainability** is critical to ensuring sustained and inclusive economic growth and social development in Cambodia.

The country is highly vulnerable to increased levels of **pollution, uncontrolled exploitation of its natural resources and climate change**. This vulnerability is most felt by the poorest and most vulnerable (UNDAF, 2015).

In some cases environment still consider as a sensitive issues or as a politic issues to discuss



Cambodia Environmental and Climate Change Policy Brief

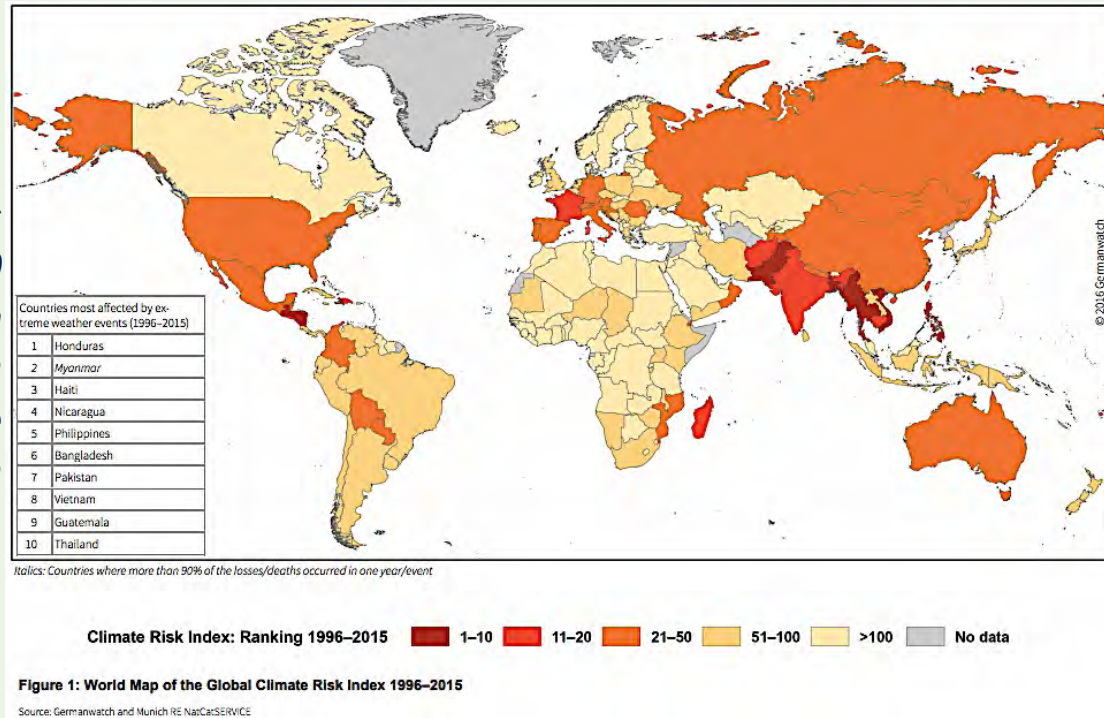
Göran Ek (2013) SLU, SIDA & University of Gothenburg

<http://sidaenvironmenthelpdesk.se/wordpress3/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/Env-and-CC-Policy-Brief-Cambodia-Final-130909.pdf>

Key environmental problems

1. CLIMATE CHANGE

The mean annual **temperature has increased** by 0.8°C since 1960 (0.18°C per decade). **increases in rainfall** for Cambodia. Sea-level in this region is projected by climate models to rise by 0.18 to 0.56 m in the 2090s

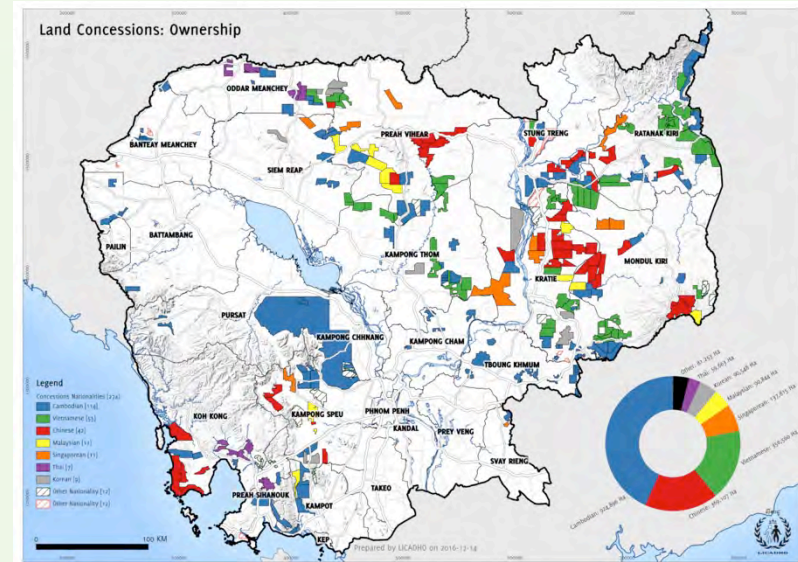


2. LAND CONVERSION

At least 86 valid **economic land concessions (ELC)** have been granted since 1995 covering a land area of about 1,041,144 hectares in 18 provinces throughout the country. However, according to the NGO Forum database, using information collected from different sources, 229 ELC have been granted in Cambodia.

3. DEFORESTATION

The **Cambodian Millennium Development Goal (CMDG)** aims to maintain forest cover at 60% by 2015. However, the deforestation rate of 1.2% is among the highest in the world and is closely linked to other key environmental problems such as **land degradation and grabbing, extinction of wildlife, soil erosion, reduced water tables and general loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services leading to reduced resilience to disasters and climate change impacts.**



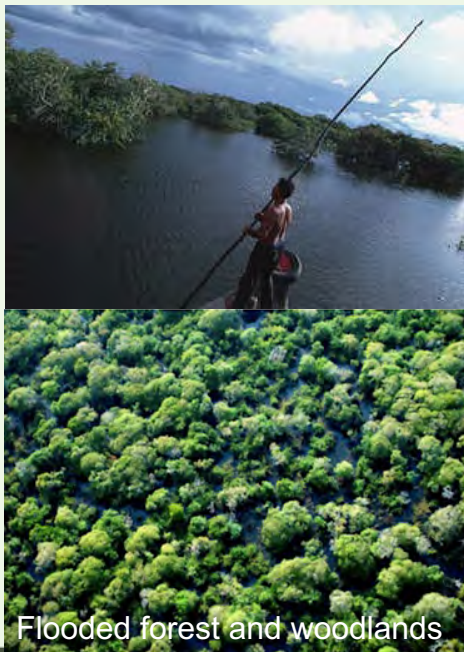
4. INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT IN THE MEKONG AND ITS TRIBUTARIES

About 86% of Cambodia's territory (156,000 km²) is included in the Mekong's basin which is an indication on how sensitive Cambodia. A number of foreign private and state owned companies are currently conducting feasibility studies for almost a dozen hydropower projects

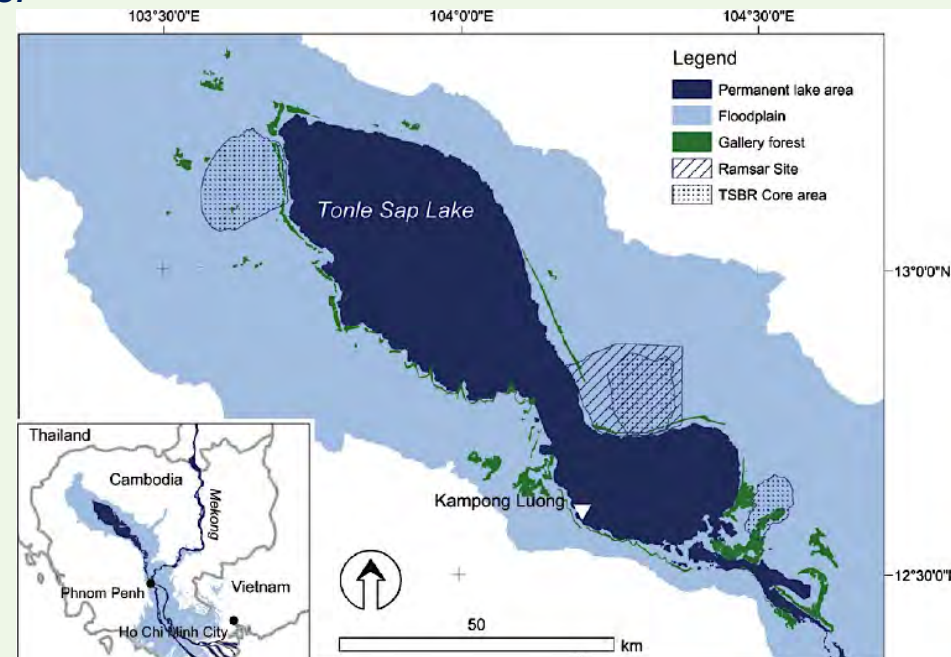


5. CONVERSION OF INUNDATED FORESTS AND WETLANDS

*A significant loss of healthy **fish habitats** due in a large part to conversion of inundated forests and wetlands into crop land, thus leading to an increase in use of pesticides in and around traditional capture fish production areas.*



Flooded forest and woodlands



6. DEGRADATION OF SOILS AND PESTICIDE USE IN AGRICULTURE

Most of the soil types identified have a rather low natural fertility. Average household use of fertilizers has now reached 115 kg for each production season.

7. DEPLETION OF BIODIVERSITY

Specific drivers to biodiversity loss include land conversion (ELC) for agriculture, mining, large-scale tourism, and other economic activities also contributes to biodiversity loss as well as infrastructure development in natural areas (roads, dams, urbanization) that open up forest land to further development. And an increasing illegal wildlife trade.

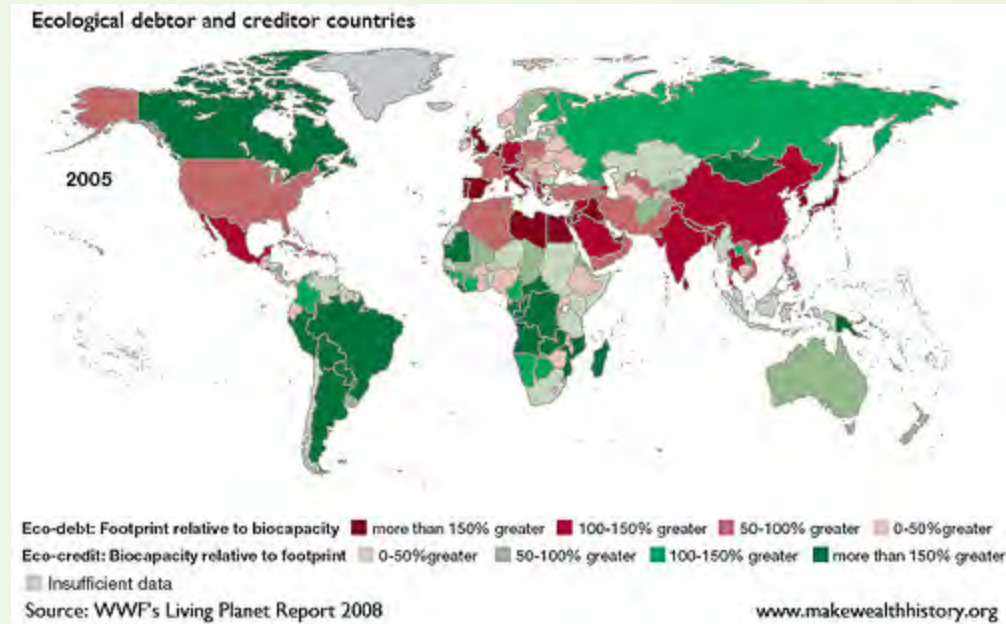
8. INCREASED PRESSURE ON MARINE AND COASTAL ZONES

***Mangrove loss** have accelerated from 1.6% between 1990 and 2000 to 1.9% between 2000 and 2010. There are strong indications of **widespread seagrass habitat destruction** due to degradation of water quality and destructive fishing practices. And **coral reefs are threatened** by overfishing, harvesting of corals (for trade), degradation of the water quality and the use of destructive fishing practices.*



Ecological Footprints by Country

- If a country does not have enough ecological resources within its own territory, then there is a local ecological deficit and it is called an **ecological debtor** country.
- Otherwise, it has an ecological remainder and it is called an **ecological creditor** country.



Extractive Industries in Cambodia is now expanding from exploration to exploitation where exploitation licenses have been increased from 18 in 2015 to 23 in 2017 (**Oxfam, 2017**).

Impractical license of ASM

Late of power delegation to the sub-national level (2015)

ASM communities becoming informal/illegalize and vulnerable

Conflict

Environmental negative impacts

Environmental health

Gender and child labour

An Artisan Mining License may be issued only to persons of Khmer nationality for the purpose of conducting the exploration and exploitation of mineral resources by using locally available common instruments and their own labor or with the help of family with no more than 7 (seven) persons.

Mining crafts may explore and exploit mineral resources found only in loose state in silts, gravel, sand and rock, and within a demarcated area no larger than 1 (one) hectare, and to a maximum depth of 5 (five) meters.



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Planned Actions to Implement the Prioritized Policies

Environmental Protection and Conservation and Climate Change (MoE)

- Implement the Cambodia Climate Change Strategic Plan 2014-2023.
- Adopt Green Growth and low carbon development strategies, which are key to sustainable economic development.
- Strengthen the management of protected areas to eliminate illegal exploitation of natural resources, and curb illegal land and forest clearings.
- Evaluate environmental impacts of any development projects proposed.
- Maintain a high quality environment: it should be chemical-free; by monitoring and inspecting polluting sources and monitoring water, soil and air.
- Adapt to climate change and mitigation measures for reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.
- Strengthen the implementation of bio-safety and biotechnology activities.
- Strengthen environmental education and dissemination of environmental information.



Cambodia plans to have an ambitious **Natural Resources and Environmental code** adopted by the end of 2017.



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