

**Assessing Ecotourism Using Pro-poor Tourism Principles:  
The Case of Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary, Cambodia**

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## **List of Abbreviations**

AIPP	Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact
ADB	Asian Development Bank
APT	Anti-Poverty Tourism
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
AUTEC	Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee
CBET	Community-based Ecotourism
CDC	Council for the Development of Cambodia
CFs	Community Forestries
CLV	Cambodia-Lao-Vietnam
C-PEST Analysis	Competitive-Political Economic Socio-cultural Technological Analysis
DDF	Deciduous Dipterocarp Forest
DFID	Department for International Development
DoA	Department of Agriculture
DoE	Department of Environment
DoT	Department of Tourism
DWNP	Department of Wildlife and National Parks
ELIE	Elephant Livelihood Initiative Environment
EPL	Eastern Plains Landscape
FA	Forestry Administration
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
ha	hectares
ICT	Information and Commuication Technologies
IIED	International Institute for Environment and Development
KOICA	Korea International Cooperation Agency
MAT	Mondulkiri Adventure Tour
MoE	Ministry of Environment
MoT	Ministry of Tourism
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
NTFPs	Non-Timber Forest Products
NZD	New Zealand Dollar
PDR	People's Democratic Republic

RGC	Royal Government of Cambodia
RUPP	Royal University of Phnom Penh
ST-EP	Sustainable Tourism-Eliminating Poverty
TIANZ	Tourism Industry Association New Zealand
UNESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
UNWTO	United Nations World Tourism Organisation
WTTC	World Travel and Tourism Council
WWF	World Wildlife Fund

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## **Attestation of Authorship**

“I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor materials which to a substantial extent have been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning”.

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**Socheata TAO**

**July 2017**

## **Abstract**

The purpose of this study is to assess ecotourism in the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary, Cambodia using pro-poor tourism principles. There are two basic research questions: 1) what aspects of pro-poor tourism are evident in tourism development in the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary?; and 2) are there alternative models of tourism development that encourage stakeholder collaboration and poverty alleviation? Using a case study approach, nine key informants were selected for the semi-structured in-depth interviews. The study employed an interpretive thematic approach as an analysing tool, and NVivo was used as a tool for organising the data into themes.

The study revealed that tourism in the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary does not necessarily follow the principles of pro-poor tourism. The findings suggest that: 1) tourism operations in the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary are not commercially realistic because they may not provide secure income to the local community; 2) local participation in terms of tourism planning and in the local economy remained rather limited; 3) a holistic livelihood approach and opportunities principle showed that tourism is not a main option for local community livelihoods; 4) the distribution channels in tourism at this sanctuary entirely depend on private actors (e.g. tour operators) to bring tourists; 5) although training programmes were in place, there was nevertheless a limited ability to transfer those skills to local villagers; 6) local empowerment remains questionable; and 7) in terms of flexibility, besides a lack of specific tourism plans for this sanctuary, the strategic plans for the whole Monduliri province appeared to neglect some important aspects when assessed using a C-PEST analysis model.

The study suggests that joint-venture partnerships may be an applicable model for the current situation in the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary. Suggestions were proposed in line

with the adoption of this model, namely: 1) clear benefit-sharing mechanisms; 2) an agreement between local community and the private actors; 3) on-the-job training and capacity-building programmes for local villagers; 4) a key facilitator to coordinate work between local communities and private actors; 5) development of a monitoring tool kit and an evaluation programme in order to track the progress of the partnership and its tourism businesses; and 6) setting a proper timeframe for the project implementation.

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## **Chapter 1. Introduction**

### **1.1 Background to the Cambodian Economy**

Cambodia, a country with a low-lying central plain landscape surrounded by uplands and mountainous areas including the Tonle Sap Great Lake and the Mekong river delta, covers an area of 181,035 km<sup>2</sup> (Soklieng, 2013; WWF, 2006). The country shares its border with Lao People's Democratic Republic (PDR) to the north-east, Thailand to the north and west, and Vietnam to the east (WWF, 2006). Among the other Asian countries, Cambodia has been regarded as one of the faster-growing economies over the past five years (ADB, 2016). According to the Council for the Development of Cambodia (CDC, 2017), primary industry, secondary industry and tertiary industry respectively accounted for 26.18%, 22% and 38% of the whole Cambodian economy.

Additionally, tourism is one the top priority sectors and functions as a tool to contribute to the improvement of socio-economic conditions and job opportunities, enhancement of local people's livelihoods, and alleviation of poverty in Cambodia (MoT, 2012). CDC (2017) acknowledged the importance of the contribution by the tourism sector to the overall Cambodian economy. According to Ministry of Tourism (MoT, 2012, p. iii), the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) regards tourism as a "green gold" sector, which is defined as an essential aspect of green economic development due to its contribution to Cambodian gross domestic product (GDP).

MoT (2007, p. 1) maintained that tourism is "a billion dollar earner" which is one of the fastest growing industries in Cambodia. As an example, the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC, 2015) advised that in 2014, travel and tourism contributed 13.5% of total GDP. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2013)

maintained that Cambodia had the highest international tourism receipts of ASEAN countries as a contribution to GDP. Tourism receipts and the number of tourists as confirmed by the Ministry of Tourism have increased significantly in recent years. The number of tourist arrivals, for instance, increased from 4,502,775 in 2014 to 4,775,231 by the end of 2015 (MoT, 2015). In addition to this statistical evidence, MoT (2015) declared that tourism receipts had soared dramatically. From 2014 to 2015, these increased from 2,736 million US dollars to 3,012 million US dollar (MoT, 2015). In that respect, the top five tourist arrivals in Cambodia are from the ASEAN countries. This is a positive consequence of ASEAN integration (free visa policy), which allows tourists to travel to Cambodia more conveniently. According to MoT (2015), the top five international markets in 2015 were Vietnam, China, Lao, Korea and Thailand.

## **1.2 Case Study Context**

This section presents an overview of Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary. According to MoT (2012), tourism sites in Cambodia are divided into six major hubs. These include the north-eastern ecotourism site, which is home to great biodiversity, natural attractions, and diverse ethnic culture (MoT, 2012). The main tourism promotional theme for this area is “culture and nature” (MoT, 2012, p. 17). There has been growing interest from tourists travelling to ecotourism and community-based destinations in the rural areas and also the mountainous ones (MoT, 2012). Although the number of foreign visitors to ecotourism sites in Cambodia is lower than those who visited Phnom Penh and surrounds, Siem Reap and surrounds, and the coastal areas, the number of foreign visitors to ecotourism sites increased from 60,031 in 2014 to 63,261 in 2015 (MoT, 2015).

Mondulkiri Province, located in the north-eastern part of Cambodia, consists of valuable dry forest and is home to various endangered species. This province covers 1,366,891

hectares (ha). This province is one of the provinces in Cambodia situated in the Cambodia-Lao-Vietnam (CLV) triangle. MoT recognises the importance of this province as a zone for ecotourism and nature tourism both in Cambodia and in the entire CLV triangle area (DoT & WWF, 2013; Phat, 2014). Interestingly, this province is implementing a strategic plan aiming to promote mountain biking.

**Figure 1. Location of Mondulkiri Province, Cambodia**



**Source:** OntheWorldMap (2017)

This province is also a part of the Eastern Plain Landscape (EPL) which is made up of five important protected areas including Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary, Seima Wildlife Sanctuary, Phnom Prich Wildlife Sanctuary, Lumphat Wildlife Sanctuary and Yok Don National Park (Vietnam) (Rohit et al., 2013). This province has attracted attention from both national and international tourism (Table 1 below).



**Table 1. Number of national and international tourists visiting Mondulkiri province from 2000 to 2012**

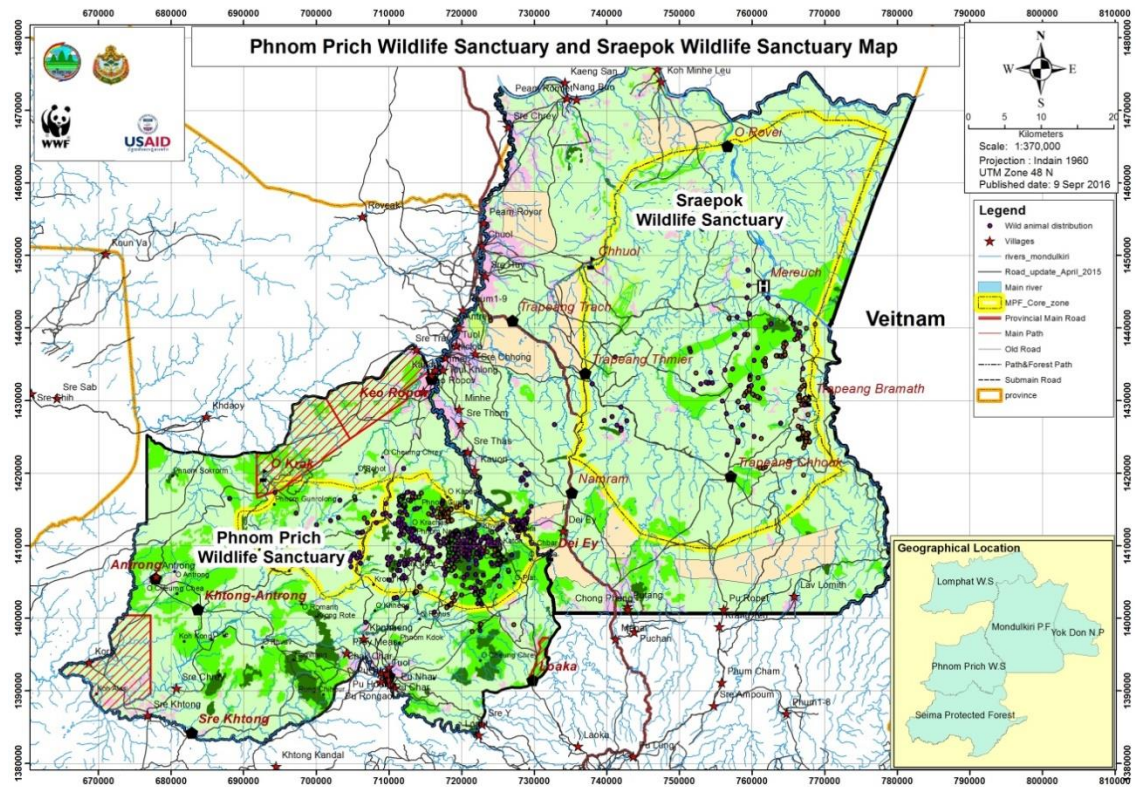
Year	National tourists		International tourists		Total	Growth (%)
	Number	Growth (%)	Number	Growth (%)		
2000	90	-	208	-	298	-
2001	223	147.78	409	96.63	632	112.08
2002	366	64.13	563	37.65	929	46.99
2003	919	151.09	2108	274.42	3,027	225.83
2004	8,295	802.61	1,058	-49.81	9,353	208.99
2005	9,020	8.74	1,024	-3.21	10,044	7.39
2006	11,801	30.83	1,828	78.52	13,629	35.69
2007	17,085	44.78	2,110	15.43	19,195	40.84
2008	19,014	11.29	2,406	14.03	21,420	11.59
2009	26,836	41.14	3,420	42.14	30,256	41.25
2010	40,652	51.48	3,916	14.50	44,568	47.30
2011	58,757	44.54	4,879	24.59	63,636	42.78
2012	78,784	34.08	5,138	5.31	83,922	31.88

Source: Adopted from DoT and WWF (2013)

The Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary, which covers an area of 372,971 ha (MoE, 2016), is classified into four major zones: 1) core protection zone (90,734 ha); 2) regulated use zone; 3) community use zone; and 4) ecotourism zone (WWF & FA, 2015). Within the community use zone, there are three sub-community clusters (consisting of villages and communes): 1) the northern cluster; 2) the western cluster; and 3) the southern cluster (WWF, 2006). The whole site comprises 3 districts, 8 communes, and 30 villages and there are 3,542 families inside the area (WWF & FA, 2015). Regarding the demographic situation in the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary, there are 11 ethnic groups of which 45% are Bunong People, 33% are Khmer, and 13% Laotian (WWF & FA, 2015). Before the sanctuary was named as the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary, it was known as “the Mondulkiri Protected Forest”. The Mondulkiri Protected Forest was proclaimed a protected sanctuary by the Royal Government of Cambodia in 2002 (WWF & FA, 2015). At that time, the Mondulkiri Protected Forest was under the control of

Cambodia's Forestry Administration. Then in 2016, it was changed to the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary which is officially under the control and management of the Ministry of Environment (MoE, 2016).

**Figure 2. Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary Map**

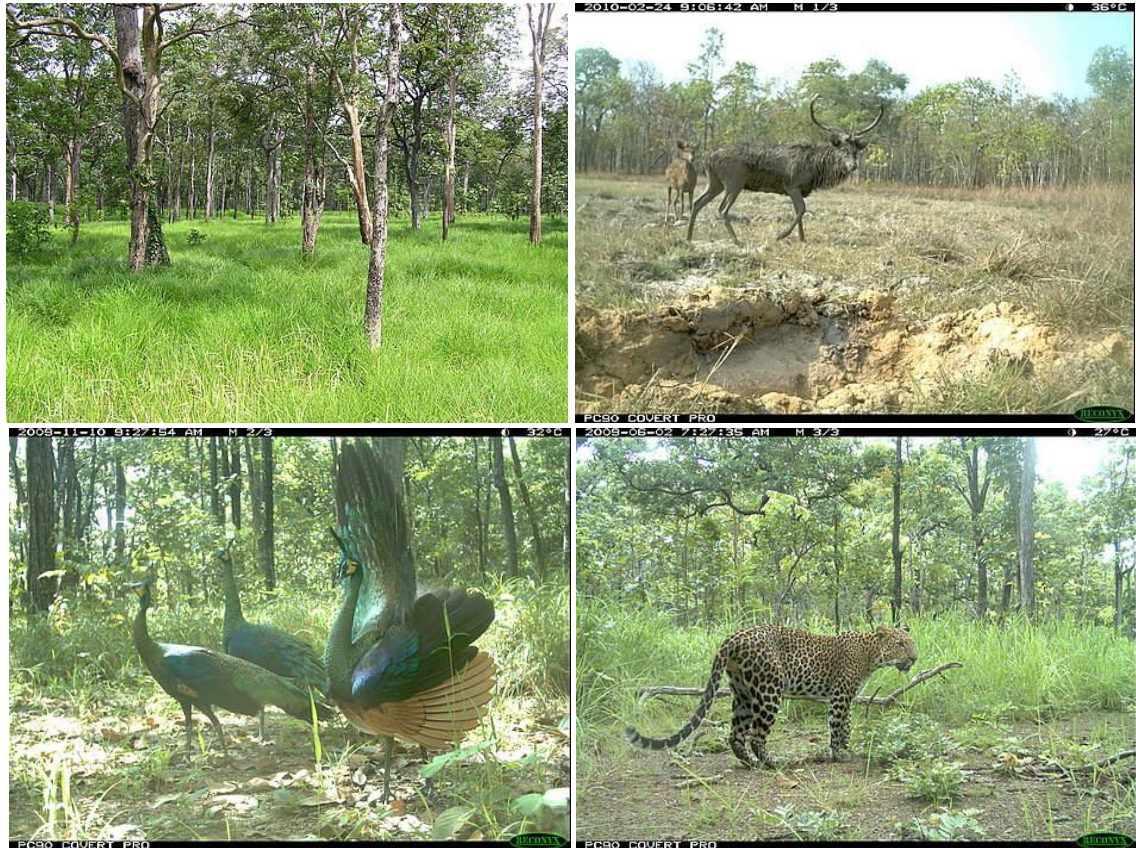


**Source:** MoE, FA, WWF, and USAID (2017)

This sanctuary not only has abundant natural resources but also various wildlife species living inside the area. WWF (2006, 2017a) reported that the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary consists of the Lower Mekong Dry Forest Ecoregion which is home to many different rare species of wildlife. These include three wild cattle species (Banteng, gaur, and wild water buffalo), deer species, wild pigs, tigers, leopards, variety of jungle cat, sun bears, different type of primates, and bird species (sarus crane, giant and white-shoulder ibis, vulture, and green peafowl), and others types of species (WWF, 2017a).



**Figure 3. Wildlife Species in the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary**



Source: Adapted from [http://cambodia.panda.org/where\\_we\\_work/dry\\_forests/mondulkiri\\_protected\\_forest/](http://cambodia.panda.org/where_we_work/dry_forests/mondulkiri_protected_forest/) ,  
retrieved 31 May, 2017

### **1.3 Research Gap**

This study used pro-poor tourism principles to assess the current ecotourism development in Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary. There are two research problem statements which made the researcher choose this topic as an area of study. The first type is generated from the actual context of tourism in the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary, and the other is the research gap found in the existing literature.

This part starts with an explanation of the problem statement derived from the actual context of the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary. First, the illegal poaching activities inside

the Sanctuary are still happening. If ecotourism can provide sufficient benefits to both local villagers and wildlife as advised by the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED, 2017), the illegal poaching actions committed by some local villagers will be reduced. WWF (2017b) provided proof of illegal logging and hunting which were found inside the sanctuary. Without knowing, local communities are part of this problem because they were found overharvesting species and degrading the ecosystem within the Srepok Wildlife Sanctuary (IIED, 2017). It means that those activities are also part of local people's livelihood activities.

Therefore, it appears that if current ecotourism fully benefited local villagers, they would not become involved in degrading the natural resources which are regarded as a core attraction for ecotourism. However, it turns out to be the case that natural resources inside the sanctuary have been threatened from other livelihood activities. IIED (2017) confirmed that many species' populations have seriously declined in the last few decades because of unsustainable harvesting and habitat loss. If tourism worked properly and provided significant benefits to local communities, there would be no cases of illegal hunting and logging in which local communities take part. It could be translated that benefits from tourism are not necessarily sufficient to local communities. Due to this problem, the Sraepok Wilderness Area is an initiative within the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary in order to address problems of illegal hunting, logging, and subsistence farming within the protected area which has potential for tourism development (WWF, 2006). One of the key objectives for this project is:

To initiate wildlife ecotourism activities in the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary and to provide a model for the development of sustainable ecotourism activities elsewhere in Cambodia (WWF, 2006, p. 4).

However, to what extent ecotourism can benefit local villagers has remains uncertain until recent times.

Additionally, it appears that ecotourism sites such as the Srepok Wildlife Sanctuary do not necessarily gain benefits from tourism. Based on statistics provided by MoT, the number of tourists travelling to ecotourism sites remained small compared with tourists to coastal zones and other areas (MoT, 2015) although the government has paid attention to developing ecotourism at the community level. This consequence appears not to support what the government has been trying to do. DoT and WWF (2013), and MoT (2012) claimed that tourism is regarded as a tool for socio-economic development, local livelihood improvement, employment and poverty reduction. Community-based tourism and ecotourism are promoted with a hope that poverty is reduced at a local level (MoT, 2012). Based on the claim by the Department of Tourism, promoting ecotourism aligns with Goal number 1 of the Cambodia Millennium Development Goals, which is *Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger* (RGC, 2007). On the other hand, the number of tourists travelling to ecotourism sites remains lower than the number of tourists who travel to coastal zones. Therefore, it is questioned how the local community can benefit from the small number of visitors into the ecotourism site?

Moreover, previous studies have not answered whether or not tourism contributes to poverty alleviation at local level in the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary. This is why the researcher chose to focus on this particular issue. No previous study has focused on using the principles of pro-poor tourism to evaluate whether current ecotourism, particularly in the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary, really makes local livelihoods better. There have been several studies on tourism undertaken in this sanctuary; however, none of them took poverty reduction into consideration in relation to tourism. As an example, there are studies on several topics in relation to tourism development in this sanctuary such as: 1) “Tourism product development: a case study at Trapeang Khaerm

Community Forest” conducted by Department of Tourism, RUPP under financial support from WWF; 2) “Ecotourism investor demand study” conducted by WWF; and 3) “Using Wildlife ecotourism for sustainable resource management in Sraepok Wilderness Area of Northeastern Cambodia”.

The study also found a gap in the theoretical literature which guided the author to choose pro-poor tourism as an area of interest. There are two myths that encouraged the researcher to choose pro-poor tourism principles to access the current potential of ecotourism, particularly for the selected research site.

First, there is a gap in the knowledge about pro-poor tourism and its relationship to tourism development. This is because the theoretical and methodological development of a pro-poor tourism approach has not been assessed systematically. Pearce (2012) illustrated that none of the previous studies analysed the theoretical frameworks and models of pro-poor tourism in their studies despite authors acknowledging the importance of theories and models in providing a clear framework for the study (as cited in Truong, 2014).

Additionally, there is currently a lack of understanding and study about a pro-poor tourism approach. According to Truong (2014), a deep understanding of poverty is almost entirely lacking because the research related to pro-poor tourism has been mostly conducted in African countries. For instance, academia and policy workers perceived poverty differently from the poor (Truong, 2014). Some people think that they are poor only when they have no land or lose their land and are relocated to other areas due to tourism development in the area (Johnston, 2007). However, people in Lao and Vietnam define themselves as poor only when they have no rice (Harrison & Schipani, 2007).

More importantly, only a small number of tourism researchers have paid attention to poverty reduction and other relevant issues (Zhao & Ritchie, 2007). According to Truong (2014), pro-poor tourism research has not reached its academic saturation level yet. Therefore, theories and models related to pro-poor tourism are not as diverse as those relating to other types of tourism.

Second, it is still questionable whether ecotourism can really solve the problem of poverty alleviation within regions. There have been contradictory arguments among previous scholars regarding this question. According to one side of the story, ecotourism is a tool that supports many dimensions of sustainable tourism development principles. These dimensions include promoting awareness about the environment and conservation, encouraging unique travelling experiences and education, as well as enhancing community welfare and dealing with ethical issues (Ceballos-Lascurain, 1987; Donohoe & Needham, 2006; Fennel, 2008). Additionally, Buckley (2009) suggested that ecotourism can contribute to the preservation of threatened biodiversity and enhancement of the local economies as well.

According to other side of the story, there have been concerns about the negative effects of ecotourism development. The point is that misunderstanding, misusing, and abusing of ecotourism can result in negative impacts. Drumm and Moore (2002) explained that some tourism operations use the term “ecotourism” as a marketing tactic to attract the attention of tourists who are keen to contribute to environmental conservation and the improvement of society. Although not everyone agreed, Fennell and Dowling (2003) maintained that many academics view ecotourism as a scam or a marketing ploy. Subsequently, Aramberri (2010) asked whether ecotourism could be a “morality tale” for volunteer tourism and pro-poor tourism in the future.

More specifically, many ecotourism destinations are at risk because there is a lack of adequate environmental assessment in place (Tsaur, Lin, & Lin, 2006). More importantly, there is a lack of appropriate frameworks to guide basic principles of ecotourism. Courvisanos and Jain (2006) gave a specific example in Costa Rica with regard to this claim. Government agencies, conservation non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and local communities in Costa Rica failed to put into operation the guiding principles of ecotourism. Given the arguments aforementioned, pro-poor tourism will be used to assess the current form of ecotourism in the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary.

#### **1.4 Aim and Objectives**

This study aimed at assessing tourism in the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary, Cambodia using pro-poor tourism principles. There are two objectives:

- 1) to analyse the current form of tourism development in the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary with regard to pro-poor tourism principles; and
- 2) to explore alternative models that encourage stakeholder collaboration and poverty alleviation.

#### **Research Questions**

- 1) What aspects of pro-poor tourism are evident in tourism development in the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary?
- 2) Are there alternative models of tourism development that encourage stakeholder collaboration and encourage poverty alleviation?

#### **1.5 Thesis Structure**

This thesis is structured into six chapters. The first chapter has introduced the research context together with the aim and objectives of the study. Chapter Two presents a



literature review with the aim of providing fundamental theories and a research framework by previous scholars with regard to pro-poor tourism and its relation to poverty reduction. Chapter Three explains the research methodology, data collection methods and data analysis tools which were used to reach the objectives of this study. Chapter Four discusses the key results and research findings. Chapter Five provides an analysis and discussion from the data that emerged in relation to the literature review. This allows the researcher to highlight what this study has to contribute to the existing literature. The final chapter is a conclusion, which demonstrates the key findings, suggests research implications and recommendations including future study, and presents limitations of the study and its potential significance.

## **Chapter 2. Literature Review**

This chapter explores relevant literature with regard to this study. This chapter is structured into five main sections. First, this chapter explored an overview of mass tourism and its impacts which led to the birth of pro-poor tourism. The second section presents an overall understanding about pro-poor tourism starting with definitions and the purposes of developing it. This is followed by section three, on the principles of pro-poor tourism, in which each principle is critically discussed. A small set of indicators is explored in order to measure these individual principles. At the end of this section, a table is attached in order to give a brief summary of the principles of pro-poor tourism that this study touches on together with their key indicators. The final section of this chapter presents a possible stakeholder collaboration model. This provides an understanding of the importance of having one possible model for tourism development at community level in order to fulfil the objectives of this study.

### **2.1 From Mass Tourism to Pro-poor Tourism**

During the neoliberal period, governments in the third world countries have been very supportive of encouraging a large number of visitors in order to create more economic expansion opportunities (Scheyvens, 2002). The most visible notion of mass tourism is associated with cheap package holidays and a tourist sensibility focusing on warm climate, coastal pleasure, freedom from highly-disciplined world, relaxation and a party environment (Pons, Crang, & Travlou, 2009). Brohman (1996) expressed a concern on the narrow perspective chosen by the government trying to get only a large number of tourists in order to enlarge foreign exchange when there is no connection between this and wider development goals including poverty elimination and regional development. Ghimire (2001) maintained that in developing countries, the government has put

considerable effort in trying to getting more foreign visitors while ignoring the problem that mass tourism brings. It could only be interpreted that more elite businesspeople, who have an investment in resort and hotel properties in most tourism destinations, could get more money from the growing tourist numbers (Brohman, 1996). Shah and Gupta (2000) indicated that from luxury hotels to tourism resorts, mass tourism does not necessarily bring good returns but it also can cause significant social negative impacts on local communities. Fennell and Dowling (2003) also maintained that with the increasing number of tourists visiting natural places, it is clear that mass tourism provides an increase in negative impacts on the environment.

Due to social, economic and environmental impacts from conventional and mass tourism, alternative tourism products have been developed (Scheyvens, 2002). Choi and Sirakaya (2006) added that some policy makers go in search of alternative tourism tools and development options simply because they are aware of the negative impact derived from mass tourism. Harrison and Schipani (2007) maintained that the recent focus of tourism has been switched to ecotourism, pro-poor tourism and community based tourism. This is aligned with what Rodenburg (1980) mentioned in his study. He maintained that bottom-up development, local participation, locally-owned and small scale tourism is favoured when taking into consideration the impact of mass tourism and transnational companies (Rodenburg, 1980).

However, there are also critiques about the concept of pro-poor tourism with regards to how helpful this approach could be in combating poverty at a grass-roots level. There is still controversy about the contribution of pro-poor tourism to communities. From the point of view of King and Dinkoksung (2014), pro-poor tourism is viewed as both an empowering and exploitive tool. King and Dinkoksung (2014) maintained that there are

two problems with pro-poor tourism. Firstly, financial return to communities is considerably small. Aramberri (2010, p. 323) expressed a concern on this matter through asking one critical question: “Could this type of tourism find much demand? Can they elicit the necessary investments to make such commendable impacts come true?” It is very difficult to make small-scale development profitable although it might be beautiful (Aramberri, 2010).

Second, only people with entrepreneurial skills can gain the benefits from this development (King & Dinkoksung, 2014). Pro-poor tourism is problematic when stakeholders appear to manipulate and take advantage of the true poor. This happens when stakeholders who are powerful and enjoy certain privilege in communities take the opportunities to serve their self-interest. Therefore, it becomes very doubtful if pro-poor largely benefits the poor. The Department for International Development (DFID, 1999) confirmed that pro-poor tourism will not benefit the poor equally; that means some might not be able to grasp the opportunities. Therefore, DFID (1999) was very specific that the “fairly poor” who have more capital and skills are more likely to gain a lot of benefit in comparison to the poorest. In order to deal with this, Chok, Macbeth, and Warren (2007) suggested that it is essential to ensure that pro-poor tourism does not put its main focus on any one homogenous group.

If pro-poor tourism also has its own problems, should it be considered when developing tourism at the community level? Aramberri (2010, p. 323) asked an important question with regard to this matter, which is: “Should people be discouraged from engaging in pro-poor tourism?” The answer according to Aramberri (2010) is absolutely ‘no’ because at some stage, pro-poor tourism may provide job opportunities and income for livelihood improvement in some local places; however, in order to be successful, this

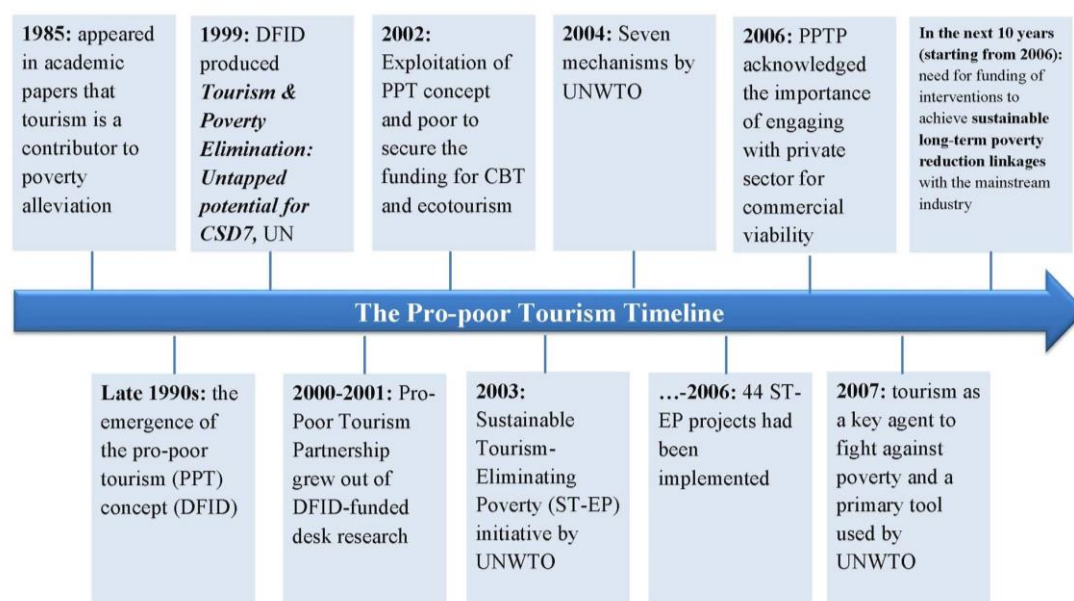
type of tourism has to be able to attract investment and be able to encourage tourists to visit in order to sustain it.

Among the other alternative forms of tourism, pro-poor tourism appears to try to involve more local communities in comparison with other alternative forms. Other forms of tourism do not consider the effects on poor people's livelihood like pro-poor tourism does as its first priority. For instance, while ecotourism benefits local people through incentives for environmental conservation (Ashley, Roe, & Goodwin, 2001), pro-poor tourism puts major emphasis on enlarging opportunities explicitly for poor people and also contributes to environmental conservation (Ashley et al., 1999). Additionally, while the aim of community-based ecotourism (Chok et al.) is to encourage local people to get involved in the development, pro-poor tourism not only works to engage more local communities but also ensure that those benefits and opportunities are accessed by the poor (Ashley et al., 2001).

Starting from the late 1990s, the concept of pro-poor tourism has become widespread, "worthwhile and more self-consciously moral", especially when adopting this idea into community-based organisations under the umbrella of sustainable tourism (Harrison & Schipani, 2007). Tourism and its contribution to poverty alleviation have been mentioned in academic publications before 1985 even though pro-poor tourism is a relatively new concept (Truong, 2014). The growing interest in focusing on poverty reduction, specifically the intention of the United Nations to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, happened after the official endorsement of the British government that put poverty alleviation at the heart of the development agenda (Goodwin, 2009). UNWTO (2011) started the Sustainable Tourism Eliminating Poverty (ST-EP) initiative in 2003 with the purpose of using tourism as an initial tool to fight against poverty.

Exploring the evolution of the pro-poor tourism concept gives a deep understanding regarding the changes in the development focus over a period of time. Subsequently, the author developed a timeline for the evolution of the pro-poor tourism concept below (See Figure 4 below).

**Figure 4. The Pro-poor Tourism Timeline Developed by the Researcher**



## 2.2 Definition of Pro-poor Tourism and its Purposes

This section sets out the fundamental definition of pro-poor tourism and its purposes. Pro-poor tourism is defined as tourism that generates net benefit for the poor (benefits greater than costs) (Bennet, Roe, & Ashley, 1999, p. ii). The most important thing about pro-poor tourism is that it is not a tourism product or attraction, but an approach to the development and management of tourism (Ashley & Haysom, 2005; PPTP, 2004; Singh, 2001).

There are several key purposes of using pro-poor tourism: 1) rather than enlarge the size of the tourism sector, pro-poor tourism aims at unlocking opportunities for the local poor community (Bennet et al., 1999; Goodwin, 2009); 2) to create a direct connection

between tourism and poverty elimination by putting emphasis on the poor's voices and needs in tourism development (UNWTO, 2002); and 3) to alleviate poverty at the community level and ensure that the development benefits disadvantaged groups (Saayman & Giampiccoli, 2015; UNESCAP, 2003). Notably, pro-poor tourism is a model that can be applicable to a wide range of tourism products and attractions (UNESCAP, 2003). Furthermore, Ashley et al. (2001) explained in detail the benefits of pro-poor tourism including: 1) opportunities are expanded for the poor; 2) demands for products and services supplied by the poor will rise; 3) the sources of livelihood in a rural area will be diversified; 4) pro-poor tourism supports pro-poor policies and process change; and 5) it fundamentally supports sustainable tourism to reach its goal for poverty reduction.

### **2.3 Pro-poor Tourism Integrated Research Framework**

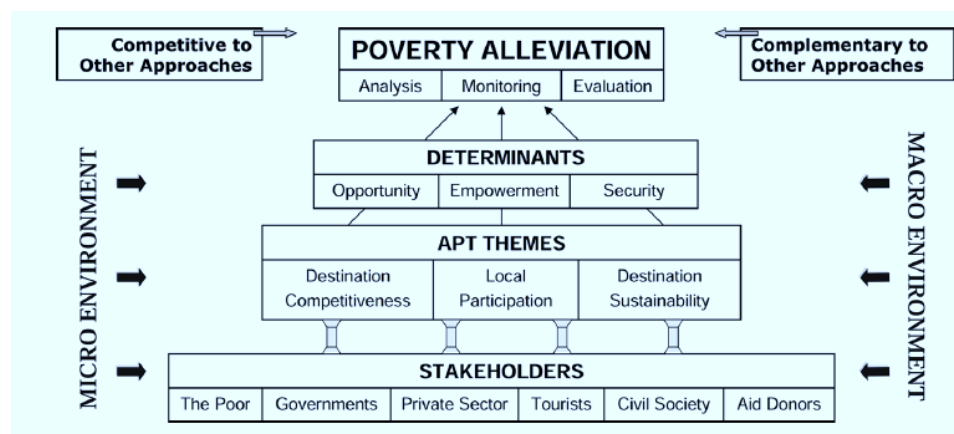
This section introduces an integrated research framework adopted from Zhao and Ritchie (2007). This framework puts poverty elimination at the apex of the concept and functions as a catalyst that allows investigation in future research, which is crucial for the foundation of the emerging research topic. The four ladders, namely poverty alleviation, determinants, anti-poverty tourism (APT) themes, and stakeholders, basically represent the process and mechanisms as a way how tourism can benefit poverty reduction (see Figure 5, page 19).

*Poverty alleviation* is regarded as an important objective of any development initiative and which is the convergent part of the whole framework. Another ladder, which is *determinants*, involves three aspects, namely opportunity, empowerment, and security. These three aspects are what every development initiative must fulfil as prerequisites in order to complete the objective of poverty alleviation.

The next ladder is *APT themes*, which comprises destination competitiveness, local participation, and destination sustainability. Each tourist site needs to: 1) enhance destination competitiveness; 2) make sure that there is adequate local participation; and 3) ensure compliance with the sustainable principles. The last ladder is *stakeholders* in tourism planning, development, management. The six stakeholders are: 1) the poor; 2) governments; 3) the private sector; 4) tourists; 5) civil society; and 6) aid donors. The other two overhanging boxes represent the macro environment and micro environment. These two boxes show that the tourism industry is an open system, and APT is subject to change by a wide range of influences and pressures from within and outside the system.

This thesis emphasizes the two ladders in the middle of the framework, which are *determinants* and *APT themes*. An explanation of how these two ladders were integrated with other aspects in order to finalise the principles of pro-poor tourism for this thesis is provided in the *Principles of Pro-poor Tourism and Indicators to Evaluate Ecotourism Section*.

**Figure 5. An integrative framework for anti-poverty tourism research**



Source: Adopted from Zhao and Ritchie (2007)



## **2.4 Principles of Pro-poor Tourism and Indicators to Evaluate**

### **Ecotourism**

It is no surprise that measuring one type of tourism and its sustainability is not an easy task. It demands specific principles together with key indicators. Although sustainable development is increasingly becoming a concern for the world, there is still a lack of international agreements together with uncertainty in its strategies, theories and processes (Redcliff, 1999). The point is that there is a lack of reports on sustainable tourism development and its implementation and measurement indicators to monitor and track effectiveness and changes in tourism available at the level of local communities and individual countries (Choi & Sirakaya, 2006). This means until now the term sustainability and its strategies have not been agreed upon.

According to Choi and Sirakaya (2006), there should be more studies using qualitative measurements to determine sustainability in tourism because most of the traditional approaches paid too much attention to quantitative economic measures. In addition, to measure the quality of life indicators by using objective measures is suspect (Schneider and Donaghy 1975 as cited in Tsaur et al., 2006). Additionally, Tsaur et al. (2006) argued that no single set of indicators or criteria is always applicable to all contexts of different tourism destinations. The authors added that sustainability indicators may be subjective and not always be quantifiable (Tsaur et al., 2006). One of the goals of the UNWTO, is that tourism destinations not only require a set of indicators which are useful for all situation, but also indicators which are practical to the management of a given site (as cited in Choi & Sirakaya, 2006). Therefore, this study employed a set of subjective qualitative indicators to measure individual principles of pro-poor tourism.

According to Ashley, Boyd, and Goodwin (2000), DFID (1999), and Roe and Urquhart (2004), there are eight pro-poor tourism principles. They include aspects of local livelihood as they understood that poverty is a multi-dimensional concept, and those principles are: 1) participation; 2) a holistic livelihood approach; 3) balanced approach; 4) wide applicability; 5) distribution channels in tourism; 6) flexibility; 7) commercial realism; and 8) cross-disciplinary learning (Ashley et al., 2000; DFID, 1999; and Roe & Urquhart, 2004). This research also took two ladders in the integrative pro-poor tourism framework, which are *determinants and anti-poverty tourism (APT) themes*. These two levels involve opportunity, empowerment, security, destination competitiveness, local participation, and destination sustainability (see Figure 5). Therefore by integrating the component in the APT theme with the principles guided by Ashley et al., 2000, this thesis put forward seven key principles of pro-poor tourism namely: 1) local participation; 2) empowerment; 3) a holistic approach and opportunities; 4) distribution channels in tourism; 5) commercial realism; 6) cross-disciplinary learning; and 7) flexibility (adapted from Ashley et al., 2000; DFID, 1999; Roe & Urquhart, 2004; Zhao & Ritchie, 2007). These seven principles are presented briefly at the Table 2 below.

**Table 2. Key principles of pro-poor tourism and its major indicators**

Key Principles	Major Indicators
Commercial Realism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Viability of local tourism business in the region</li> <li>• Destination sustainability</li> <li>• Destination competitiveness</li> </ul>
Local Participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public participation as community members</li> <li>• Tourism-related economic participation (employment)</li> </ul>
A Holistic Livelihood Approach and Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sources of local communities' livelihood</li> <li>• Roles of tourism in local economic stimulation</li> </ul>
Distribution Channels in Tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Roles of local communities in contact with tourists</li> <li>• Role and influence of other key intermediaries in tourism</li> </ul>
Cross-disciplinary learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The presence of income generation capacity-building</li> <li>• Skill obtained by the communities beside tourism and hospitality related skills</li> </ul>
Empowerment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local capacity to influence and be involved in matters related to their communities</li> </ul>

Flexibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specific management plan and strategies to different context</li> </ul>
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Source: Adapted from Ashley et al. (2000); DFID (1999); Roe and Urquhart (2004); Zhao and Ritchie (2007)

### ***2.4.1 Commercial Realism***

Pro-poor tourism means doing business differently, whether that business is a large beach resort or a luxury wilderness lodge (Ashley & Haysom, 2005); that means it involves more than just small, medium and micro enterprises (Chok et al., 2007). This section concerns the explanation of key three components of commercial realism, which includes commercial viability, destination sustainability and destination competitiveness. These three components will be critically discussed in the following order.

This part presents the first measurement of the commercial realism principle which is the commercial viability. Ashley et al. (2000), DFID (1999), and Roe and Urquhart (2004) agreed that commercial viability is one of the major focuses on measuring commercial realism. It is essential to ensure the viability of pro-poor enterprises or businesses. Murphy (1985) maintained that the community needs to be satisfied with the return for their effort and inconvenience when the community is to be put on show. Additionally, Goodwin (2009) suggested that being competitive is very important for tourism to be sustainable and in order to achieve this, local communities have to be given greater control over their tourism resources and operations. This will ensure that local communities can access the markets and have sufficient rights regarding ownership of natural and cultural resources. Tourism Industry Association New Zealand

(TIANZ, 2002) explained that tourism in the community should boost local businesses, grow and expand the local economy, encourage more community involvement, and be open for more investment opportunities. Choi and Sirakaya (2006) added that because tourism is an economic activity, sustainable tourism must be economically viable. Moreover, UNWTO (2002, p. 94) explained that

“commercial viability is paramount [...] the poor do not have sufficient resources...to risk engaging in initiatives which do not have strong links to demonstrably viable markets for their goods and services.”

In pro-poor tourism, although the poor do not have enough financial capital to start their business, they can create value and use their natural and cultural capital which can be rich and varied (Ashley et al., 2000). However, because of limiting socioeconomic conditions, and lack of human and financial capital, local and small tourism enterprises have been constrained and excluded from the development cycle by other competitors at a multinational level (Ashley et al., 2000; Zhao & Ritchie, 2007).

There are some strategies suggested by different authors in order to secure economic viability for the poor. These include: 1) local community choosing a form of tourism which complements their existing livelihood strategies and trying not to become involved in the forms of investment which demand large amounts of capital (Ashley et al., 2000); 2) integrating pro-poor tourism forms with the private sector because this inclusive engagement can make a greater impact at the local community level (DFID, 1999; Goodwin, 2009); and 3) paying close attention to key aspects such as product quality, marketing, investment in business skills and inclusion of the private sector (Ashley et al., 2001; UNWTO, 2002).

This part presents the second measurement of the commercial realism principle, which is destination sustainability. First, public sector management is essential because if

tourism is left unmanaged, tourism would damage the environment where it takes place, affecting people and the economic system both positively and negatively (Page, 2007). Fennell and Dowling (2003) maintained that governments are in a position of control where they find themselves engaging in the management and facilitation of development goals above other stakeholders. Therefore, it is suggested that the government take control over tourism through policies, actions to either limit or encourage more tourist numbers (Page, 2007). In addition to this, Worboys et al. (2005) added that what can be done and cannot be done shows up through well-constructed regulations which enable local communities to protect their own resources through their representatives. Therefore, if the policy is flawed, the existing issues within tourism destinations will not be dealt through its implementation and integration into planning mechanisms (Page, 2007). Shone, Simmons, and Dalziel (2016) added that the government's roles involve a wide range of activities: 1) infrastructure development; 2) social servicing; 3) the protection of community-wellbeing; 4) environmental conservation; 5) deployment of public and common properties into tourism product and consumption for commercial purposes; and 5) the provision of subsidies for destination marketing and promotion for the commercial goals. Reflecting the case of developing countries, Ghimire (2001) was concerned that tourism development is generally being adopted without systematic government planning.

Second, the different background of stakeholders brings about different views regarding ecotourism. Zhao and Ritchie (2007) indicated that although there is motivation for putting participatory tourism development in place, stakeholders who are interested in local participation may have a conflict of interest with each other. From the community's perspective, tourism is viewed as a means for local economic diversification, especially when livelihood options are not diverse (Ioannides, 2003).

Nevertheless, from NGOs' perspectives, Boyd and Singh (2003) stated that tourism NGOs generally put more focus on the protection of the environment, which represents the resources and assets of local communities. Cobbinah, Black, and Thwaites (2015) stated that projects related to biodiversity and conservation tend to be more focused on natural-resource-dependent communities with limited source of livelihood. However, in reality most of the projects appear to fail in contributing to poverty reduction (Cobbinah et al., 2015). Moreover, McShane (2003) once stated that many conservation projects including ones that used ecotourism or other types of tourism continue to make the poverty conditions at the local level worse because they take away local access to land and natural resources in conservation areas, without providing a substitute livelihood option. Robinson (1993) insisted that there should be a balance between conservation goals and socio-economic conditions of local communities.

The private sector is believed to have a significant influence in the economic activities but have less interest in environmental conservation within the region (Fennell & Dowling, 2003). Therefore, Fennell and Dowling (2003) advised that the position of the private sector is necessarily the opposite of the standpoint of NGOs. Because tourism is noted as an economic enterprise, private actors are offered permits to start development projects which are often a political decision (Fennell & Dowling, 2003). Fennell and Dowling (2003) continued that money is a driver that determines the agenda and actors want to make money and obtain power from such relationships. Reed (1997) added that conflicts often arise between those who intend to make changes in the nature of the economy in local communities and those who want to encourage businesses to start.

In addition to this, Murphy (1985) added another important aspect for consideration for sustainable tourism development. He advised that tourism destinations should aim at

achieving visitor satisfaction as a goal because the quality of tourists satisfaction may ensure the survival of tourism businesses (Murphy, 1985). Moreover, communities will obtain more immediate revenue and future business through recommendation from word of mouth when the destination is able to deliver what is expected by tourists (Murphy, 1985). However, Bouchon and Rawat (2016) confirmed that the expectations of tourists and the local community themselves are not necessarily matched when taking into consideration two things: 1) the destination's quality of product level and service; and 2) locals' attitudes which are derived from their own expertise and talent in serving guests. Mbaiwa (2005) also found that poor performance in providing services at the community level may threaten the sustainability of the community and their resources.

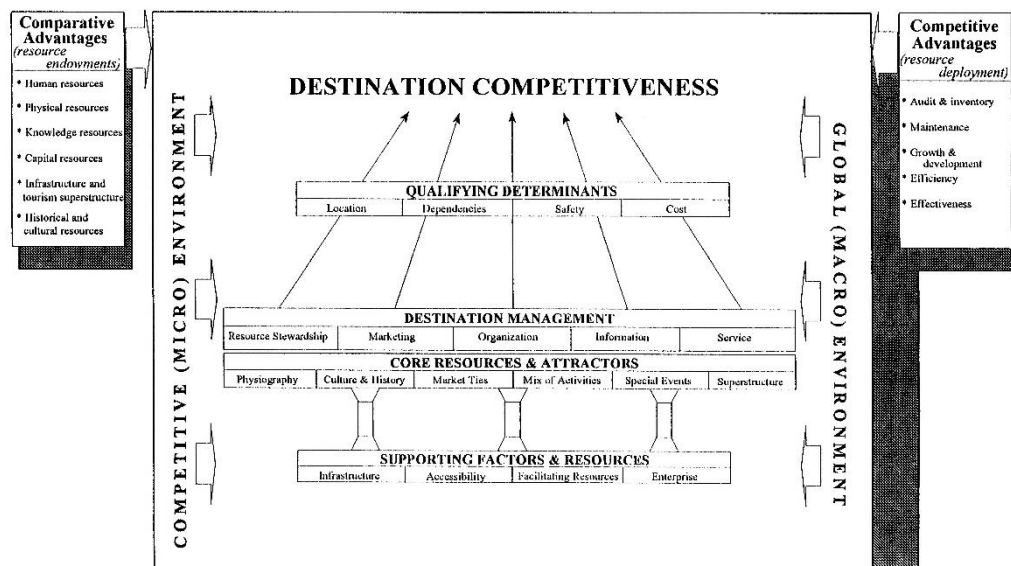
This part presents the second measurement of the commercial realism principle which is destination sustainability. After having an understanding about factors that contribute to destination sustainability, this part introduces key features of tourism destination competitiveness. The concept of destination competitiveness remains debatable within tourism research which means it is not a universally recognised concept yet (Mazanec, Wober, & ZIns, 2007). Enright and Newton (2004, 2005) advised that the performance of tourism destinations is increasingly based on the influence of destination competitiveness. A destination can attract and satisfy potential tourists if it is competitive and in defining competitiveness of the destination, a wide range of factors that influence service providers should be taken into account (Enright & Newton, 2004).

This thesis is guided by knowledge about destination competitiveness introduced by Crouch and Ritchie in 1999. This is because Mazanec et al. (2007) once confirmed that a comprehensive interpretation in which an agreement has been likely to be reached is a concept first introduced by Crouch and Ritchie. The latter authors built on a conceptual

framework of destination competitiveness in which they categorised this concept into four main determinants (Crouch & Ritchie, 1999).

The first component is *core resources and attractors*, which can be measured by six elements namely physiography, culture and history, market ties, activities, special events and the tourism superstructure. Three terms out of the six element in the core resources and attractors were explained: 1) physiography is made up of landscape and climate; 2) market ties rely on linkages of locals with the regions from which tourists come; and 3) superstructure focuses on accommodation, food services, transportation facilities, and major attractions. The next component after core resources and attractors is *supporting factor and resources*, which consist of infrastructure, accessibility, facilitating resources and enterprises. The third component is *destination management* which is a factor that can influence other component in the destination competitiveness. This component is made up of resource stewardship, marketing, organisation, information, and services. The last component is *qualifying determinants*, which focus on location, dependencies, safety and cost (Crouch & Ritchie, 1999). The following conceptual framework adopted from Crouch and Ritchie (1999) is presented in order to provide a clear understanding on how the destination competitiveness could be determined.

**Figure 6. Conceptual Framework of Destination Competitiveness**





Source: Crouch and Ritchie (1999)

In addition to the above framework, there are several authors who touched on relevant elements that affect each core component of the destination competitiveness. First, Bouchon and Rawat (2016) explained that although there are many programmes and policies trying to enhance tourism development opportunities, the gap between major tourist attractions and other secondary attractions in the rural areas still remains. Second, rural locations also play a role in making one destination become less favourable than other destinations. Moreover, another challenge of rural locations is difficulty of access to larger markets and skilled labour, and access to other business networks due to remoteness (Bosworth & Farrell, 2011).

#### ***2.4.2 Local Participation***

Local participation is imperative in ensuring opportunities for local communities. Different levels of ownership and input from communities and organisations determine the level of involvement and participation in ecotourism (Zeppel, 2006). By definition, local participation is viewed as a voluntary form of action in which people take opportunities and responsibilities of their citizenship (Tosun, 2000). Choi and Sirakaya (2006) claimed that multi-stakeholder involvement is significant for decision-making and the development process of tourism at all levels, from planning and policy making (which tends to include the government, NGOs, private industry, and local communities) to identifying a specific type of tourism that the community needs. TIANZ (2002) and Smith, 1981 as cited in Tosun (2000) advised there is a need to involve people from a wide range of backgrounds and representatives from the

communities which reflect the diversity of interest within communities. More importantly, Gunn (1988) confirmed that

“the go-it-alone policies of many tourism sectors of the past are giving way to stronger cooperation and collaboration [...] no business or government establishment can operate in isolation” (p. 272, as cited in Jamal & Getz, 1994).

Having an understanding about the importance of local participation, it is crucial to note the type and level of local participation. Based on the previous integrated framework, there are two types of local participation: public participation and participation in local employment (Zhao & Ritchie, 2007). However, Zhao and Ritchie (2007) argued that most researchers have paid less attention to public participation than to participation in employment sector. The former means participation of community members in influencing decision making related to tourism development in their own area (Zhao & Ritchie, 2007). TIANZ (2002, p. 4) stated that “if you as a community do not plan for your future, you risk someone from outside making key decisions for you”. Public participation happens under the picture of grabbing the opportunities to participate in the process of self-governance, having a response to authorities when the plan impacts their lives and working with other organisations to deal with common issues (Til, 1984 as cited in Tosun, 2000). However, Bello, Carr, and Lovelock (2016) stated that although there may be participatory tourism planning in place, it remains unassessed in terms of its level of effectiveness.

Tosun (2006) concluded that public participation is usually induced and coercive. Timothy (1993) examined the case of Indonesia, and McIntyre, Hetherington and Inskeep (1993) researched the case of Zambia and Mexico to illustrate issues regarding local participation (as cited in Tosun, 2000). They confirmed that local participation still happens in the forms of “manipulative participation, passive participation or pseudo

participation” (Tosun, 2000, p. 614). Whether in a developed or developing country, local communities are potentially excluded from the decision-making process generally because government is the party which retains control over tourism (Choi & Sirakaya, 2006). Mark (2000); Teye, Sonmez, and Sirakaya (2002) agreed that although communities should be their own decision-makers, in reality they are often divided internally and excluded from planning, decision-making and management of projects. Tourism may not mean much to the local poor if they, the target beneficiaries, remain out of the tourism economy circle (Zhao & Ritchie, 2007). Promoting principles of local participation on paper is much easier than exercising those principles in the real world (Tosun, 2000). Obviously, there are serious issues in terms of local public involvement and participation in tourism planning and development. Buultjens, Brereton, Memmott, Reser, and Thomson (2009) supported the argument that whether it be as employees or employers, the level of indigenous involvement has been very limited. More importantly, having a lack of opportunities for engaging with the public sector is another concern.

The second form of local participation involves activities related to human resources, which can be either paid work or self-employment (Zhao & Ritchie, 2007). Much of the attention in research has paid to formal and paid employment while there is less attention to the informal sector such as self-employment, local small enterprises, and vendors (Zhao & Ritchie, 2007). Beeton (2006) and Bosworth and Farrell (2011) confirmed that at certain stages tourism provides only low-skilled, low-paid and part-time occupations, with seasonality in demand, and low levels of innovation and entrepreneurship, while the more specialised work can only be obtained by outsiders. Page (2007), for instance, stated that in less-developed countries and non-urban areas,

the benefits from tourism are very seasonal and low-paid and there is high economic leakage.

It seems challenging for the poor to actively engage in local participation. Although there is a widespread understanding of the potential of tourism development, local communities still find it hard to move out of poverty and the traditional agricultural-based economy due to a lack of expertise and skills (Bouchon & Rawat, 2016). Akinyi (2015) agreed that the main barriers which limit local ability to fully participate in tourism projects include limitations in tourism knowledge and a lack of practical skills. Mark (2000) also explained some practical difficulties that a community can face namely: 1) they have a lack of capital to invest in training, facilities and advertising; 2) they may not be used to the business context; 3) they may not understand why tourists are coming to their community and what the point is of developing tourism; and 4) accessing the tourist market is difficult for local villagers.

Tosun (1999) added that the barriers in culture, operation, and structure make real public participation very limited. In addition to this, Williams and O'Neil (2007) also raised some issues limiting the ability to influence local participation in general. These include limited ability to share their culture appropriately, dealing with the business environment and government system as well as working with other stakeholders (Williams & O'Neil, 2007). Scheyvens (2002) advised that due to having a lack of information, resources, and power in relationships, and limited ability and experiences of the business sector, local communities are vulnerable to being exploited.

Another challenge comes with tourism seasonality. TIANZ (2002) observed that it is not an easy job to ensure ongoing input from local members, so developing a seasonal

calendar might be a good solution to let everyone in the community know when they can provide services, and when to engage in other economic activities when tourism is in its low season. As a consequence, poor performance is a challenge for community tourism as a tourism concept may be a new and foreign-oriented idea. In the case of the community in Basarwa, this concept is not completely understood by the community (Mbaiwa, 2005).

TIANZ (2002) explained that every member of the community needs to have an understanding about realities before using tourism as a tool for economic improvement. Scheyvens (2003) agreed that local villagers should be able to access information about the advantages and disadvantages of tourism and how it may affect their lives. This is important particularly for communities in the developing countries as the flow of information is often limited (Scheyvens, 2003). TIANZ (2002) added that it is essential to find someone who 1) is neutral and independent and able to maintain good relations with everyone in the community, and 2) has the proper diverse skills and knowledge and co-ordination regarding the preparation of tourism in the community. Burns (1999) as cited in Boyd and Singh (2003) suggested that to promote cooperation and develop connection between local communities and regional tourism sectors, NGOs can function as a bridge. However, as time passes, individual members in the formalised tourism group should be able to learn and take back roles and tasks which were originally controlled by outside facilitators (TIANZ, 2002).

#### ***2.4.3 A Holistic Approach and Opportunities***

This part presents the third principle of the pro-poor tourism which is *a holistic approach and opportunities*. A holistic approach and opportunities concerns the diverse sources of local community livelihoods (Ashley et al., 2000; DFID, 1999; Roe &

Urquhart, 2004). It is important because the degree to which one can improve local livelihoods strongly influence how sustainable tourism is, in and around, the protected areas (Liu et al., 2010). Therefore this section explores two major aspects: 1) diverse sources of local community livelihoods; 2) the reasons why tourism is chosen as part of a local community's source of income.

Communities seem to have a variety of sources of livelihood according to the literature. Tao and Wall (2009) stated that people who live in remote places do not have single jobs, but survive by depending on various sources such as hunting, gathering, fishing, agriculture, odd jobs and remittances; these jobs vary from season to season and year to year. Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP, 2010) stated that livelihood strategies and occupations of people depend greatly on the condition of their traditional lands and natural territories, and in Asia to be specific, indigenous people are mostly involved in small-scale agriculture, fishing, hunting and collecting of non-timber forest product (NTFPs). For example, Suntikul (2007) indicated that 45% of villagers in Laos rely wholly on slash-and-burn agriculture for subsistence crops. Johnston (2007) maintained that indigenous people place more value on land and natural resources as they think that they are poor only when they have no access to land and natural resources. This especially occurs when they are relocated to new places due to new development initiatives. Supporting this claim, indigenous people in Cambodia also value natural resources as their communal properties to support their subsistence livelihoods (Pinot, 2010). Travers, Winney, Clements, Evans, and Milner-Gulland (2014) supported this view by noting that indigenous people in Cambodia rely entirely on their traditional livelihood system which places much value on small-scale swidden agriculture, in which a small part of the land is used at one time during cultivation. Indigenous villagers in Mondulkiri province, for instance, based their living on collecting liquid and

dry resin to sell at the market in order to buy rice in return (Pinot, 2010). Nevertheless, evidence provided by Fox, McMahon, Poffenberger, and Vogler (2008) suggested that many communities have dramatically changed their living from traditional farming to rely on production of commercial crops and timber.

This paragraph presents common reasons why tourism is adopted in an indigenous community. The first reason is that traditional farming areas have often been threatened by illegal logging activities and commercialisation of the forest product and land concession; this leads to insecure income stability and food scarcity (Pinot, 2010). According to Mbaiwa (2005), particularly in the Basarwa, southern Africa, the concept of community tourism concept was adopted for the purposes of accomplishing rural development and natural resource management. The second reason is that tourism should enhance the opportunities for poor people to access the economic benefits in order to improve their future living conditions (Zhao & Ritchie, 2007). Gerberich (2005) also supported the notion that economic and other forms of benefits should be directed to local communities. Nevertheless, Scheyvens (2002) argued that adopting tourism to improve community development appears like an amazing concept in principle. But the practice is “fraught with difficulties” because the ‘community should have equal access to involvement in and benefits of tourism’. This often appears to mean that elite groups in the village often dominate the tourism development in communities to capture the benefits of tourism (Scheyvens, 2002).

However, there are some points to consider when considering adopting tourism into the community. The first consideration is that Ashley et al. (2000), and Gerberich (2005) suggested that in general tourism should not replace or overwhelm the core livelihood activities such as agriculture, fishing, and traditional social system. Instead, tourism

should be an alternative option for the poor to make a better living. Scheyvens (2002) maintained that it might be difficult to argue that “good change” has happened when communities were transformed from self-reliant farmers and traders into a community of employees reliant on tourism businesses. Subsequently, due to the changing condition of the tourism industry, local economies should not entirely depend on tourism or else the economy may fall apart (Gerberich, 2005). And, there should be an understanding of how tourism can fit in so that it does not replace the existing livelihood activities but provide additional activities which are compatible with existing activities of livelihoods (Tao & Wall, 2009).

The second consideration is that a tourism program that is considered appropriate on specific reservations might be disrespectful and unsustainable in other places (Gerberich, 2005). Moreover, Ryan (2005, p. 70) asked an important question when thinking about indigenous tourism, namely: “why should an indigenous group, whose culture may not necessarily engage in entrepreneurialism as understood by capitalist cultures, engage in tourism?” After this question, Gerberich (2005, p. 86) also raised one important question which is “what does each tribe really want to gain or achieve from tourism?” An example from Uganda provided by Lentz (2002), local people support new projects which include schools, health centre and roads as long as their basic need is already secured. This is similar to tourism development projects that basic needs of locals should be secured in advance before introducing tourism into community.

#### ***2.4.4 Distribution Channels in Tourism***

This part presents the fourth principle of the pro-poor tourism which is *distribution channels in tourism*. Distribution channels in tourism has drawn attention among



researchers over the last few decades (Pearce, 2010). More literature has been increasingly developed, however there is no agreed-upon common definition with regards to distribution channels yet (Pearce, 2010). In this case, Sochea (2016) maintained that the definition provided by the United Nations World Tourism (UNWTO) provides complexity and a deep understanding of distribution systems by taking into account the importance of intermediaries and the purpose of that channel despite minor criticisms. UNWTO (1975) defined the distribution channel as “a given combination of intermediaries who cooperate in the sale of a product. A distribution system can be and in most instances is composed of more than one distribution channel, each of which operates parallel to and in competition with other channels”. Sochea (2016) maintained that other definitions overlook essential aspects such as the channel members engaged in the distribution, the role of promotional and marketing research, information provision functions, local distribution channels (inbound travel agents), roles of information and communication technologies (ICT) and ways that small and medium enterprises deliver their services.

Furthermore, direct channels and indirect channels via one or more intermediaries create the link between producers and consumers, and a wide range of channel structures may happen in any tourist attraction (Pearce & Tan, 2004). Although there are diverse components associated with the distribution channel, this thesis primarily focuses on roles of local communities in interacting with tourists in direct channels, and roles intermediaries in indirect chains.

First, this section introduces the roles of local communities in interacting with tourists. Go (1993) mentioned that direct distribution happens between sellers and buyer. Sochea (2016) added that in the direct distribution channel, sellers deal with buyer or travellers

directly without any intervention or coordination from intermediaries. Scheyvens (2003) indicated that full participation of the local community occurs when the local community provides the full supply in terms of services and goods to tourists as well as contributing input into planning-related decisions and collectively taking control over their own resources. Sochea (2016) maintained that suppliers, who focus more on the direct channel, believe that they can perform better on their own with regards to cost saving, prompt response, and consumer satisfaction. Moreover, when thinking of roles of local communities, Gerberich (2005) took the visitor side into account. He maintained that visitors should experience a representative community rather than one manipulated by external actors.

Next comes the roles of intermediaries in the indirect distribution channels of tourism within local communities. Indirect channels of distribution are identified as a selling point where the process of selling is facilitated by one or more intermediaries (Sochea, 2016). In indirect distribution channels, intermediaries have become the ones who represent the tourism suppliers in the destination market (Bitner and Booms, 1982 as cited in Go, 1993). The intermediaries' roles are to access the markets, provide information, get together what tourism products have to offer and develop package tours, provide bookings and coordinate payment processes (Go, 1993; Sochea, 2016). Go (1993) pointed out that intermediaries may include travel agents, tour packagers and tour wholesalers who promote and facilitate package tours.

However, both direct and indirect distribution come at the cost of development, which means they have their own trade-offs. Pearce and Tan (2004), and Sochea (2016) maintained that direct and indirect distribution brings their own trade-off between market and cost and have their own advantages and disadvantage. One-channel

distribution, as an example, might be appropriate for community-based tourism and inappropriate for a luxury market (Sochea, 2016). It is a fact that tourism inside the community entirely depends on outside interests and local communities have less control over their own resources (Timothy and Ioannides, 2002 as cited in Ioannides, 2003). Ioannides (2003), for instance, mentioned that tour operators mostly take a role as gatekeepers, which highly influences the flow of visitors. They can influence the direction of tourism destinations without much cost by changing tourist itineraries. This, therefore, leads to leakages from the local economy. Dwyer (2014) maintained that the economic benefits from the community may go back to the companies and countries that take over most of the infrastructure for tourism. When goods and products are supplied in order to meet the demand of tourists visiting the local communities, it could be translated that tourism sector may not have linkages with other sectors, for example, agriculture (Dwyer, 2014). Go (1993) maintained that having intermediaries into the chain means that third parties not only play roles in distribution channels of tourism, but also gain the benefits from the chain too. Therefore, the government should enhance the regulatory environment to make sure that the involvement from private actors does not necessarily cause negative effects on the wellbeing and environment of communities (Scheyvens, 2003).

#### ***2.4.5 Cross-disciplinary Learning***

Pro-poor tourism is different from charity and philanthropy because it focuses on building the poor's income generation capacity rather than giving to them (Zhao & Ritchie, 2007). As a consequence, capacity-building is an essential step for improvement of the labour force (Bouchon & Rawat, 2016). This section presents the importance of a capacity-building programme. Key aspects to take into account when hosting income generation building programs and challenges in sharing knowledge

about tourism related ideas through existing training programmes within local community are acknowledged.

Cross-disciplinary learning refers to the notion that the poor should be able to learn from their development experiences (Ashley et al., 2000; DFID, 1999; Roe & Urquhart, 2004). Additionally, the government should take action to provide adequate education, with technical and professional training programmes in order to improve local involvement. Furthermore, Zapata, Hall, Lindo, and Vanderschaeghe (2011) introduced specific skills and experiences that the poor have to obtain in order to ensure success in their operation including skills development for family, micro- and community-based entrepreneurs. In accordance with this explanation, Dixey (2008) added that promoting enterprises and local capacity is the key to enriching the net benefit to the poor. Therefore, actions should not solely focus on how to develop community tourism, but also on-the job training. These include training of the trainers, certifying educators and improving research skills in order increase capacity (Tukamushaba & Okech, 2011).

When providing training for tourism and hospitality to local communities, a number of things are important. First, Bouchon and Rawat (2016) suggested that non-formal education would be a comprehensive strategy that can meet the local needs, and provide life-long learning skills which are transferable to tourism services. Additionally, Wittkopf and Berge (2007, p. 15) maintained that informal learning makes trainees able to take up knowledge and information faster. It is “accessible, quickly applicable” and it does not need a formal learning environment. He also added that informal learning targets individuals and allows trainees to meet the requirements of a changing workforce. Figgis and colleagues (2001) highlighted that for people in enterprises,

informal processes of learning are crucial and are more influential than what people learn from a formal process (as cited in Dawe, 2003).

The second thing that is necessary when providing training for tourism and hospitality to local communities is that local market needs should be considered because they reflect the different priorities for the delivery and development of training (Bray, 2006). Dawe (2003) agreed that to develop technical and professional skills, training should be able to meet the individual's needs. Simply put, Beeton (2006) concurred that effective capacity development at the ground level happens when local needs are met and conditions are created. As such, Bray (2006) stated that what is a top priority for a particular country and place might be the second or third elsewhere. Identifying local needs in terms of skills and knowledge would enable training designers to fulfil local needs.

Third, for the capacity-building phase, time frames determine both success and failure of the training programs. Beeton (2006) took the view that when progress is slow, the donors need to be aware of the long term view before declaring something as a failure. Fourth, Bray (2006) recommended to have a regular date for the training program. He explained that scheduling ahead for the future trainings can ensure that the participants are available during the training and are informed in advance if they happen to miss participation. Fifth, two things should be considered: 1) the current situation of local communities; and 2) past capacity development building attempts, which need to be acknowledged in order to enhance empowerment and self-determination (Beeton, 2006).

However, there are challenges which make tourism training in the community hard to achieve due to specific reasons. The ability to transfer knowledge in each training program is limited due to two reasons. First, Bouchon and Rawat (2016) explained that although there are many programs and policies trying to enhance tourism development opportunities, a lack of service management expertise is still a major concern. Second, due to the nature of multi-disciplinary subjects, the process of innovation and transferring tourism knowledge is complex (Bouchon & Rawat, 2016). Echtner, 1995 as cited in Tukamushaba and Okech (2011) agreed that increasing tourism education is a complicated job due to the multi-disciplinary nature of the subject.

#### ***2.4.6 Empowerment***

How local communities participate in tourism reflects the level of empowerment which has been exercised. Scheyvens (1999) explained that economic, psychological, social and political empowerment occurs when there is effective local participation. Timothy, Singh, and Dowling (2003) suggested that the more people become empowered in making decisions, the more they involve themselves in tourism entrepreneurship. Empowerment is important for successful ecotourism / community-based ecotourism enterprises (Zeppel, 2006). Additionally, empowerment is a tool that promotes sustainable use of natural resources, and enhances ownership, entrepreneurship and managerial skills (Mbaiwa, 2005). Consequently, there is a need to illustrate how empowerment is exercised in the community regarding capacity and training.

There are several things which can prove that the empowerment concept is being exercised in reality. The process of empowerment involves the will, resources and opportunities of local communities and giving them opportunities to make decisions and influence any decision making related to development projects in their community

(Akama, 1996; Fennel, 2008; Zeppel, 2006; Zhao & Ritchie, 2007). Moreover, Zeppel (2006) explained that when there is community empowerment, there are several things that can be noticed: 1) building community capacity to involve and fully participate in tourism including: general tourism awareness courses, and languages, business training and operational skills training; 2) giving control of decision-making and employment to communities; and 3) creating more entrepreneurial activities. Moreover, Mbaiwa (2005) agreed that providing formal and informal trainings to villagers would also contribute to the success of empowerment for local people. The empowerment can also be shown in the community by eliminating any barriers that do not support the poor, as well as protecting the local community's assets to allow them to be involved in the market (Zhao & Ritchie, 2007).

However, donor-driven and private-oriented forms of development are the most common factors that threaten the notion of empowerment of local communities. Reed (1997) confirmed that to begin tourism projects in communities, usually requires funds to be allocated to support local infrastructure and diversify services which are going to serve incoming tourists.

There have been many critiques about manipulated forms of collaboration either between non-governmental organisations or private partners. First, when the funded tourism project wholly depends on development partners, the likelihood to be successful relies entirely on the donor themselves (Font, Goodwin, & Walton, 2012). In addition to this, donor agencies and aid agencies take three main things into account when considering developing foreign aid policy namely, self-interest, bureaucrats and government strategic interest (Williamson, 2009). With different values, perspectives, attitudes and power levels that the different stakeholders have, the community voice can

be weak (Beeton, 2006). As a consequence, local needs may not be successfully met due to their weak voice in comparison with other voices. Gerberich (2005) argued that visitors should experience the representative communities rather than one that is manipulated by external actors. This is why Williamson (2009) called into question the ability of foreign aid to accomplish goals. Moreover, because tourism in the community is donor-driven and not market-led, many new tourism enterprises are not making enough profit in order to survive (Dixey, 2008). On the other hand, TIANZ (2002) insisted that if tourism is initiated by the local community, they will be able to understand “where they are now” and “where they want to be”. That means they understand their own needs if they take control over management issues. Consequently, there are more possibilities that their needs will be met. Beeton (2006) also advised that local people should be consulted with during all stages of tourism development because the more people feel that their voices are valued, the more they become supportive toward to a tourism plan.

Second, a trade-off in working with the private sector is the dominant roles of private actors in local communities. For instance, joint-venture partnership between community and private sectors usually results in a management contract in which local people have less involvement with management decisions (Mbaiwa, 2005). More interestingly, Reed (1997) explained that people who are able to influence community decision-making and policy formation are those who are tied to growth and the community vitality.

#### ***2.4.7 Flexibility***

Flexibility concerns the adaptation of a management plan with proper strategies because different places bring about divergent development contexts (Ashley et al., 2000; DFID, 1999; Roe & Urquhart, 2004). Having integrated tourism planning in place is a positive



sign to pursue sustainable tourism goals for the community. Beeton (2006) confirmed that having strategic planning and management is important for local communities as it helps them to articulate their visions, aims, and goals for the future of their communities, therefore all members will understand and be able to pursue their desired goals.

Tribe (2010, p. 7) added that strategy is ‘the planning of a desirable future and the design and testing of suitable ways of bringing it about’. Fennell and Dowling (2003) defined strategies as mechanisms and processes developed in order to complete objectives of the development. A wide range of policies needs to be developed to support a strategy because without strategies, tourism entities may fail to monitor its progress with the changing state of the external environment (Tribe, 2010). Tribe (2010) divided the process of strategy into four: 1) strategic purpose; 2) strategic analysis; 3) strategic choices; and 4) strategic implementation. This study does not intend to interrogate all the processes of strategy. Instead, the study focuses on the strategic choice.

Strategic choice requires three processes, namely strategic options, strategic directions and methods and strategic evaluation. This thesis focuses on the strategic evaluation. Three important elements have to be examined in order to do strategic evaluation: 1) suitability analysis; 2) acceptability analysis; and 3) feasibility analysis (Tribe, 2010). Because the flexibility principles intends to provide an answer whether current strategies fit well with the current situation of ecotourism in the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary, suitability analysis will be used. This is because according to Tribe (2010), suitability analysis aims at testing if a strategy fits the situation facing the organisation

or not. The other two elements (acceptability and feasibility analysis) remain outside the scope of this thesis.

Primarily, the suitability analysis could be conducted by taking into account three important elements. These are environmental fit, resource fit, and cultural fit (Tribe, 2010). This thesis is going to narrow down on the scope for the study by focusing on only environmental fits because 1) resource fits focus on a resource audit which the research could not access with the available data, and 2) cultural fit intends to answer how well the proposed strategies can cope with a particular place or organisation and in order to answer this question, the research has to understand the culture of organisation that give a clue to a particular paradigm (Tribe, 2010). Consequently, this section only presents important things in examining the environmental fit. The environmental fit investigates how well the strategy takes the opportunities and counters to the threats within the external environment (Tribe, 2010). A C-PEST analysis sheds light on how to assess the suitability (Tribe, 2010). Tribe (2010) indicated that PEST analysis gives a framework for tourism organisations to determine their opportunities and threats from the external environment. Table 3 (below) is developed to provide an understanding of how to assess the environmental fit in the proposed strategies.

**Table 3. Key Factors for Assessing the Environmental Fit under an Umbrella of Conducting the Suitability Analysis**

Key Factors	Explanation	Detailed points to address
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The competitive environment	Look closely at the strategy that enhances the competitive advantages of the destination	1) Does the strategy enhance competitive advantages against destinations who share the same territory?
The political environment	Focus on the government and their effects	1) Does the strategy identify possible political change in the future and the likely effects of this on the destination? 2) Does the strategy identify different political environments in the destination countries where it operates? 3) Does the strategy take account of influential pressure group activity? 4) Does the strategy take account of possible policy changes?
The economic environment	Examine the economic issues related to the strategy	1) Does the strategy take account of the economic environments that affect the expenditure of the tourists? 2) Does the strategy take account of economic environments in which tourism product takes place which may affect the supply of tourism? 3) Does the strategy take account of changing conditions of destination competitiveness?
The socio-cultural environment	Investigate the changes in population size, structure, consumer tastes, preferences and broader cultural shifts	1) Is the strategy sensitive to changes in attitudes and values about travel? 2) Is the strategy informed about the availability of paid leave?
The technological environment	Intend to cover how well the strategies cope with issues in the technology and its effect on the tourism destination	1) Does the strategy take advantage of changes in ICT?

Source: Adapted from Tribe (2010)

Discussing the components to evaluate tourism planning at community level has five aspects. First, due to the fact that tourism is closely linked with other sectors of the economy, its planning and development aspects require multi-stakeholder components to contribute to a variety of thinking (Bello et al., 2016). Second, there should be coordination between national, regional development planning and local tourism development planning which takes into account several elements such as the economy, the environment, and socio-cultural impacts (Marcouiller, 1997). Third, rural tourism planning should be integrative and should take a long-term perspective, and community-

based approach which contributes to completing the community's objectives (Fletcher, Coooper 1996; Gibson, 1993; Jonhson and Thomas, 1993; Murphy 1988 as cited in Marcouiller, 1997). Fourth, Marcouiller (1997) stated that integrative tourism planning should include a wide range of contemporary issues, initiative, stakeholders and clear data to be used in the planning process. Fifth, Cater (1994) and Drake (1991) agreed that local community participation contributes to the effectiveness of tourism planning and management (as cited in Eshliki & Kaboudi, 2012).

## **2.5 A Possible Stakeholder Collaboration Model**

This thesis suggests one possible form of collaboration in tourism in order to enable ecotourism to exercise pro-poor tourism principles in reality. Scheyvens (2002) maintained that it is a real truth that local people rarely come up with new initiatives with regards to tourism without input from external partners such as local NGOs, conservation agencies, donors, government agents or private tour operators. And although some people think the government must be responsible as a facilitator and organisational framework for the country, there is an emerging form of collaboration in which decision making and control of tourism are placed in a collaborative framework (Fennell & Dowling, 2003). Therefore, there needs to be cooperation with multiple stakeholders to ensure that an equitable way for community involvement with those other stakeholders is developed (Scheyvens, 2002). This can be called "development of an integrated system", which include concerned stakeholders as well as local communities who are perceived as a marginalised group with regards to the power structure of tourism and need to be engaged in the development process (Fennell & Dowling, 2003, p. 333).

Boyd and Singh (2003) noted that it is difficult to suggest proper partnerships to various communities, so generalisations should be made with caution. Consequently, these closing paragraphs of the chapter discuss one type of expected collaboration together with key mechanisms that stakeholders should take into consideration when developing tourism by following pro-poor tourism principles.

According to Zeppel (2006), there are five levels of local involvement: full or part ownership, joint ventures, partnerships, services offer and employment by non-indigenous tourism companies. Adopting joint-venture forms may fill gaps and transfer entrepreneurship skill and managerial knowledge to local people (as cited in Mbaiwa, 2005). Goodwin (2007) supported the argument that in order to secure access to the market, information about capital and other resources, local communities should partner with the private sector; this would also reduce the risks of the individual operation. From 1985, the year of the establishment of the pro-poor tourism concept, policy makers such as the Overseas Development Administration and UNWTO acknowledge that their research intervention and initiative did not create a significant benefits to the poor due to the lack of linkage between the mainstream industry (private sector and tourism enterprises) and poor producers (Ashley et al., 2000; Goodwin, 2009). From the private sector perspective, Murphy and Murphy (2004) encourage business not to rely on only profit margins and shareholder returns; they should also think about working with local villagers and contributing something of worth back to the society where their business takes place. This has two aspects to it: 1) challenges of how to include the local community in making decision; and 2) opportunities when broader perspectives from the community are taken (Murphy & Murphy, 2004).

However, it is challenging to achieve coordination among the government and private enterprise; it demands new processes for integrating the diverse nature of tourism as an industry (Jamal & Getz, 1994). Moreover, Tukamushaba and Okech (2011) claimed that in reality there is a lack of partnership between the government and private sector, which does not necessarily enhance tourism entrepreneurship. Therefore, when the partnership is to occur, there should be a clear division of roles among the different stakeholders. Scheyvens (2003) argued that the government should create an enabling policy environment for small-scale tourism enterprises to be managed by local people and support them to develop viable business enterprises. The private sector should encourage partnership with local communities in a way that they can learn from experiences and be able to take part in that tourism association (Scheyvens, 2003). Furthermore, NGOs should take roles as facilitators who work on enhancing empowerment and building local capacity for local communities (Scheyvens, 2003).

## **2.6 Summary**

This section summarises the key features of the literature presented above. The whole chapter focuses on three important things: the impact of mass tourism, the emergence of pro-poor tourism concept and its principles, and the alternative stakeholder collaboration models. When the impact of mass tourism has been felt, the concept of a sustainable approach in tourism has been introduced. As an example, ecotourism is one of the tools that has been used in many different destinations, however, whether or not it can contribute to poverty alleviation remains questionable from destination to destination. The point is that the number of visitors to ecotourism sites, particularly in Monduliri Province, remain smaller compared to the visitors travelling to coastal zones in Cambodia.

Therefore, this study focussed on the current situation of ecotourism using pro-poor tourism principles. The concept of pro-poor tourism was initially introduced in order to address not only the economic impact, but also the socio-cultural and environmental impact within local destinations. Regardless of the differences in points of view about the pro-poor tourism approach, the common objective is to combat poverty at a community level and enhance stakeholder collaboration among different stakeholders, especially local involvement. Each aforementioned principle of pro-poor tourism involves many important key indicators that contribute to the sustainability of tourism destinations. Therefore, the Literature Review Chapter built on the elements of each of the principles of pro-poor tourism to assess ecotourism within tourism destinations.

## **Chapter 3. Methodology**

This section presents the research methodology which was used to guide this thesis. This primarily consists of the reasons for choosing the case study as the methodology of the study. That is then followed by discussing the data collection technique employed in order to reach the target data. Next the sampling technique is included in this chapter as it guides how to select the right participants for this study. After that this chapter critically discusses the data analysis method as well as ethical considerations. The chapter ends by presenting the validity and reliability of the research.

### **3.1 Research Paradigm and Methodology**

This study is based on qualitative research. As suggested by Marshall and Rossman (2014), qualitative research is important for the applied fields and social sciences such as education, management and regional planning, social work, and community development. Merriam (2009) believed that how people's experiences are interpreted, how their words are constructed, and what people mean by each experience is of interest to the qualitative researcher (as cited in Butina, Campbell, & Miller, 2015). Generally, qualitative research is viewed as an approach to studying social events and its basic feature is naturalistic and interpretive; it uses various methods of inquiry (Marshall & Rossman, 2014).

There are several key characteristics of qualitative research: 1) the study focuses on the interpretation of experiences given by the participants (Creswell, 2013); 2) the researcher is the key player in getting their research done (Creswell, 2013; Rossman & Rallis, 2012); 3) the entire research contributes to theory-building following an inductive approach (Creswell, 2013); 4) the research findings are descriptive and interpretive compared to quantitative research (Creswell, 2013; Rossman & Rallis,



2012); 5) it is conducted in the natural world (Rossman & Rallis, 2012); 6) qualitative research requires a variety of methods which are interactive and humanistic (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). Marshall and Rossman (2014) added that findings from qualitative study may be transferable to other contexts although those findings might not be generalisable by using numerical data.

The research paradigm for this study is defined as a 'philosophical perspective' based on logic, which influences a research methodology, and develops "a context for the process" (Crotty, 1998, p. 3). There are several reasons that make an interpretivism research paradigm suitable for this study into pro-poor tourism principles and the relationship with ecotourism at Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary.

The first reason is that the study not only focuses on the facts given by the participants, but also examines the meanings derived from the experiences of each participant. According to Grant and Giddings (2002), those who have interpretivism as their research paradigm focus on the truth of the experience, and use theoretical perspectives to understand human's perspectives and the meaning that people attach to events. Consequently, the data is interpreted based on the experiences and the facts provided by the participants, and the researchers have to ensure that their pre-knowledge does not influence the way they are going to interpret data. This means that the researcher should be empathic to each participant.

The second reason is that the study values the perspectives from individual experiences because it is how the researcher understands the world as the way it is. Rossman and Rallis (2012), and Snape and Spencer (2003) concurred that an interpretivist understands the world as it is from the views and perceptions of people relevant to the

study. Gaining perspectives from people's experiences can be done by providing a thick description for key aspects of the study that the researcher intends to investigate. Although Rossman and Rallis (2012) maintained that analysis and interpretation of the data is possible due to the thick description from the data, Denzin (1994) argued that data interpretation is an art in which there is no one-size-fits-all process of analysis.

In relation to the interpretivism research paradigm, this study employed the explanatory case study as its methodology for several reasons. Firstly, this study aimed to deeply explain contemporary events. This study did not only find out what is what, but was related to why and how that phenomenon happened in particular. Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014, p. 28) added that a case is 'a phenomenon or a unit of analysis of some sort occurring in a bounded context'. Rossman and Rallis (2012); and Yin (2009) noted that using a case study method is relevant when the researcher aims at investigating and having an understanding about specific social phenomena. Because this study demanded an in-depth description to understand the complex nature and context of tourism development in the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary, a case study method responded well to this need.

The second reason for choosing case study as the methodology is that the study did not intend to provide a generalisation of the phenomena using statistical evidence, but to contribute to the theories in relation to pro-poor tourism and ecotourism. Yin (2009) concurred that a case study method helps the researcher to generalise a theoretical proposition. This can be done through looking at the interaction and relationship between key aspects and how they happen that way (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). To understand the interaction of key aspects requires thick description, which can be obtained through a humanistic research method. This means that the case study is based

on face-to-face interaction between researchers and their participants (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). In addition, those methods can be in-depth interviews, observation or some combination of both (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). Hence, the case study helped the researcher to reach her aim in an effective way. Additionally, the case study is essential for its rich description because its nature is descriptive, holistic, heuristic and inductive (Rossman & Rallis, 2012, p. 103).

### **3.2 Data Collection Techniques**

Researchers use different research methods because they have different needs and situations for investigating their own study (Yin, 2009). This study employed documentary data collection and in-depth interviews as the basis of data collection.

Ritchie (2003) stated that documentary data might include media reports, government and public papers and other procedural documents. Secondary data were collected from an existing source related to the topic area. Mondulkiri's Development Strategic Plan for Tourism 2014-2018 was analysed to see how suitable the strategies are to the current context of ecotourism in Mondulkiri Province.

In terms of primary data, this study used semi-structured in-depth interviews with eight key informants. There are different types of in-depth interview which include "unstructured interviews, semi-structured interviews, and sometimes, narrative interviewing as well as life story interviewing" (Lewis-Beck, Bryman, & Liao, 2004, p. 485). There are several reasons for choosing semi-structured in-depth interviews.

First, it could generate deep perspectives with in-depth explanations provided by the interviewees. The study did not aim to describe what is what, but why and how. Therefore generating a deep perspective that interviewers view from their perspective

was necessary. In-depth interviews offer the researcher an understanding about their participants' world views, their reasons, feeling, perspectives and beliefs through natural conversation in which the researchers and their informants 'co-construct' the meanings (Legard, Keegan, & Ward, 2003; Rossman & Rallis, 2012, p. 176; Shirley, 2011).

Additionally, in-depth interviews provide more personal contact with research participants and may be the best tool for studies whose objectives are to explore and examine the perspectives of research informants (Gray, 2014; Smith, 1999 cited in Maureira & Stenbacka, 2015). More importantly, suggestions and ideas related to the study are put forward by the participant because the researchers invite them to do so throughout the interviews (Legard et al., 2003).

The second reason for choosing in-depth interviews as a tool for data collection is that in-depth interviews give the researcher more flexibility in exploring their study. Because an in-depth interview is interactive and may be unstructured in nature, it allows interviewees to respond freely to the questions and the interviewers can intervene to ask questions based on the answers previously provided (Legard et al., 2003). This means the researcher can ask follow-up questions according to the answer they received in order to explore their study more comprehensively. Although the interviews are semi-structured, the researchers have an understanding of what themes to explore in the interviews. This means that it follows the topic guide (Legard et al., 2003). Shirley (2011) added that in-depth interviews motivate participants to discover and reveal feelings within a given topic due their open-ended nature.

Additionally, Gray (2014) suggested that because semi-structured interviews have a “non-standardised” set of questions, the researcher has the opportunity to alter the format to elicit in-depth information. Goetz and LeCompte (1984) contended that questions for in-depth interviews are divided into a multitude of types which are described as ‘experience, opinion, feeling questions, hypothetical questions, and personal questions (as cited in Shirley, 2011, p. 56).

There were two main stages of questions for the interviews conducted in this study. Firstly, general facts or information expected from the interview consisted of: 1) information related to informants’ working experiences with regard to tourism development in the area; 2) the current tourism context in the province; and 3) potential ecotourism sites and activities. Informants’ perspectives were also taken into consideration because the ability to reach the main aim of the study depends on the quality of information from informants’ perspectives when assessing each principle of pro-poor tourism in the case of the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary.

### **3.3 Sampling Techniques**

The type of sampling to select informants and criteria for selecting informants for in-depth interviews is important for qualitative research. Purposive sampling was used to reach potential research participants to take part in in-depth interviews. The main purpose of choosing this sampling type was to ensure the representativeness of key informants for the study and obtain typical key aspects of related issues (Gray, 2014).

The potential participants were selected based on their work in developing and providing tourism services for more than one year in Mondulkiri Province. Although not all participants were local people born in Mondulkiri, they have experienced living and working in this region for more than one year, hence they understand the context of

this province. Moreover, because the researcher was working on a project related to the north-eastern part of Cambodia, particularly Mondulhiri Province, selecting the key participants in the study was made easier. Primarily, her working experiences in the research field helped facilitate the process of recruiting and approaching the participants. The process of selecting key participants varied based on who the participant is as follows:

- Tourism authorities were selected from the registration list received from the researcher's previous experience at the workplace. The researcher gave a call to each participant and requested their time for the interview. Prior to the date of the interview, the researcher gave each participant a reminder call in order to make sure that there was no change in schedule and place for the interview. There were four participants from provincial government level: 1) a representative of the Department of Tourism; 2) a representative of the Department of Environment; 3) a representative of the Forestry Administration; and 4) a representative of the Department of Agriculture Forestry and Fisheries.
- Representatives from NGOs were approached by email obtained from their official websites. Prior to the interviews, each representative received a reminder email to re-inform them once again about the date and time for the upcoming interviews. Two NGOs such as, WWF Mondulhiri and the Elephant Livelihood Initiative Environment (ELIE), were selected due to their related working activities on tourism in the Mondulhiri Province, mainly in the natural sanctuaries.
- Tour operators were contacted by email to request their contribution for the interviews. After obtaining their confirmation, the researcher gave them calls using phone numbers obtained from their websites a day before the interviews started. Two private tour operators in the region were chosen: a representative of

the Mondulkiri Adventure Tours and a representative of the Green House Restaurant and Tour.

**Table 4. Summary of the Research Participants**

Key Informants	Number of Informants	Location of the Interviews	Interview Duration
Tourism authorities	4	Their offices in Mondulkiri	Approximately 1 hour
NGOs	3	Their offices in Mondulkiri	Around 1:20 minutes
Private Tour Operators	2	Local café stores in Mondulkiri	Around 20 minutes

Table 4 above showed that the minimum length of the interviews was 20 minutes and the maximum were 1 hour. The researcher used a phone as a recorder during the interviews and transcribed those interviews into full form. Doing this allowed the researcher to determine key aspects in each interview. All the interviews were conducted in the Cambodian language, which caused some barriers when the researcher translated them into English.

### **3.4 Data Analysis Tools**

There were two data analysis tools: 1) documentary analysis was employed in the qualitative research to review and analyse existing documents with the purpose of interpreting them more deeply; and 2) interpretive thematic analysis was used to analyse primary data garnered from the in-depth interviews (Gray, 2014). As regards the thematic analysis, NVivo was used to organise the data into themes.

The documentary data analysis concerned with collecting all relevant documents as far as possible to interpret such. Ritchie (2003) suggested that documentary analysis is

important when history or experiences, written communication, public and private accounts, are central to the study's questions. Gray (2014) advised that the documentary analysis is used in qualitative research to review and analyse the existing related study documents with the purpose of interpreting them more deeply.

Second, this study also utilised interpretive thematic analysis. This is the most common approach to content analysis (Franzosi, 2004). Rather than deciding what the key variables or data categories will be, thematic analysis is a tool of analytical induction or inductive analysis aiming at determining, evaluating and describing patterns and themes through coding (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Patton, 2002 as cited in Curtis & Curtis, 2011; Franzosi, 2004)

Thematic analysis is suited to obtaining a clear picture of the basic content of the text (Franzosi, 2004). This type of analysis is suitable for an emerging researcher conducting in-depth interviews and does not need as much detailed theoretical knowledge as other methods of analysis do (Curtis & Curtis, 2011). Lewis-Beck et al. (2004) added that thematic analysis is important for theorising across cases and finding common themes across key informants. Franzosi (2004) mentions several questions that this type of analysis is concerned with. Two of them are: "1) what's in the mind of your informants?; and 2) what's in your field notes?" (Franzosi, 2004, p. 562). Curtis and Curtis (2011) added that this type of data analysis refers to coding, which is divided into three stages:

- *Open coding*: refers to the process of selecting and terming categories from the data. This coding aims at giving a holistic picture of the research in which the researchers have to deconstruct their notes, interview transcripts, and observations into excerpts, key phrases and words.



- *Axial coding*: refers to the process of putting the data into different forms by explaining and trying to understand the connection and relationship between categories to which they are related.
- *Selective coding*: this focuses on determining core codes out of the open codes and axial codes by looking closely into the commonalities and linkages between the coded data.

In addition to this, Ely (1991) provided two ways of defining and identifying key themes: 1) a statement that is repeatedly mentioned throughout the data; and 2) a statement that is mentioned less in the whole data but has a significant impact for the analysis (as cited in McMurray, Pace, & Scott, 2004). Franzosi (2004) contended that there is no one way of understanding the meanings of a text; rather there are multiple understandings.

In addition to this, NVivo was employed to get the data organised into proper themes after the interviews. NVivo is appropriate for the researcher who intends to make a deep analysis of either small or large volumes of the data (Bergin, 2011). Bazeley (2007), and Oliveira, Bitencourt, Santos, and Teixeira (2016) described NVivo as a qualitative data analysis software tool innovated by QSR International for coding text and photos which enables the researcher to synchronise answers digitally and see the connection of analytical intersections. NVivo helps the researcher to organise data especially when the researcher garners heavy loads of the data and allows the researcher to determine the relationship between important aspects in the data in a faster and more far-reaching manner (Oliveira et al., 2016). More importantly, NVivo allows the researcher to see the differences, which are beyond their previous knowledge and bring it closer to the data. Doing this enables the researcher to focus on the meaning and the relationship of how

one idea influences the others within their data (Sotiriadou, Brouwers, & Tuan-Anh, 2014).

### **3.5 Ethical Considerations**

This study complied with all the ethics requirements and official ethics approval was granted by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC) on 16<sup>th</sup> August, 2016 (Appendix 5. AUTEC Research Ethics Approval). In order to get the approval from the Ethics Committee, the researcher had to fulfil several ethical requirements as follows:

#### ***Voluntary participation and informed consents***

The researcher ensured that all the respondents' participation in this study was voluntary. The researcher respected the decisions of the informants either to participate or reject this study. Before the interviews, the researcher gave the consent form and participant information sheet to those who agreed for interviews (see Appendix 3. Participant Information Sheet and Appendix 4. Consent Form) prior to the beginning of the interview. The researcher welcomed all sorts of questions related to this project in order to make sure the participants understood what they were involved in so that they could expect what sort of the data that they were able to offer. After that, they agreed to sign the consent form. The information sheet advised the participants that they had the right to withdraw from the study if they did not feel comfortable in providing further answers. Alternatively, the researcher provided the informants the right to object to any particular question.

#### ***Confidentiality***

Offering confidentiality was absolutely essential for this study. The researcher used a nom de plume when providing direct quotes from the participants. The consent form clearly states whether the participants wanted them and their official positions to be

identified. The researcher, for instance, referred to ‘a representative of the Department of Tourism’ when it was necessary to provide direct quotes to support the claims in the findings part. However, considering the small sample of respondents, only limited anonymity could be provided. This means that there is a possibility that a participant is identified within the organisation due to the small number of people working in each organisation. In addition to this, the researcher transcribed the interviews, so the only people to have access to the raw data were the researcher herself and her academic supervisor.

### ***Conflict of Interest***

There are no conflicts of interest between the primary researcher and participants because her job (she was a teaching and researcher assistant at the Department of Tourism, Royal University of Phnom Penh) is not directly related to the participants.

## **3.6 Research Validity and Reliability**

Although the researcher intended to highlight ways to improve the above areas, there is no single set of criteria which can best describe and explain how good qualitative research can be. Miles et al. (2014) demonstrated that from the interpretivist researcher’s point of view, it is impossible to develop standards or criteria for good qualitative research. On the other hand, qualitative researchers still have to show that their study is able to meet the traditional criteria of soundness (Marshall & Rossman, 2014). Therefore, this section is concerned with criteria for the legitimacy and reliability of the study or three alternative constructs in order to reflect the assumption of the qualitative research paradigm.

The first construct is *credibility*. This is also known as *internal validity* or *authenticity* (Miles et al., 2014). Miles et al. (2014) defined these three interchangeable terms as a

truth value. The goal of creditability is to ensure that interviews were conducted in a way that the subjects were appropriately informed, questioned and given explanations (Lincoln & Guba as cited in Marshall & Rossman, 2014). Miles et al. (2014) suggested three basic questions for researchers to consider: 1) are findings easy to understand?; 2) are findings credible to participants and their readers?; and 3) is it authentic to what the researcher is focusing on? There are some strategies that can be put in place to improve creditability / internal validity (Marshall & Rossman, 2014; Miles et al., 2014): 1) gather context-rich and thick descriptions which reflect processes and interactions; 2) develop parameters of the setting and theoretical framework in order to set the boundaries around the study; 3) utilise triangulation of methods of data collection and data sources; 4) ensure the data and findings are presented clearly and systematically and linked with prior theories and emerging ones; and 5) the conclusion should be considered to be accurate by the informants.

The second construct is *dependability*. Miles et al. (2014) said that dependability can be used interchangeably with the concept of *reliability* and *auditability*. While the positivist assumes no changes in relation to the questions they are trying to ask, the qualitative / interpretive researcher believes that the world is constructed and changing (Marshall & Rossman, 2014). Miles et al. (2014) proposed one key question for consideration: have the processes of the study been done consistently and substantially with care? There are several ways to deal with the dependability aspect: 1) the researcher questions and the study design must be clear; 2) basic theoretical perspectives and methodologies must be clearly explained; and 3) the study finding must be parallel to the data sources (participants, context, and time).

The last construct is *confirmability*. Marshall and Rossman (2014) mentioned that the researchers should ask themselves whether the findings of their study are able to be confirmed by another or not. That means the researchers have to take one step backward, remove subjectivity, and let the data inform their study findings. This can help avoid unintentional but otherwise inevitable bias in their study. There are several useful tips to eliminate, as far as possible, study bias (Miles et al., 2014): 1) the methods and procedures for the study should be explained distinctively in a detailed manner; 2) the researcher can keep track of how their data are collected, processed and displayed; 3) the conclusions are significantly linked with the displayed data.

## Chapter 4. Findings

This chapter presents key findings based on the principles of pro-poor tourism. The findings are divided into nine sections: 1) commercial realism; 2) local participation; 3) a holistic livelihood approach and opportunities; 4) distribution channels in tourism; 5) cross-disciplinary learning; 6) empowerment; 7) flexibility. The final two sections are 8) alternative tourism development forms; and 9) conclusion of the chapter. Direct quotations (as translated by the researcher) are presented from each representative organisation.

### 4.1 Commercial Realism

In this study, commercial realism touches on the viability of community tourism, the accessibility of other related enterprises run by the local community, destination sustainability and destination competitiveness. In terms of the visibility of community tourism, the study found that tourism businesses in the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary remain stagnant and are not profitable enough to make communities secure for a number of reasons. First, at present there is no tour organiser arranging package tours to Sraepok Wilderness Sanctuary due to its accessibility and lack of services provided in the community. As mentioned previously under *Distribution Channels in Tourism*, tourism in the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary depends wholly on the private sector to take tourists into the community. Many travel agents take tourists only to sites which are not far from the central town rather than to the sanctuary. A guide from Mondulkiri Adventure Tour (MAT) stated that:

*I take tourists to other communities outside the sanctuary as they have Bunong people, farmland, waterfall, homestays, and skilful guides. Like in Pu Tang, they do far better than the villagers in the sanctuary. They understand the benefits of developing tourism in their village as they have income for themselves. Also, they know how to cook and where they should take tourists to.*

A guide from the Green House Restaurant and Tour also added that:

*I do not work with local communities inside the Sanctuary, but I cooperate with local communities in Pu Tang and Pu Lung village outside the sanctuary. I work with them because they know how to cook and provide homestay, sell souvenirs, and sell Sra Peang [kind of traditional wine]. So when villagers receive benefits from tourism, they feel that tourism is important to them and their family.*

Furthermore, as reported by the guide from the MAT, due to the ending of support from WWF, there are not as many tourists as before. Consequently, tourism community operators became unmotivated.

A provincial guide from the Mondulkiri Adventure Tour gave one actual case about the barriers to running tourism businesses with the local community. He said that the local community does not prioritise appointments that they made with him as they have to look after their farms instead. This phenomenon is supported by the statement from the Department of Agriculture (DoA) that the majority of local communities are farmers, which make them unable to commit to do something else beside their crop planting. Specifically, the guide from MAT gave one example:

*When there was an appointment at 10am with tourists, they came at 12pm after doing their farming. So the tourists and I had to wait until local people came and guided us where to stay.*

This also reflected that the local community did not necessarily feel enthusiasm and interest about developing tourism in their communities. Additionally, until now there has only been one house, which has four rooms to accommodate tourists. As mentioned by DoT, there is still a lack of tourism facilities and infrastructure to support tourism in this sanctuary.

Besides the problem with accessibility, there are also problems with a lack of services and facilities that enable tourism. DoT explained that there is a lack of homestays, tourism activities, and food and beverage services provided by the local communities. This means that there was only a small number of local communities who get involved in the project. Accordingly, the representative of DoT explained that:

*Local communities will not get involved in development unless there is a key player to guide and lead them, and the result should be impactful. That means people should get some money from what they have invested. However, the community does not necessarily receive as many benefits from tourism as what they used to expect in the beginning.*

This factor makes tourism unlikely to be the first choice of livelihood in comparison with other activities.

In terms of accessibility to related enterprises operated by local communities, there is still a lack of entrepreneurial activities taking place inside the community. According to the Department of Environment (DoE) and two of the WWF staff, there is only brief training on hospitality, training on collecting honey together with how to make the honey fit for the market inside the province and some training activities on improving local livelihood (*details of what training has been provided, refer to the Cross Disciplinary Learning*). DoA, DoE, DoT and two WWF staff agreed that the context of business remains new to local people. From the local community perspective, having land, forests, the agricultural farms and participating in their traditional events defines their wealth in the village. From the outset, they rely on land and natural resources that they have. The first WWF staff member gave an example related to entrepreneurial skills regarding collecting and selling bamboo to the Bambusa Project as below:

*The point is that they get used to collecting honey and resin so when they do business selling these two products, it does not bring many problems. When it comes to collecting and selling bamboo to outsiders, they face*



*many problems as it is new for them. Therefore, it is really difficult to encourage them to get involved in this livelihood project.*

Therefore, introducing entrepreneurial skills might need a long term approach and much effort to put knowledge into practice. Having inadequate support and training in entrepreneurial activities and the habit of relying on natural resources do not equip them well for initiating entrepreneurial activities.

With regards to destination sustainability, the study found that there are some problems that threaten the sustainability of the destination. First, having no supportive policies and law in place is the most concerning factor. Several interviewees support this statement.

The representative of DoE explained this phenomenon saying that:

*Community tourism in Cambodia is like a father who was born later than their kids which means there is no policy support for its tourism operation including the establishment of a tourism community. And we develop CBT in the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary as the way we observed from others. Actually there has been no policy, or regulation to support the development of ecotourism in place yet.*

The representative from the WWF staff also added that:

*According to sub-decree, they are not allowed to develop community forestry (CFs) inside the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary [old name of the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary]. However, WWF support forest conservation. Therefore, we want to develop CFs inside the sanctuary. We used guidelines for creating CFs to apply in the sanctuary. Until now all the eight CFs have been recognised by Forestry Administration. But when the whole sanctuary is transferred into the management of the Ministry of Environment, we are considering whether we should convert these CFs into community protected areas instead.*

The representative from the WWF staff supported that:

*We have to make sure that we have policy support. It is important because it is related to those who gain benefits and those who do not. So if we don't implement that policy properly, those who have a voice in the development still have the right to say, and those who don't have a voice still do not get a say.*

Second, there is a problem with stakeholder collaboration, which is derived from the different purposes of each important stakeholder. The representative from the DoA stated that:

*All NGOs partners should not think only about conservation. They should also focus on how to teach farmers to increase their living income too.*

Partly, it comes from a lack of transparency, clarity and information among themselves when working together. The representative from the DoA explained that:

*The NGOs rarely share their annual plan with authorities. Say for example when they have a plan to increase local livelihood, the NGOs never consult with expert departments about what farmers should do in terms of increasing their income. If we refer to the government plan, we also have the budget to develop and implement new projects too. If the NGOs show their plan with us, we will be able to create a larger impact for local communities. The collaboration between government and NGOs is not fully active, but it is not too bad.*

DoT added that:

*WWF or the Royal University of Phnom Penh (RUPP) might develop the signs in the sanctuary. Or maybe they did not inform DoT or I myself did not know every little detail about the progress in this sanctuary.*

Third, the study found that there are complaints from tourists who visit the site. Chances are that they may spread the information about what they experience to other tourists.

There are also tourist complaints about guiding services inside and outside the community as reported by the provincial guide from MAT:

*When I got too many tourists in a group or I had to guide more than one group, I passed those tourists to other guides who were my friends. But the problem is that they cannot speak English well. And some guides do not know how to talk and explain like a story telling, they just accompany tourists trekking and that is all.*

In terms of the destination-competitive aspect of tourism and attraction development, this thesis was guided by the framework of destination competitiveness introduced by Crouch and Ritchie in 1999. Therefore, there are six indicators that were investigated.

The first indicator to measure the destination competitiveness is physiography. The whole province is very fortunate to have a favourable climate filled with attractive scenery. According to the WWF (2006), the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary has been identified by its forest landscape as a high biodiversity priority which falls within WWF Global Ecoregion No. 54 the Lower Mekong Dry Forest among 200 priority Ecoregions. Goodman et al. (2003) indicated that deciduous dipterocarp forest (DDF) is the dominant forest in the open Dry Forests which provides a supportive environment to a large community of mammals, birds and reptiles that are considered as threatened groups. Moreover, the natural environment of the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary has the advantage of having a diversity of natural resources which makes it possible for tourism development. According to the interview with the representative of DoT, the sanctuary has wonderful views along the Sraepok River which allows for different kinds of tourist activities. He said that:

*I love the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary because there are a lot of natural resources like forest animals, birds to watch, and wonderful forests along the Sraepok River landscape where we can also promote fishing tours.*

However, taking into consideration the advantages of this sanctuary and its competitiveness with other places, the chances of seeing wildlife and birds are lower than the nearby sanctuary of Seima Wildlife Sanctuary due to its topography according to the interviews with WWF and DoT. This is supported by the representative of WWF, who mentioned that:

*I think the Seima Forest works well as it possess one competitive advantage which allows tourists to easily watch the forest animals. However, there is not much different from the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary. But the point is that in the Seima Forest, tourists can see monkeys with white tail [the most endangered species in Asia]. Therefore, most tourists prefer to visit there due to the chances for animal and bird watching.*

This means the ability to put tour itineraries into action remains quite low. A guide from MAT stated that:

*I used to hear many complaints about animal watching in the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary. Some tourists could not spot wildlife in the forest as expected.*

Also in comparison with Seima Wildlife Sanctuary's landscape, the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary has a plain topographical condition which allows easy accessibility to illegal logging and poaching. This has destroyed key attractions and resources which are vital for tourism. As explained by ELIE, the Seima forest has a V-shape land area, which makes the illegal activities harder to carry out. ELIE added that:

*Without tourism, local communities still keep cutting down the forest and do their traditional farming. When we involve them in tourism, we support their livelihood and guarantee their health. It looks like they are having good living conditions. When we use their land to keep elephant, we provide 30kg of paddy rice to that family per month. We also support their learning too.*

The second indicator to measure the destination competitiveness is culture and history. Culture and history are the second element that this thesis interrogated with regards to destination competitiveness. All the key informants reported that there are ethnic groups who have been living inside the sanctuary. Based on the DoT and WWF (2003), Mondulkiri Province is made up of many diverse ethnic groups, of which the majority is Bunong people. Their ways of life, dance, traditional festivals and marriage celebrations, handicrafts and special food make their culture and history unique (DoT & WWF, 2003).

The third indicator to measure the destination competitiveness is market ties. The market ties focuses on the linkage of the local people with the tourist-generating region. Based on WWF and FA (2015), the demographic situation in the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary is made up of various ethnic groups of which 45% of them are Bunong

People, 33% are Khmer, and 13% Laotian. Based on the interviews with the representatives of WWF, the study found that majority of tourists visiting the sanctuary are foreign tourists and domestic tourists remain considerably few in number. Therefore, local villagers inside the sanctuary do not necessarily have strong market ties with those foreign tourists. In addition to this, the guide from MAT reported that most of the local villagers could not communicate with tourists. So, how can people expect those local villagers to have a strong relationship or linkage with the foreign tourists?

The fourth indicator to measure the destination competitiveness is the mix of activities, which focuses on the activities created from the special features of the physiography and cultural values. The study found that tourism activities which were offered inside the sanctuary remained at a moderate level. This means that not many tourist activities were offered inside the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary. According to the interview with the guide from the MAT:

*When I worked as a guide and translator, mostly there was a forest trekking tour [two nights, three days]. Tourists slept in the forest at Ou Chhbar [the area of wild animals]. There is a clear price for each tour for example one night, two days, it costs \$80. The formula is that: \$60 was given to the community, and I and other transport service charged only \$20 so in total it is \$80.*

The fifth indicator to measure the destination competitiveness is the special events, which refer to happenings ranging from traditional community events to outside-the-community events. DoT and WWF (2013) maintained that there are particular events celebrated inside the community including Bunong dances (Kous Korng dance or rice stripping dance, rice offering festival and traditional weddings). However the point is that these events are celebrated based on specific times. For example, the rice stripping dance is celebrated when local villagers start harvesting their paddy rice. DoT and WWF (2003) also added that the DoT is planning to organise some events in order to

show the identity of the province and its history to tourists. Those events include the elephant festival, mountain festival, ethnic arts performance, ethnic food exhibition, traditional festivals of ethnic group and sports such as bike racing. However, these events will take place in the central town.

The last component to measure the destination competitiveness is superstructure, which focuses on accommodation, food, road condition and attraction. The study found that there is only one homestay inside the Dei Ey community, which can provide only four rooms based on the interviews with the guide from MAT. He added that when he led a tour, he brought along some materials to cook ethnic food in the forest when all people in a package tour have to sleep overnight in the forest. However, he continued that some tourists complained about the food made during the stay overnight in the forest.

Safety of tourists and the road conditions, accessibility, and to the site remained another concern based on the interview. The study found that there is a concern related to safety issues for tourists inside the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary. The guide from the MAT noted that:

*We are still afraid of dangerous animals at night like elephants and tigers. We have nothing to protect ourselves. We just walked with another local guide.*

Another concern in relation to superstructure is road condition and accessibility to the core attraction inside the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary. The road becomes muddy and slippery during the rainy season as advised by the representatives of WWF. Although WWF (2006) claimed that the access to tourism attractions in Mondulkiri Province became easier due to the construction of the National Road No.76 from Snoul district of Kratie Province to Senmonorom city, accessing major attractions like the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary remains difficult, especially during the rainy season.

The representative of WWF advised that the distance from the Mondulkiri provincial town is not far in comparison to other sanctuaries. Nevertheless the distance and time to reach the core attraction inside the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary are further and longer in comparison with other nearby sanctuaries like Siema Wildlife Sanctuary. Generally, tourists can access only Trapang Khaerm (one of the attraction in the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary) and Dei Ey community, yet they have not accessed Mreuch which is the core attraction. In Mreuch, tourists can also enjoy a lot of fun activities and the view along the Sraepok riverside. Additionally, the study found that time spent reaching the core attraction in Mreuch and along the Sraepok river requires them to stay overnight in the forest, therefore most of them prefer to go to only the nearby and accessible areas for camping, and elephant watching and riding. In terms of accessibility, the WWF member explained that:

*The Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary is located not so far from the central town; however, accessing the core attraction (Mreuch Site) and core area is hard.*

The guide from the MAT reported that:

*During the trekking, tourists and I have to sleep overnight inside the forest in order to get to the key spots of attraction within the sanctuary.*

In addition to the accessibility aspect of the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary in comparison with the Seima Forest, the study found different views toward how easy it is to access the site. DoT thought that accessibility to core attractions in Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary is easier than in the Seima Forest. The representative of DoT claimed that:

*Accessing the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary is easier than getting into the Seima Forest. In the case of Seima Forest, the road is hard to access the key attraction unless tourists dare to walk into the deep forest.*

The second WWF staff member supported that:

*If you refer to the Seima Forest, it is far from the central town. And geographically, the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary does not have deep mountains like the Seima Forest which make the access easy for*

*tourists in general. And one more thing, along the way to the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary, there are attractions which allow tourists to stop over and enjoy the views.*

However, the second WWF staff considered that accessing the core attraction in the Siema Forest is easier. He explained that:

*If you refer to access to the core zone among these two sanctuaries, the Seima forest is easier to reach than the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary.*

That is a reason why ELIE choose Seima Wildlife Sanctuary as the focus to help improve local community livelihoods by using tourism as a tool. This also protects the number of elephants available in the Seima Wildlife Sanctuary.

Due to the lack of information about the site and a lack of expert guides to lead tourists in the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary, the representative of WWF claimed that this makes the close-by destinations to town preferable for both national and international tourists. Domestic tourists, for example, like going to farmland resorts and picnic sites, which is a new trend in this province. According to the interviews with WWF, DoE and DoT, there is a lack of people working in tourism, especially in the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary. That is why tourism in this sanctuary works ineffectively, although there is demand from tourists as claimed by the WWF staff member and the guides from Green House Restaurant and Tour. The WWF staff member explained that:

*Actually, many tourists have contacted WWF and asked for information about Trapeang Khaerm and Dei Y (two communities in the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary), but there is a lack of guides, tourism resource rangers and managers.*

However, there has not been any formal research on the demand for tourism specifically for this Sanctuary yet. The only study is on investment demand. Yet, according to RUPP and ReDI (2016), the number of national and international tourists coming into Mondulkiri Province increased from 19,014 (2009) to 78,784 (2012).



Although there are disadvantages for the development of tourism in the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary, the study found that there was a positive view toward future development tourism plans in this sanctuary. To be specific, the representative from DoT mentioned that the representatives from MoE and MoT have plans and much interest in working with each other to develop tourism in sanctuaries. According to the interview with WWF staff member, regardless of the small impact created by tourism so far, local people still welcome tourists into their communities when they come.

## **4.2 Local Participation**

This study focused on two types of local participation: public participation and local participation in the tourism economy. In terms of public participation, the study found that without initiatives from external actors, especially NGOs, there will be limited development in relation to community tourism. WWF, for instance, helped local communities in the Sraepok Wildlife Area to propose their request for registering community forestry (CFs) to government agencies. A reinforcing example, as stated by the representative from DoT, explained that:

*Communities need a key player in place to develop and prepare and initiate plans particularly for the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary. If you wait for the ideas from communities to develop something, it is really hopeless to wait for their ideas, unless there is a partner organisation or a private partner who is responsible for putting the principles into action because so far communities still do not know what tourism means to them.*

In terms of local participation in the tourism economy, local communities are only involved in the operational level of tourism employment in their own communities. Although tourism has been developed in the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary since 2006, the concept of tourism development still remains new to local communities. Taking part in and interacting with tourists during the trekking tour is still a difficult job for local communities to participate in. In fact, they tend to only work as local co-guides, rangers, cooks and homestay providers. The WWF staff member supported that:

*The point is that when there is involvement from private agents, local communities are only involved at an operational level due to their limited knowledge; they are neither managers nor consultants for the tourism project.*

However, beside initiating a tourism project, WWF also assist local communities to protect their community forest and support them to collect honey by providing technical support and finding the markets at the provincial level. It is noticeable that local communities are involved in tourism inside their sanctuary only when there is the support from external partners to guide them. A provincial guide from Modulkiri Adventure Tour (MAT) gave one specific example about working with a local guide in the community:

*Some local guides do not even know how to communicate in English, so they cannot explain interesting things in the forest. They just accompany tourists with me trekking and do nothing, unless I ask them to do something.*

The study discovered that there are specific challenges to local communities to actively engage in tourism in their area. First, there is limited knowledge about what tourism really is and what they can do for their product presentation. This is a challenge for local communities in the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary. The WWF staff member expressed concerns regarding this matter as below:

*Most local people do not even know what tourism really is. To them, tourism is still new. They do not understand why tourists come to their communities and why they should develop tourism in their communities.*

The representative from DoE agreed, saying that:

*Because of the limitation of their knowledge, they do not understand the importance of and what to do with natural resources. Most of them cannot even write and read.*

A guide from MAT added that:

*Local people still do not know what to show and how to do product presentation. Due to their tradition, they seem not to be able to involve tourists in a cycle during the trip. I used to see some tourists keep standing when local communities do not invite them sit. That is culture barrier and difference.*

The second challenge is that there is a language barrier as English language remains problematic to the local people. This hinders their ability to communicate and present their tourism products to English-speaking tourists. In Dei Y, for example, when emails and telephone calls were transferred from a provincial guide to be managed by the communities, the number of tourists started dropping because local people could not communicate in English. One provincial guide from MAT mentioned that:

*Due to their limitation in English communication with tourists, local guides in the community do not know how to interact with tourists. More than this, they still do not know how to treat tourists well when they are visiting their communities. If I do not ask them about things in the forest or something to present to tourists, they will not do anything besides walking.*

The third challenge is the contradictory views of what wealth means to local people as one of the factors which make local communities less involved in tourism development in their community. To them, having natural resources and land defines their wealth in the village. This is because the majority of their livelihood relies on collecting non-timber forest products (NTFPs) including forest vegetation, mushrooms, honey, resin and many other things for daily use. The provincial guide from MAT supported that view, saying that local communities are different, and they are not interested in making profit.

Many from the local community are still involved in traditional farming on their ancestors' land, which entirely depends on the weather. The representative of DoE stated that:

*Most local communities in the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary are farmers, so they cannot fulfil their responsibilities as tourism community members.*

Practising their traditional farming and NTFPs collecting gives more value to the community as it can provide them with an immediate income every day. In a statement which supports this, a guide from MAT indicated that:

*Tourism is really seasonal, so local communities developing tourism is like either having a bad day or good day. This makes local communities compare what they can get from tourism and what they can get from other occupations.*

The fourth challenge is the choice of local people's livelihood such as traditional farming and some illegal poaching and logging and the benefits that they can get from those occupations. Local communities considered that other occupations provide more benefits to them, especially when law enforcement remains weak, which leads to inappropriate uses of land and natural resources. The WWF staff member gave one specific example.

*If local communities are involved in illegal hunting, poaching and logging, they might get 300,000 to 400,000 [NZD 100.92 to NZD 134.56] Khmer Riel per day if they can access that resource.*

However, if they rely heavily on tourism in the community, they are not able to provide for their whole family as a consequence of the nature of tourism itself, which is seasonal.

The fifth challenge is a lack of key actors, who plays important roles in providing guides to communities. Tourism development remains slow, which does not encourage local participation. This study found that when there is no key player taking the lead in the community, there are no significant benefits to be gained from tourism. The WWF staff member said:

*I think it is related to a model that NGOs have used so far specifically in WWF which does not allow any staff to get involved in financial transactions in each community. WWF used exit strategies in order to end their support the communities in the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary, but in reality it does not work that way. You cannot leave communities alone during the implementation of tourism development. Take Som Veasna*

*Centre and the Elephant Livelihood Initiative Environment (ELIE) for example.*

Additionally, WWF does not allow their staff to get involved in financial transactions in each community due to their policy. They only guide the community what to do for tourism in general, and after the end of the project, everything goes back to its original state. That means when there are no financial benefits to local communities, there is no motivation for them to develop tourism in the communities.

The representative of ELIE mentioned about the importance of having a key player to facilitate tourism development in the community. He added that his organisation contributes significantly to the success of tourism development in the Seima Wildlife Sanctuary, which can be a good lesson for the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary. ELIE also stated that:

*ELIE functions organisation to support, provide training, and facilitate tourism flow to ensure that information is given to tourists. ELIE is involved from the start to the end of the tourist journey which means it functions as an actor to bridge connections between local communities and tourists.*

Without support from an external partner, it is very difficult for local communities to initiate ideas about what to do with tourism inside their sanctuary and communicate with tourists. DoT supported that:

*There is not a lot of hope waiting for local communities to come up with the ideas for tourism development in their areas for themselves unless there is a partner like NGOs or the private sector. That is because local communities still do not know what tourism really means to them.*

The sixth challenge is the benefits that are not widely spread across whole communities. According to DoT, this occurs due to the scale of impact on the communities, and partly because of the number of local communities who are involved in the project. Due to the problem of benefit sharing, it was discovered that there are conflicts of interest among local communities and external guides and tour operators. A guide from the Green

House Tour reported that those conflicts emerged from local people who do not benefit from community tourism development and wish to run it by themselves. Below is an important story reflecting the situation in the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary as well as in the Mondulkiri Province. The provincial guide said that:

*There was a conflict between a guide from a provincial town and local people who did not take part in tourism with other communities. It happened when he took a group of tourists into the forest. A group from the local community reacted unhappily when they saw tourists taking a trip inside their community forest and waterfall. Local people claimed that the waterfall is their ancestors' property and no one can bring the tourists there unless they pay the money to them. However, the guide argued that up to 50 metres from the waterfall is public property according to Land Law.*

Moreover, there are contrasting ideas between the government agents and WWF about who should play the greater role if tourism is developed in the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary. DoE explained that:

*The government wanted to collaborate with WWF to develop tourism inside the area; yet WWF has no rights to develop it on their own. WWF wanted to engage a private actor to play a major role inside the sanctuary. However before this sanctuary was transferred to be managed by the Ministry of Environment, it was managed by the Forestry Administration (FA). So at that time FA did not want the sanctuary to be managed by the private actor. Therefore it comes down to who should play key roles in this sanctuary. At the end we cancelled all the plans, which is why tourism in this sanctuary did not work as well as in others.*

### **4.3 A Holistic Livelihood Approach and Opportunities**

The study found that tourism is not the first priority compared to other occupations for a number of reasons. First, benefits gained from tourism are lower than what other occupations can provide. The study found that other occupations including agriculture, illegal logging and poaching are a pull factor which makes local communities not wish to be involved in developing their products for tourism as the benefits providing from other sectors outweigh the benefit provided by from tourism. The WWF staff member claimed that:

*From the local community's perspective, they think that tourism cannot provide enough benefits and income for their family. They believe that other occupations beside tourism provide more benefits. That means they still compare what they can gain from tourism with what they can get from other sectors. So other occupations like agriculture are a pull factor which make communities not choose tourism in their regions.*

The guide from MAT also supported that view, saying:

*Local communities compare what tourism can give them with other sectors. Most of them decide not to be involved in tourism as other occupations are well-paid and tourism is very seasonal. So developing tourism is like either having a lucky day or a bad day. If they become involved in tourism, they might get only 20,000 riel [NZD 6.73] per day [even on a day when there are tourists in the community]. By contrast, if they work in the plantation for others, they can earn at least 30,000 riel per day.*

Therefore, there is little reason for local communities to become involved in tourism development in their area. It is hard for them to complete their other responsibilities as well as being involved in tourism. The representative from DoE noted that:

*Most of them are farmers, so they cannot commit to fulfil their responsibilities as tourism workers.*

Also, local communities are not motivated to develop tourism inside their community as a consequence of having natural attractions destroyed by other villagers. Some local villagers get involved in these activities because these occupations give more immediate income for their whole families to survive on. The second WWF staff explained that:

*Some illegal activities namely logging and poaching provide economic benefit to local communities. This leads to the decrease of tourism product for tourism, and makes tourism in the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary remain stagnant.*

The second reason which makes tourism unlikely to be the first option for their income is its seasonality. According to the interview with ELIE, the peak season is from November to March. From July to September is the quietest period. In addition to this, the number of tourists going into the communities in the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary

started dropping, which did not encourage any involvement from local communities.

The representative of DoT claimed that:

*Around 2006 or 2007, WWF established one tourism community in Dei Ey in the MPF. Their purpose was to direct tourists into the community. However, currently the number of tourists has dropped. As far as I know, not many tourists go there. That is because the preparation and the development by the WWF is not proper, so there are fewer tourists going into the communities. Also the community does not show much interest and commitment in developing tourism in their community.*

The second WWF staff added that:

*Tourism happens only in the nearby destination in town. Right now, it rarely happens in the deep jungle of the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary; say for example the core zone and the sustainable use zone. This is because of the inaccessibility, and lack of information about the site.*

The Department of Environment (DoE), DoT, the WWF staff, ELIE and two provincial guides agreed that the number of tourists is quite low and keeps dropping due to a lack of information about the site and its attractions and accessibility to the area. This is the main factor which makes tourism not impactful enough to support the daily livelihood for local communities. This shows that local communities cannot rely on tourism as the only sector for their income.

The study sought strategies from the participants to improve and integrate tourism with other sectors. First, the integration between tourism and agriculture can make these two sectors grow even stronger. However, as suggested by DoT and WWF staff, before people can start this project, they should have a feasibility study about the potential of tourism and agriculture in Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary. They need to identify clearly what types of small agriculture enterprises they can work with in order to make tourism and agriculture sector grow together at the same time.

DoT provided one transferable example:

*I think the agriculture sector has potential in the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary. If we study this more deeply, we will see what we can do with this area. Then we can push each sector to grow together and support each*



*other. For instance, if we find out that there is potential in growing banana and pineapple, we can encourage small and medium enterprises. We can have proper packaging for this product, so there will be tourists going into the community to buy the products.*

As a second strategy, one central community hub should be developed in order to serve as a place to sell community products and provide information to tourists. This is a place where local communities can get together and highlight and sell their products directly to tourists as suggested by DoT. This centre can be developed after there is clear identification of what products to offer and who the customers are. Therefore, the occupations for local communities will be varied including farmers, tourism service providers and honey collectors. Although the study found that local communities keep comparing what tourism can offer with other occupations, DoT and WWF agreed that local people still welcome tourists into their communities if there is demand. In this case they can provide accommodation, food and guiding services to tourists during their stay in the community.

#### **4.4 Distribution Channels in Tourism**

This part revealed two things about tourism distribution channels: the role of local communities coming into contact with tourists, and the roles of other key intermediaries that influence tourism. In terms of the role of local communities, the study found that they can provide only operational services to tourists due to their level of education and understanding about tourism. That means until now the majority of them still do not work and take part in managing and operating tourism without support from external actors. The research found out that there is a lack of initiatives proposed by the local community themselves. That means most of the projects are imposed upon them by external actors who see potential in developing tourism in the area. According to the interviews with DoT and guides from MAT and the Green House restaurant and tour,

local communities provide homestays, food, and services as guides and rangers of their own forest. The second WWF staff claimed that:

*There are not enough people working in the channel to make tourism in the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary work, therefore not many tourists access the site.*

Key informants admitted that so far the local community do not understand what tourism means to them and what it really is. Actually, they have not done much in order to direct tourists into their communities besides waiting for private partners to bring tourist into theirs.

In terms of role of key intermediaries, the study found that private tour operators play a very significant role in taking lead tourists into everywhere they want to tourists to see.

The second WWF staff explained that:

*Tourism happens only in the communities located near the central town, Senmonorom. Generally, most travel agents do not organise for their tourists to visit more distant sanctuaries like the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary. If there are no tour operators taking tourists to the sanctuary, that means, the site receives no tourists.*

That means the direction of tourism is entirely controlled by those private actors, which also reflects the extent of local influence on tourism in their own communities. If the private sector actors do not create a package tour to visit the forest, there will not be many tourists accessing that area.

The interview with WWF staff showed that, even though in the future there may be joint ventures between local communities and private actors, private actors still take the lead due to the community's lack of understanding and ability in communicating with overseas tourists. The WWF staff member gave support for that view, by saying:

*The point is that when there is involvement from private agents, the local community can only be involved at the operational level due to their*

*limited knowledge. They are unlikely to be managers or consultants for tourism projects.*

In addition to this, tourism in the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary remains stagnant due to a lack of tour organisers to arrange package tours into the community. The provincial guide from MAT stated that:

*Tourism in Dei Y used to work when I controlled the lines of communication with tourists. These included telephone calls and emails. Unfortunately, when these lines were transferred to local communities under the WWF project, the number of tourists into Dei Ey started dropping incredibly. Local communities are responsible for managing their own communication with tourists. So when it comes to managing communication with tourists by themselves, they are not able to communicate in an effective way due to their lack of English knowledge.*

#### **4.5 Cross Disciplinary Learning**

The major focus of cross disciplinary learning is on the presence of income generation capacity building rather than on tourism. The study discovered that the training provided to local people in the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary is not regular and not delivered in a deep way. According to the interview with DoT, several training programmes related to tourism were delivered in towns and community representatives were invited to join too. For example, DoT used to organise training on indigenous traditional dance. DoT invited an expert from the Department of Culture to deliver the training to local people. The purpose of this training was to engage young indigenous people to perform their dance on a regular basis. However DoT noted that:

*So far training has been delivered but not in a deep way. We used to do it once at DoT. During the workshop, one or two community members had been invited to participate. However, the training did not focus deeply on how to provide homestay services, the skill that people are in need of, but rather it focused on hospitality skills.*

As a result, the skill was still not transferable to local people due to the infrequency and irregularity of the training. The second WWF staff stressed that:

*I believe that we need actual learning in class and at the sites, enough financial support, and clear assessment prior to the start-up. For example, if we choose one alternative livelihood programme for them, we should understand the production value channel and have a clear roadmap and a prior local capacity assessment. We should have a support plan detailed and long-term enough to achieve the goals for local communities.*

Besides tourism-related training, the study found that there is some income generation capacity building and on-the-job training provided to local people in the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary. According to the interview with DoE:

*In Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary, we have developed and supported communities in terms of honey collection. In Ou Malay and Sre Huy, we gather communities to collect all the bamboo for Bambusa Global Ventures.*

Based on the interview with WWF staff, the study found that there is a project called Support Forest and Biodiversity by USAID. The main focus is to create community forestry inside the sanctuary. So they have developed eight community forestries inside the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary. The project focuses on enhancing local communities' livelihood through providing small and medium enterprise skills to local communities.

## **4.6 Empowerment**

In this study, empowerment focused on several things: capacity building and training, community control, and removing barriers to allow the community to reach out to markets. First, there are capacity building programmes in equipping the local community to make their honey ready for market demands. There is also training support for hospitality skills to the local community too.

In terms of community control, tourism in the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary relies wholly on the support from WWF and private travel agents in town. DoT explained that tourism is still new to the local community; therefore, it is not an easy job for them to take control and initiate new activities in their communities. Tourism in this sanctuary

depends on private travel agents to bring tourists, as explained by the WWF staff and two provincial guides. In terms of community employment, the study found that there is a lack of skilled people functioning in each aspect of making travel possible for tourists.

For instance, the second WWF staff explained that:

*There are not enough people working in the distribution channel to make tourism in the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary work, therefore not many tourists access the site.*

There are still barriers which hinder the community's opportunities to reach their tourism markets although they have the natural resources ready for tourism development. First, the core attraction, which is the natural resources, is threatened by illegal uses and poaching. WWF staff stated that there is pressure on the use of natural resources such as illegal hunting and logging, and a lack of transparency and equity among community members which allow those resources to become fragile. Being a natural attraction, Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary relies entirely on the beauty of its resources. However, when it comes to natural resources degradation within the sanctuary, this means the loss of a natural asset to the community. The second factor is the limited knowledge of business contexts and how the external world works. All informants agreed that the local community's knowledge is still limited. Having limited knowledge hinders the local community's opportunities and ability to develop tourism in an effective way and grasp opportunities available around them to initiate new ideas with regard to tourism development in the community.

## **4.7 Flexibility**

Flexibility refers to the adaptive strategies and specific plans for the management of tourism in the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary. Developing the strategy for one particular tourism destination requires processes as discussed in the Literature Review chapter. However, this study set out to conduct a suitability analysis in order to understand how

well the strategies fit with the existing context of tourism in the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary. The study found that there is a plan for the general context of the whole provincial tourism development, namely Mondulkiri's Development Strategic Plan for Tourism 2014-2018 conducted by DoT in Mondulkiri Province and WWF. Based on the interviews with all the key informants, there has not been a specific tourism plan for the particular case of the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary. Therefore, the researcher did the analysis of the suitability of Mondulkiri's Development Strategic Plan by taking into account the strategies written in it. This author used C-PEST as a model to do the suitability analysis on this plan. Applying the C-PEST model, the study identified various opportunities, threats, goals and strategies in the five environments as shown in Table 5 below.

**Table 5. C-PEST Component Stated in the Plan**

Competitive Environment	
<b>Opportunities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many resources not yet processed and used for tourism</li> <li>• A lot of infrastructure is being constructed to assist the investors to make investments</li> </ul>
<b>Threats</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The ecosystem is polluted by tourism activities</li> <li>• Waste management is not yet good</li> <li>• Annual wildfires</li> <li>• Continued land encroachment in the resort and forest area</li> <li>• Constructing buildings without a master plan, which affects the landscape area that should be protected</li> </ul>

<b>Goals and Strategies</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Improve quality of tourism products and services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enforce laws and regulations on tourism in order to make tourism businesses including all resorts comply with hygiene and safety standards for customers</li> <li>• Develop infrastructure for main tourist spots</li> <li>• Provide capacity building to all members of the communities</li> <li>• Strengthen the position of souvenir craftsmen by enhancing their capacity</li> <li>• Strengthen the position of elephant riding groups</li> </ul> </li> <li>2. Develop new tourism products <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop community-based tourism in the wildlife sanctuaries and protected areas</li> <li>• Organise tourism events such as elephant festivals, mountain festivals, performances of ethnic arts, ethnic food exhibitions and ethnic festivals</li> <li>• Implement the National Ecotourism Policy, which is at the drafting stage</li> <li>• Collaborate with stakeholders to strengthen and expand tourism communities and build capacity of tour guides in the community including the skills for providing homestay and food services in their villages</li> <li>• Collaborate with other institutions, private actors, and development partners for commercial and small-scale development of ecotourism and community tourism</li> <li>• Promote agricultural production at the community level to supply to tourists</li> </ul> </li> <li>3. Improve human resource quality specifically in the tourism industry <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide training on tourism skills to tour operators</li> <li>• Provide capacity building training with regard to management and tourism service provision to communities</li> <li>• Improve the capacity of officials working in the Department of Tourism</li> </ul> </li> </ol>
<b>Political environment</b>	
<b>Opportunities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support from authorities for the tourism sector, which is the province's priority sector</li> <li>• Support from civil society</li> </ul>
<b>Threats</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continued land encroachment in the resort and forest area</li> <li>• Constructing buildings without a master plan, which affects the landscape area that should be protected</li> </ul>

<b>Goals and Strategies</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Emphasise tourism safety and impact management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve the role of tourism police and set up first aid stations at tourist destinations</li> <li>• Cooperate with other departments to improve awareness of tour operators and local communities about hygiene, environmental protection and waste management</li> <li>• Promote small-and medium-scale enterprises to supply food and accessories in response to the needs of tourists so that the livelihood of local communities may be improved</li> </ul> </li> <li>2. Enforce laws and regulations formulated by the Ministry of Tourism <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disseminate and enforce tourism-related laws</li> <li>• Monitor tourism businesses by cooperating with authorities to make sure that there are no illegal tourism businesses</li> <li>• Create networks for the enforcement of related law to promote joint memberships among private, public sector, NGOs and local communities</li> </ul> </li> </ol>
<b>Economic environment</b>	
<b>Opportunities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increasing numbers of tourists to Mondulkiri province, the new goal</li> </ul>
<b>Threats</b>	Not mentioned in the plan
<b>Goal and Strategies</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Focus on the study of tourism marketing and promotion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Closely observe the tourists spending their holidays in the province so that tourism product and service can be developed to meet their needs</li> <li>• Prepare promotional tool to attract the target market</li> <li>• Improve good governance in the tourism sector by ensuring work performance and collaboration of the Department of Tourism with other institutions and partners</li> <li>• The Department of Tourism acts as a coordinator to create an enabling environment for investment in tourism projects</li> </ul> </li> </ol>
<b>Socio-cultural environment</b>	
<b>Opportunities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increasing numbers of tourists to Mondulkiri province</li> </ul>
<b>Threats</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inflow of external culture affects the preservation of the traditions and culture of local communities, particularly ethnic minorities</li> </ul>
<b>Goal and Strategies</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Emphasise tourism safety and impact management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disseminate information about the effects of adopting foreign cultures</li> <li>• Prevent adaptation to foreign culture and protect ethnic culture by using posters, pictures and guide books that provide information to tourists</li> </ul> </li> </ol>
<b>Technological environment</b>	
<b>Opportunities</b>	Not mentioned in the plan
<b>Threats</b>	Not mentioned in the plan
<b>Strategies</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Emphasise tourism safety and impact management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Set up first aid stations, means of transportation and communication in tourist destination in order to respond to any incidents involving tourists</li> </ul> </li> </ol>

Source: Adapted from DoT and WWF (2013)



## 4.8 Alternative Tourism Development Forms

The study found an applicable model may provide potential for the development of the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary. Before introducing the key elements for this alternative form, this section begins with how key stakeholders should work together. DoA advised that:

*NGOs and experts from each department should sit down together and develop a plan. They should participate in the government meeting at some point to show their plans for the area they are focusing on. We also share the plans we have for local communities. Doing this can help show how the NGOs can help and how much the government side can contribute. So that we can work together and help more local people.*

The study found that there is a possibility for a joint-venture model. Key actors include local communities, government agents, NGOs and the private sector. DoT and WWF supported such a model for a number of reasons. Joint-ventures with private actors would make the process of development faster and more effective. The second WWF staff member explained that:

*I fully support the involvement of the private sector because I think if the private sector is involved in tourism, it will work faster and more effectively. This is because: 1) when private actors work, they give their full attention and effort in order to really make it work; and 2) they can collaborate with government agencies and NGOs for technical support too.*

DoT added that:

*I heard from WWF. They announced that they welcome wealthy and resourceful partners like private actors to be involved in tourism development along the Sraepok River.*

DoE also added support for this view, saying:

*I think when it is transferred to the MoE, MoE has enough law and policies to support and engage private partners just like we did in the Bokor Resort. They want Mondulkiri Protected Forest (MPF) to be managed by the private partner as they believe that private actor can manage it very well, so WWF and the government just monitor the private actor's work. And the income should be distributed properly to local communities, to conservation fees and other recipients too. But currently, there is not a private actor in place yet.*

This study found seven key elements were necessary in order to make this joint-venture model work properly. The first element consists of benefit sharing mechanisms. Clear benefit sharing mechanisms should be put in place in order to avoid delays to project implementation and conflicts of interests. The WWF staff member stated that:

*Having clear benefit sharing mechanisms is important for tourism because conflicts of interest may happen among different actors which prevent tourism from fulfilling its objectives.*

As regards the second element, clear agreements between local communities and private actors should be in place prior to the start of investment in tourism. Due to the different purposes of tourism development, having clear agreements is highly significant to avoid conflicts of interest among stakeholders in the future. The second WWF staff indicated that:

*Clear agreement prior to the development is very important. While the private sector wants to get financial benefits and their business sustainability, the local community's purpose is to improve their livelihood, knowledge and natural resource conservation to secure their tourism attraction.*

Third, on-the-job training and a clear capacity-building plan are required. The second WWF staff member believed that:

*We should have a clear plan for community capacity building and training. We cannot let the community develop tourism on their own in the first place as they have limited knowledge. For example, Chambok community can be that successful until today because of the continuous support from the external partners.*

As a result, the staff member commented that the project should support on-the-job trainings and on-going capacity building plans for local communities along with their tourism operations.

Fourth, a key specific person or organisation should take responsibility for facilitating the process of bringing tourists into communities. As learnt from the experience in Keoseima Wildlife Sanctuary, tourism still works due to their facilitation and

communication with the demand side by the key player, namely the ELIE organisation.

The second WWF staff said:

*It is important to have a specific assigned person or organisation to be responsible for tourism development and operation. However, I do not really want to have big investors to develop in the sanctuary because I want to make sure that benefits are widely spread into the hands of local people.*

Fifth, the second WWF staff also suggested that there should be a clear monitoring and evaluating program operating in the process of tourism development in the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary. He explained that:

*Tourism can help improve and provide benefits to the local environment which do not impact negatively on local livelihood. But if we do not use it properly, we will not gain any opportunities. Running a tourism business needs to be done in proper ways otherwise the situation will turn upside down. If tourism business inside the community fails, it will let people assume that the site does not have enough potential for tourism development.*

Sixth, having policy support from the government is another important factor. According to the interview with WWF, having no policy or strategic support from the government will make the process slower. The second WWF staff member also concurred that when there is policy support in reality: 1) the effectiveness of the project implementation will be enlarged; and 2) law enforcement will lead to securing transparency and equity to protect tourism resources from unsustainable use.

The seventh and last factor concerns the proper timeframe for investment and project implementation. Based on the comments of the two WWF staff members, these two components should be clearly stated in the business plan prior to the start. The second WWF staff explained that:

*We need long term investment to ensure effectiveness and significant impact for local communities. It is based on on-site capacity building until they can have enough ability to provide services, communicate with tourists and have control over their financial management for their own operation. Also we should have a clear business plan, which I*

*refer to as smart business development and management, which takes value the channel into consideration.*

The study found a good example in the practice of tourism in Seima Wildlife Sanctuary. The ELIE representative explained that:

*There has been a big question about why indigenous community tourism works in Keoseima Wildlife Sanctuary. There have been many factors which create an enabling environment for Seima Wildlife Sanctuary. First, it has a key actor who plays an important role in bridging and facilitating tourists into the community. ELIE is an organisation working with local communities in Seima Forest to develop tourism inside the community. They provide on-the-job trainings and ongoing support to the community. Their focus is to strengthen local livelihoods and conserve the forest and specifically elephants and wildlife. ELIE provides ideas about what to do with tourism in Seima Forest to local communities and deals with lines of communication directly with tourists too. More importantly, they take care community of the wealth and health of every member of the community. Second, the tour itinerary is realistic, which means tourists are able to see and do what had been stated in the tour program. For example, tourists can see monkeys with white tails. Fourth, although the distance from town to Seima Wildlife Sanctuary is far, accessing core attractions is far easier than accessing the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary. Fifth, tourism works and there is involvement from local community simply because tourism provides community benefits especially financial benefits to support their livelihood. When they get supported, they are willing to become more involved in the process of tourism development in their own area.*

The findings revealed that current ecotourism in the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary does not necessarily follow the principles of pro-poor tourism. With regards to the first principle of pro-poor tourism, namely commercial realism, the study found that tourism businesses in the sanctuary were not realistically viable. Furthermore, there are problems related to destination sustainability: 1) a lack of supportive policies; 2) the controversial focus of each important stakeholders; and 3) complaints from tourists. Other principles of pro-poor tourism are presented in order: local participation in terms of tourism planning and in the local economy remained considerable limited; 3) a holistic livelihood approach and opportunities principle showed that tourism is not a main option for local community livelihoods; 4) the distribution channels in tourism at this sanctuary entirely depends on private actors (e.g. tour operators) to bring tourists to;

5) although training programmes were in place, yet limited ability to transfer those skills to local villagers; 6) local empowerment remains questionable; and 7) in terms of flexibility, besides a lack of specific tourism plan for this sanctuary, the strategic plan for the whole Mondulkiri province appeared to focus on what the other tourism destinations, in general, are doing, and lacked a specific focus on how to make Mondulkiri and some other destinations, particularly Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary unique.

## **Chapter 5. Analysis and Discussion**

The analysis and discussion builds on the previous chapters. This chapter is divided into three sections: 1) analysis of the current tourism in the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary using pro-poor tourism principles; 2) analysis of existing plans and policies; and 3) discussion of an alternative collaboration model and its mechanisms. The key findings were compared and contrasted with existing ideas presented in the literature review. A table is provided at the end of this chapter to summarise what this research discovered.

### **5.1 Analysis of Current Tourism in the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary Using Pro-poor Tourism Principles**

#### ***5.1.1 Commercial Realism***

The study found that tourism operation in the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary does not necessarily offer secure benefits to the local community for a number of reasons. First, visitor numbers remain stagnant, which does not provide stable income for the local community. The Department for International Development (DFID, 1999) claimed that if tourism is to be called pro-poor tourism, it should benefit local people by providing economic benefits and non-economic benefits including socio-cultural and environmental aspects. In sharp contrast, due to the dependency on private travel agents to take tourists into the community, it is an issue when there is a lack of interest from these agents to take tourists inside the sanctuary due to a lack of site information. The number of tourists into the community started decreasing after the choices of destinations were changed. Ioannides (2003) mentioned that private tour agents influence tourist flows and are able to change destinations without much cost. In contrast, Goodwin (2009) advised that the local community should have greater control over their own resources and operations as this will enable the local community to reach markets and have rights over their ownership.

In addition, the study found that due to limited benefits provided from tourism in the area, the local community in the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary became demotivated about actively engaging in development of their own area. This finding is in accord with what Zhao and Ritchie (2007) explained. They noted that if local communities (target beneficiaries) remain outside of the benefit circle from the development, tourism means little to them (Zhao & Ritchie, 2007). Murphy (1985) maintained that the local community should feel satisfied with the benefits of tourism in return for their effort and any inconvenience imposed when the community shows their natural and cultural assets to tourists. Moreover, the UNWTO (2002) explained that commercial viability is important, especially for local communities who do not have adequate resources to risk involving themselves in initiatives which do not provide viable markets for their actions in return. Choi and Sirakaya (2006) also supported this position. They agreed that sustainable tourism must be economically viable because tourism is an economic activity (Choi & Sirakaya, 2006).

This is the second reason that tourism in the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary seems not to provide benefits to local villagers. There is a lack of ability for local people to start new businesses on the ground. It appears obvious that the birth of tourism inside the sanctuary has not encouraged any initiatives of tourism-related enterprises in the area so far. This is despite the fact that community tourism should encourage further local businesses and enhance the local economy, engage more people and open up investment opportunities too (TIANZ, 2002). Ashley et al. (2001) insisted that if development follows pro-poor tourism principles, opportunities should be expanded to include poor people, which means services provided by local people will be increased. The study revealed that starting a tourism business remained new to local people because they are

used to relying on their land, natural resources and traditional farming for their livelihoods. There are many factors that local communities have to take into consideration if they are to develop tourism. Mbaiwa (2005) confirmed that it is very challenging for local communities as tourism is a new and foreign-oriented idea and not fully understood by local communities. Furthermore, due to socio-economic conditions, local and small tourism enterprises have been excluded from the development cycle by other competitors (Zhao & Ritchie, 2007).

Therefore, imposing tourism initiatives and other entrepreneurial activities that do not relate to the community's daily activities takes time and effort. Ashley et al. (2000) confirmed that a proper form of tourism for local communities should align with their existing local livelihood strategies and avoid getting involved in forms of investment that demand a lot of capital investment. Additionally, the study uncovered that local people do not get enough support in terms of practical regular training on how to start entrepreneurial ideas. This does not prepare them well to engage in other tourism-related businesses. However, if it is pro-poor tourism, it should allow the local community to expand their knowledge and capacity from their daily practice and experiences (Ashley et al., 2000; DFID, 1999; Roe & Urquhart, 2004).

The third reason is that there are some problems that threaten the sustainability status of the destination. A lack of policy to actually support ecotourism by taking into consideration pro-poor tourism principles is a major concern. In sharp contrast, Page (2007) insisted that the government should be able to formulate tourism policy and implement it. Worboys et al. (2005) concurred that by looking at regulation developed by the government, communities should be able to understand what can be done and what cannot be done to allow them to conserve their resources. Scheyvens (2003)



admitted that the flow of information is often limited, particularly for local communities in developing countries. More importantly, if policy is flawed, the issues intended to be addressed will not be dealt through its implementation and integration into planning mechanisms (Worboys et al., 2005). Therefore, a lack of policies to guide ecotourism in the future makes it hard to achieve tourism development goals that were developed previously.

Furthermore, competing attitudes towards development plans among key stakeholders bring about lengthy and bureaucratic processes, which slow down tourism development in the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary. Simply put, strategic actions for the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary remained incomplete following conflicting interests between departments at the Mondulkiri administration level. Significantly, the study discovered that due to a lack of transparency, clarity and informed action among all concerned, stakeholder collaboration for tourism development in the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary seems fragile. Reed (1997) demonstrated that usually the conflicts occur when there are conflicting views between those who want to make a positive change in the local community's livelihood and those who wish to encourage businesses to start.

Although there has been action trying to promote participatory development, Zhao and Ritchie (2007) proved that stakeholders who are interested in involving local participation may have a conflict of interest. It is agreed that having multi-stakeholder collaboration is important for decision-making to determine what form of tourism development should be introduced (Choi & Sirakaya, 2006). However, this study discovered that different organisations bring different and contrasting ideas and focuses and could not find a suitable platform for their cross-institutional collaboration. For example, NGOs put much emphasis on natural resource conservation by using tourism

as a tool (Boyd & Singh, 2003), while local communities value tourism as a source of livelihood diversification. This makes options limited (Ioannides, 2003). Nevertheless, there should be a balance between conservation goals and socio-economic improvement for local communities.

The study also found that there are tourist complaints about guiding services provided by some provincial guides. For example, this happened when one expert guide who had too many international tourists passed them to other guides who could not speak English. Therefore, some tourists complained about the difficulties of communicating with guides who get left-over tourists from the expert guide. Mbaiwa (2005) suggested that the sustainability of the community will be threatened when there is poor service performance by the community themselves. In addition to this, Murphy (1985) also explained that communities can receive immediate income and get opportunities to start further businesses only when the destination could meet what tourists had expected. Moreover, Murphy explained that visitor satisfaction should be a goal of every single destination for the purpose of business survival (Murphy, 1985). Nevertheless, Bouchon and Rawat (2016) explained that the expectations of tourists and the community may be completely different in terms of product and service quality as well as local activities. Consequently, fulfilling tourists' expectation is always a problem which threatens the sustainability of tourism in the communities.

The third component in measuring commercial realism in the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary is destination competitiveness. Six elements, namely: 1) physiography, 2) culture and history; 3) market ties; 4) mix of activities; 5) special events; and 6) superstructure. The study uncovered that there are issues in each element which are presented in detail at the (Table 6 below, on page 104).

Moreover, in comparison with the Seima Wildlife Sanctuary, the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary still has limited destination competitiveness. There were several major limitations, which encourage more tourists' visits to the Seima Wildlife Sanctuary than the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary. First, the ability to see wildlife and birds in the Seima Wildlife Sanctuary was higher. The study found that there were high chances for tourists to see elephants and other wildlife species such as white and yellow tail monkeys in the Seima Wildlife Sanctuary. However, watching wild animals and birds in the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary was still difficult due to accessibility issues and the distance to its core attractions. Bouchon and Rawat (2016) explained that a gap among different destinations still exists although there is much attention to trying to enhance tourism conditions in each destination.

The second reason which made the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary less favourable to visitors lay in the road condition, site accessibility and safety within the sanctuary. The study revealed that in order to get access to the core attractions in the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary, tourists had to overnight inside the forest. The study found that getting to the key attractions in this sanctuary became more difficult during the rainy season as the road was muddy and slippery. This led to another concern, which was safety for all people in a group tour to this Sanctuary. The study found that there was a lack of strategies for coping with risks and crisis for this sanctuary. An example found in this study was the concern shared by the provincial guide that he felt insecure when taking tourists to stay overnight in the jungle as he did not know what to do if something bad happened to them.

The last reason which reduced the destination competitiveness of the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary associated with the existing superstructure in this sanctuary. The study found that there was a lack of information about the tourism attractions, expert guides and skilled labourers working for community tourism in the sanctuary. Bosworth and Farrell (2011) explained that a remote location creates barriers for the local community to access larger markets. Mark (2000) agreed that access to tourist markets by people living in remote areas is hard. Compared with the Seima Wildlife Sanctuary, there was one particular organisation working very hard to ensure that information about the attractions inside the Seima Wildlife Sanctuary could reach the world through its website. This organisation worked with local communities inside the Seima Wildlife Sanctuary to build on local capacity on tourism operations and bring tourists into the sanctuary. Doing this enables local villagers in the Seima Wildlife Sanctuary to understand what they are doing and what more they can do for their tourism communities. This good practice led to the continuation of tourists' visits in the Seima Wildlife Sanctuary.

**Table 6. The Core Resources and Attractors in the Framework of Destination Competitiveness**

<b>Core Resources and Attractors</b>	<b>Measurement for Each Element</b>
<b>Physiography</b>	Measured by landscape and climate
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Favourable climate: this condition is fulfilled</li> <li>▪ Attractive scenery fulfilled by DDF and a large community of mammals, birds and reptile</li> </ul>
	<b>Issues</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The chances to see wildlife and birds, which affect the ability of tour operators to put their itineraries into practice</li> <li>▪ Plain topography allows easy access to illegal logging and poaching</li> </ul>
<b>Culture and History</b>	Measured by key features in culture and history which make the destination unique
	Bunong people are the majority in comparison with other groups inside the sanctuary. They have unique ways of life, dances, traditional festivals and marriage, handicrafts and special foods.
<b>Market Ties</b>	Measured by linkage with residents of tourist originating region
	The linkage and relationship between local villagers and tourists remains questionable.
<b>Mix of Activities</b>	Measured by the creative and innovative activities that combine physiography and cultural value
	Existing tourism activities have not reached the potential of what the sanctuary can offer in reality. Those activities only involved trekking and staying overnight inside the sanctuary.
	In the Seima Wildlife Sanctuary, there was ELIE working directly with local communities to establish everything for community tourism. This enabled the Seima Wildlife Sanctuary to be prepared for tourists' visits.
<b>Special Events</b>	Measured by various happenings that create high value of interest from tourists and local residents
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ There are some traditional events such as Bunong dance, rice offering festival and traditional marriage.</li> <li>▪ Also there are plans to host new events such as the elephant festival, mountain festival, ethnic art performances, ethnic food exhibitions, traditional festivals of ethnic groups and other sports events such as biking racing.</li> </ul>
<b>Superstructure</b>	Measured by accommodation, food services, transportation facilities, major attractions.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Accommodation: one homestay with four rooms</li> <li>▪ Food: traditional Bunong food</li> <li>▪ Road condition and attraction: the road becomes muddy and slippery during the rainy season.</li> <li>▪ Distance to the core attraction is far so the tourists have to stay overnight inside the sanctuary, but this is reported as unsafe due to the wild animals at night time.</li> <li>▪ A lack of information about the site, expert guides and skilled labourers</li> </ul>

### ***5.1.2 Local Participation***

The study focused on two types of local participation: 1) public participation in general tourism related decisions; and 2) local participation in the local tourism economy. In terms of public participation, the study revealed that local people took only “follower” roles and public participation was limited. Buultjens et al. (2009) noted that either as employers or employees, indigenous involvement remained limited to the point that public participation in tourism was still a concern. Zhao and Ritchie (2007) claimed that public participation means villagers should be able to influence decision making related to tourism development in their own area. It is suggested that local people should have the chance to engage in the process of self-governance, and have their voices heard by the authorities on any development plans that impact their lives (Choi & Sirakaya, 2006; Tosun, 2000; Zhao & Ritchie, 2007). The current situation of the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary, however, has most of the development imposed by outsiders, for example, non-governmental organisations. Mark (2000); Teye et al. (2002) claimed that communities should be their own decision-makers. TIANZ (2002) added that if the community does not plan for their future tourism, others will take over these roles. Involvement from the local community can be coercive and potentially local villagers are excluded from the decision-making process generally because the government takes control over tourism development (Tosun, 2000).

Another factor related to local involvement in the tourism economy is that local people are involved in only some small aspect of operational activities. This means that they may not necessarily be involved or provide more input in terms of strategy, for example, sharing ideas or initiating small new projects for their own community. Beeton (2006),

and Bosworth and Farrell (2011) confirmed that tourism generally provides low-paid, low-skilled, part-time occupations and has seasonal demand, as well as low levels of innovation and entrepreneurship by the local community, while specialised work is provided by outsiders. In fact, local communities in the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary only provide guide services in conjunction with other provincial guides and park rangers, do some cooking and provide homestay services (there are only four rooms inside the whole area). Page (2007) confirmed that tourism benefits in less developed countries and non-urban areas leak out, with jobs that are low-paid and seasonal.

Several factors were uncovered that hinder local participation. The first factor goes to limited knowledge about what tourism really means. Bouchon and Rawat (2016) explained that due to limited knowledge and talented local villagers still find it hard to move out of poverty and a traditional agricultural-based economy. Although a tourism initiative was launched in Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary as early as 2006, ideas about developing tourism remain new to local people. Mark (2000) showed that the practical difficulties for the local community to engaging in tourism include: 1) having limited knowledge of what tourism means to them; 2) lack of understanding about the business context and the outside world; and 3) lack of financial capital to establish marketing and training. Moreover, Mbaiwa (2005) agreed with the finding that tourism is a new idea, foreign-oriented and not fully understood by the local community. Although local people have rich natural and cultural resources to present to tourists without having many financial resources (Ashley et al., 2000), it still appears to be challenging to local people when they have little idea about what tourism is and what it really means to them. Williams and O'Neil (2007) draw a conclusion that local culture, coping with a foreign business context, and working with others contribute to limited local participation.

The second factor comes down to language barriers between tourists and local people. The local people's ability to present their key values, attractions and storytelling to tourists was hindered by this limitation. Therefore, product presentation and interesting and important stories about local communities were missing for the tourists, which makes their experiences distinct from other sites. Akinyi (2015) indicated that limited knowledge and lack of skills are the major challenges that limit local ability to actively engage in tourism planning and development. This is in accord with Williams and O'Neil (2007), who supported the view that some indigenous villagers find it hard to share and express their culture with tourists when it comes to real interaction (Tosun, 1999; Williams & O'Neil, 2007).

The third factor hindering local participation was the local people's view of what wealth really means to them. This is in accord with Truong (2014). He indicated that academia, policy makers and local people themselves view wealth differently (Truong, 2014). The local people have relied on existing land and natural resources for their living, therefore their idea of wealth has been culturally defined by the amount of land and natural resources they possess. The study finding aligns with Harrison and Schipani (2007), and Johnston (2007). They confirmed that some indigenous people consider that they are poor when they have no land or lose their land due to new development in the area. In Lao villagers think that they are poor only when they have no rice to eat (Harrison & Schipani, 2007; Johnston, 2007). In fact, most local people in the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary value their traditional farms which have been passed down from their ancestors. As a result, the local community sees possessing land and natural resources as a means of wealth and a source for their livelihoods more than other things. This means that the way they view their wealth influences the entire decision on what they



should be involved to ensure family survival. Pinot (2010) lent support to this view by noting that indigenous people in Cambodia rely heavily on land and natural resources to support their subsistence livelihood.

The fourth factor hindering local participation regards the benefits and available choices of livelihood derived from the pressure of using land and natural resources and other income sources. The study found that the agricultural sector and illegal poaching activities are the key factors which provide quick income to the local community. This makes these two aspects preferable for the villagers. Besides getting involved in farming production, the study found that local people prefer to get involved in farm labour, which provides a stable income for their family. Consequently, they cannot rely heavily on tourism as benefits from this sector are less than what other occupations can provide and its nature is seasonal. Page (2007) confirmed that tourism operations are highly seasonal in nature due to the climate, environment and location of the destinations.

The last factor was the lack of a key player to take the lead and initiate new tourism development projects in the area. The study found that when there is no key player responsible for initiating and guiding new ideas about tourism development in the village, tourism processes remain slow and underdeveloped. Consequently, this demotivates local people from getting involved due to the lack of benefits provided from this slow process of development. TIANZ (2002) noted that it is important to have someone who 1) is balanced and independent and able to maintain good relations with everyone in the community; and 2) have diverse skills and knowledge. This is in accord with what this study found. This research found that the important ingredient for tourism within the community is having a key player to facilitate and contribute

significantly to the success of the site. ELIE can be taken as a good example, which makes tourism in the Seima Wildlife Sanctuary work actively today. Nevertheless, TIANZ (2002) suggested that local communities should learn from the process of working with the key actor and be able to take back roles which are originally controlled by an outsider facilitator.

### ***5.1.3 A Holistic Livelihood Approach and Opportunities***

This part presents how tourism is viewed and rated among other available choices of livelihood. The study demonstrated that tourism is not the main priority occupation among other existing choices for villagers in the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary for two major reasons.

The first reason was the scale of benefits that tourism provides in comparison with other main occupations. In Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary, the people still practice traditional farming and rely heavily on land and natural resources to support their subsistence livelihoods. AIPP (2010) confirmed that indigenous livelihoods highly depend on traditional territories and natural resources, especially indigenous people in Asia, who are involved in small-scale agriculture, fishing, hunting and collecting NTFPs. Moreover, Johnston (2007) added that indigenous people place more value on land and natural resources because they think they are poor only when they have no access to them. More specifically, Pinot (2010) stated that in Cambodia, indigenous people give value to natural resources as their communal properties to support their subsistence livelihood. This is why Ryan and Gerberich raised two important questions with regards to this matter. While Ryan (2005) asked “why should an indigenous group, whose culture may not necessarily engage in entrepreneurialism as understood by capitalist cultures, engage in tourism?”, Gerberich (2005) also pointed out one thing to consider

when a community chooses tourism, namely “what does each tribe really want to gain or achieve from tourism?”. Therefore, although sometimes tourism programmes are considered proper for some places, they might be disrespectful and unsustainable in other places (Gerberich, 2005).

In addition to the agriculture sector, illegal logging and poaching remain appealing to local communities as an immediate and stable income source for their family. Font et al. (2012) confirmed that recently, local communities have changed their jobs from doing traditional farming to practising commercial production and tree crops. This is due to the fact that more benefits are provided by these two sectors.

The second reason is the seasonal nature of the tourism industry. This makes tourism less preferable to many of the villagers as the study found that local people need occupations which can provide them consistent incomes to support their daily living. Due to the small number of tourists, which drops very significantly in the off season, local people neglect what they had already invested in. According to Beeton (2006), and Bosworth and Farrell (2011), for local communities, tourism generally provides low-skilled, low-paid and part-time occupations and depends wholly on seasonal demands. However, Ashley et al. (2000) suggested not to replace the core livelihood activities of local communities with tourism if it cannot be an alternative answer to improving their living. Likewise, Gerberich (2005) advocated that because of the dramatic changes in the tourism industry, villagers should not entirely depend on tourism or else the economy could collapse. Moreover, the study found that the benefits are concentrated in a few people in the community due to their ability to open new enterprises for tourism service in their community. Mbaiwa (2005) agreed that only a few people in the community can gain the necessary managerial and entrepreneurship skills among all the

villagers. For example, the Sraepok community has only four rooms to occupy tourists and there are only a few local guides in the village. Although they have rich natural and cultural resources, local and small tourism enterprises have been excluded from the cycle by other competitors due to their limited socio-economic conditions, as well as a lack of human and financial capital.

#### ***5.1.4 Distribution Channels in Tourism***

This section previews an analysis of the tourism distribution channel, particularly in the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary. Two aspects of the distribution channel in tourism are:

1) the roles that communities should take when taking pro-poor tourism into consideration; and 2) roles of key intermediaries that influence tourism.

Mainly, the study revealed that the direct distribution channel in tourism appeared not to work in the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary. Tourism inside this sanctuary depended entirely on indirect distribution channels. This means that the private tour operators took almost entire control over tourism development in the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary, while the local communities could be operational staff. This research found that tourism is a new concept to local communities in the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary despite it being instigated in 2006. Timothy et al. (2003) stated that it is true that local communities have less control over their community tourism and depend largely on private actors in the regions. Dwyer (2014) concurred that there is leakage from the local economy when most of the goods and services are provided by external companies, which means that the money will be returned back to those who offered the services. On the other hand, Scheyvens (2003) argued that it cannot be called full participation from local community unless the villagers are able to supply full services

and goods to tourists, and contribute to decision making at a local level and collaboratively manage tourism in their own community.

According to the literature, each type of distribution comes at some cost to tourism development. Sochea (2016) explained that one-channel distribution may be appropriate for luxury markets, but inappropriate for tourism in communities. In the case of the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary, there were problems associated with the dependency on indirect distribution. There is an argument that both direct and indirect distribution channels bring trade-offs when considering market and cost (Pearce & Tan, 2004; Sochea, 2016). When the tourism operation depended wholly on the private tour operators in the provincial town, this led to the downfall of tourism in the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary. This is because when private tour operators stopped taking tourists to the core attractions inside the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary, the number of tourists started dropping, which caused concern to local communities. According to Ioannides (2003), most private tour operators perform as gatekeepers who are able to change destinations without much cost. This is why Scheyvens (2003) suggested the government improve regulations in order to make sure that private actors do not adversely influence community wellbeing and their environment.

#### ***5.1.5 Cross Disciplinary Learning***

This section presents programmes for building income generation capacity in place and their effectiveness in transferring important skills to local villagers. The section is essential because providing local capacity-building programmes can enhance local involvement (Ashley et al., 2000; DFID, 1999; Roe & Urquhart, 2004). The study revealed that although there are several training and capacity-building programmes in place, the ability to make those skills transferable remains questionable. Ashley et al.

(2000); DFID (1999); Roe and Urquhart (2004) argued that according to cross-disciplinary learning principles, the poor should be able to learn from their development experiences. The reasons that make local training not transferable are: 1) training that does not address important needs of local people; and 2) the length and regularity of those training programmes.

Taking the first of these reasons, rather than providing the training needed by local community in the first place, some training did not respond to local needs as the first step for developing tourism in the community. Beeton (2006) argued that effective capacity-building programmes at a local level present only when local needs are met and suitable conditions are created. Additionally, Bray (2006) and Dawe (2003) agreed that capacity-building programmes should meet individual communities' needs, which might be different from one place to another. In particular, rather than providing training on how to provide homestay services in detail, the Department of Tourism hosted one training about indigenous traditional dance with technical support from the Department of Culture. Reflecting Bouchon and Rawat (2016), they advised that non-formal education may be an appropriate strategy that can meet local needs and provide life-long learning skills which are transferable to tourism services. Dixey (2008); Zapata et al. (2011) added that improving entrepreneurship skills at the family, or micro, and community-based level would potentially ensure the success of tourism operations in the community and enrich net benefits for the local community. Figgis and colleagues (2001) as cited in Dawe (2003) lent weight to the view that providing informal learning about technical skills in tourism operations is crucial for people in enterprises. These skills should be taken as first priority, ahead of other skills like traditional dancing.

Recognising the problem of having no training needs assessment, the study suggests having training need assessment prior to each training to ensure success. This is because, as Bray (2006) explained, what is the first priority for a particular place might be only second or third elsewhere. The study found that training assessment was raised among key informants as the most important factor for initiating community trainings. Beeton (2006) supported the view that training organisers should pay more attention to the current situation of local communities and the past development of capacity-building program in order to improve the level of local empowerment and self-determination.

The second problem is the length and regularity of the provided training. The study revealed that previous trainings given to local communities in the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary were not conducted regularly, and their length was rather short. Beeton (2006) argued that time frames for local training programmes determine both the success and the failure of those programs. Bray (2006) advised that there should be a series of regular training in place so that the participants can be aware in advance of when exactly they have to attend training, and this also avoids the case of trainees not being available. However, even though there are suggestions to consider when conducting training, Bouchon and Rawat (2016) and Echtner (1995) as cited in Tukamushaba and Okech (2011) maintained that transferring tourism knowledge is inherently complex due to its multi-disciplinary skills involved.

In responding to this problem, the study found that there should be a long-term plan with enough financial support. A key informant argued that trainers or initiators should pay attention to financial support and a detailed support plan which should be long-term enough to ensure the effectiveness of the training. Also, they should ensure that there is

a clear training needs assessment prior to the start of the events conducted. Beeton (2006) recommended that the donor should be aware of the long term view before declaring the outcome of a particular training a failure.

#### ***5.1.6 Empowerment***

This section looks at how community empowerment is exercised in the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary. The state of local community empowerment remained limited and questionable. The study found that most of the tourism development projects were initiated by outsiders. This is in total contradiction with what had been suggested as best practice in the literature review. Akama (1996); Fennel (2008); Zeppel (2006); Zhao and Ritchie (2007) explained that under conditions of best practice tourism would be empowering and so villagers could hold the will, resources, opportunities, and contribute to the decision-making in relation to their own communities.

There are two factors that contributed to this alarming state. First, most tourism development projects were initiated by either international or local NGOs. This means that the whole community depends entirely on the donors and NGOs to help them to start up anything new in their community. This not only includes community tourism projects but also other capacity-building programs. Reed (1997) explained that those who benefit from the growth of the economy and community vitality are the ones who are able to influence community decision-making and policy formulation. This factor hinders the ability of local communities to be involved in tourism decision-making for their own community. Font et al. (2012) added that the success or failure of funded tourism projects depends entirely on development partners. It is risky for the local community because those donor-driven partners only consider three things when they develop foreign plan and policy: 1) self-interest; 2) bureaucracy and 3) government



interest (Williamson, 2009). This showed that local needs were not considered because their voice was not heard (Beeton, 2006). The situation in Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary was contradictory to what pro-poor tourism should look like. Gerberich (2005) advised that visitors should be able to experience a representative community not one manipulated by external actors. This has also contributed to the failure of tourism in the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary as Dixey (2008) showed that tourism which is falsely donor-driven and not market-led cannot make enough profit to survive.

The other factor which contributes to the state of local empowerment is the influence from private actors. The study found that the entire tourism operation in the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary depends on the private tour operators to take tourists into the communities. It became even worse when those private actors took tourists to other places which are more accessible. Timothy and Ioannides (2002) as cited in Ioannides (2003) confirmed that the local communities depend largely on external actors and have little control over their resources. This is because: 1) local community have limited capital to access training; 2) they have limited knowledge and may not be used to tourism context; and 3) they do not understand why tourists come to visit their communities (Mark, 2000).

#### ***5.1.7 Flexibility***

This section presents the adaptive strategies and specific community tourism plan for the particular Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary. The study found that there are plans to help inform and support tourism development in the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary. There are strategic tourism plans at the national level and a tourism development plan for Mondulkiri Province as a whole. Beeton (2006) confirmed that having strategic plans and management is important for local communities because those plans can help them

to articulate visions, aims and goals for the future of their communities and, as a result, the whole community will be able to pursue their desired goals. However, there is a lack of tourism plans specifically designed to support indigenous community tourism in place, although there are general plans from the top government level, namely the Ministry of Tourism and Mondulkiri Department of Tourism.

The study reviewed key literature to list the five major components that each tourism plan should have in common: 1) multi-stakeholder contribution (Bello et al., 2016); 2) coordination between regional development planning and tourism planning which takes into consideration several things: environmental, economic, and socio-cultural impact (Marcouiller, 1997); 3) an integrative, long-term, community-based approach which helps achieve the community's objectives (Fletcher, Cooper, 1997; Gibson, 1993; Jonhson and Thomas, 1993, Murphy 1988 as cited in Marcouiller, 1997); 4) inclusion of a wide range of issues, initiatives, stakeholder and specific data (Marcouiller, 1997); and 5) local community contribution into planning and management (Cater, 1994; Drake, 1991 as cited in Eshliki & Kaboudi, 2012). A table has been created to summarize the Mondulkiri's Development Strategic Plan for Tourism and is assessed criteria of C-PEST using a suitability analysis.

**Table 7. Summary of How Key Components of the Mondulkiri's Development Strategic Plan for Tourism Can Meet the Criteria of C-PEST Using a Suitability Analysis**

C-PEST	
<b>The competitive environment</b>	
<b>Key Questions</b>	Does the strategy enhance competitive advantages against destinations which share the same territory?

<b>How the Existing Strategies in the Plan Can Respond</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ New events are proposed in order to highlight the history and culture of the province and attract the attention of national and international tourists.</li> <li>▪ Key actions that can involve the local community include: 1) community-based tourism development at the community level; 2) building capacity of local guides and tour operators; and 3) improve the linkage between agriculture and tourism</li> <li>▪ Quality control on tourism products and services.</li> </ul> <p>However, there are some problems such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Most of the strategies appeared to mention the general problems of tourism, namely: standards, new product development, and local capacity-building.</li> </ul>
<b>The political environment</b>	
<b>Key Questions</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Does the strategy identify possible political change in the future and the likely effects of this on the destination?</li> <li>2. Does the strategy identify different political environments in the destination countries where it operates?</li> <li>3. Does the strategy take account of influential pressure group activity?</li> <li>4. Does the strategy take account of possible policy changes?</li> </ol>
<b>How the Existing Strategies in the Plan Can Respond</b>	<p>Although the strategies focused on the enforcement of laws and regulations about tourism development, none of the strategies mentioned about coping strategies in an incident of either political changes or the pressure from the influential group within the regions.</p>
<b>The economic environment</b>	
<b>Key Questions</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Does the strategy take account of the economic environments that affect tourists' spending?</li> <li>2) Does the strategy take account of economic environments in which tourism product takes place which may affect the supply of tourism?</li> <li>3) Does the strategy take account of changing conditions of destination competitiveness?</li> </ol>
<b>How the Existing Strategies in the Plan Can Respond</b>	<p>In this respect, the plan focused on marketing and promoting. However, no points are mentioned about the specific marketing tools and how the plan is going to reach the target visitors.</p> <p>The plan has not considered factors, which affect tourists' expenditure, the effect of the different location of key attractions that are located in the remote area) that affect supply in tourism, and the changing conditions of destination competitiveness.</p>
<b>The socio-economic environment</b>	
<b>Key Questions</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Is the strategy sensitive to changes in attitudes and values about travel?</li> <li>2) Is the strategy informed about the availability of paid leave?</li> </ol>

<b>How the Existing Strategies in the Plan Can Respond</b>	<p>The strategies take into account an important element which is the cultural effects of tourism and how to eliminate the negative impact on the culture of local villages.</p> <p>However, the strategies overlook the focus on tourists' taste and preferences, which play a big role in the success of tourism development.</p>
<b>The technological environment</b>	
<b>Key Questions</b>	1) Does the strategy take advantage of changes in ICT?
<b>How the Existing Strategies in the Plan Can Respond</b>	The plan focuses on improving means of communication in key tourist sites; however, it does not acknowledge the importance of the technology revolution that might affect tourism destination choices.

## 5.2 Alternative Tourism Development Model and Its Mechanisms

This section responds to the last objective of this study, namely suggesting an applicable collaboration model. This study uncovered that a joint-venture partnership may be an applicable model for the current Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary. From the 2000s, policy makers such as the Overseas Development Administration and UNWTO acknowledge that their research intervention and initiatives did not create a significant benefit to the poor due to the lack of linkage between the mainstream industry (private sector and tourism enterprises) and poor producers (Ashley et al., 2000; Goodwin, 2009). DFID (1999); Goodwin (2009) also found that inclusive engagement which includes input from both the private sector and community can create greater impact for local villagers.

If a collaborative model was adopted, the development process would be faster and more effective. This is due to the contribution and input provided by the private actors to support local communities to start up their enterprises with technical and financial support from the private groups. Goodwin (2007) supported the view that local villagers should collaborate with the private sector in order to secure market access, and information about access to capital and other resources as well as helping lower the risks of business operation. Additionally, the Department of Wildlife and National Parks (DWNP, 1999) explained that due to limited knowledge about how to use natural

resources commercially and inadequate financial capital, a joint venture is perceived to fill the gaps and transfer entrepreneurship and managerial skills to local people (as cited in Mbaiwa, 2005). The interesting fact about this model is that the Mondulkiri Department of Tourism and Ministry of Environment, Cambodia opened the door for private actors to collaborate with local communities in developing tourism inside the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary. This platform will allow stakeholders to sit down together and contribute their input into integrative planning.

However, this study also confirmed there are challenges when it comes to using joint-venture as a core model for community tourism development in the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary. Boyd and Singh (2003) concurred that it is not an easy job to match partnerships to different community contexts, and consequently generalisation of the proposed model should be made with caution. Therefore, this section presents key aspects that should be taken into consideration when introducing joint-venture collaboration. There are seven key components found by this study for developers and planners to consider when they are considering introducing the joint-venture model into communities. These are: 1) clear benefit-sharing mechanisms in order to avoid conflict in the future by ensuring transparency and equity among stakeholders; 2) agreement between local communities and private actors; 3) on-the-job training and capacity-building plans; 4) key facilitators or actors taking responsibilities for bringing tourists into the community; 5) clear monitoring and evaluation programmes; 6) having policy support from the government is important because it enlarges the effectiveness of the project implementation and enhance transparency and equity for the use of tourism resources; and 7) having a timeframe for the investment and project implementation with clear business plans at the very beginning will affect the effectiveness and significance of the project.

Table 8 presents summary of the key findings and discussion of the whole thesis. Key indicators were guided by the aforementioned literature review, while key discoveries and explanation aims to summarise key points in each principles from *the Analysis and Discussion Chapter*.

**Table 8. Summary of Key Findings and Discussion**

Key Principles	Key Indicators	Key Discoveries	Explanation
Commercial realism	The viability of community tourism	Cannot provide secure income to local communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tourist numbers remain stagnant</li> <li>• Communities become demotivated</li> <li>• Lack of ability for local community to start new local businesses</li> </ul>
	Destination sustainability	Problems related to sustainability status of the destination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of supportive policy</li> <li>• Contradictory attitudes towards tourism development among related stakeholders</li> <li>• Tourist complaints</li> </ul>
	Destination competitiveness	Destination competitiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Advantage:</b> own rich natural and cultural resources</li> <li>• <b>Disadvantages:</b> 1) reduce ability to see wildlife; 2) the distance to core attraction; 3) lack of site information and local guides; 4) plain topographical conditions allow illegal poaching activities</li> </ul>
	Limited public participation	Limited public participation	Overall challenges to local participation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited knowledge about tourism</li> </ul>

Local participation	Local participation in local tourism economy	Involved only at the operational level when it comes to local participation in local tourism economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Language barriers</li> <li>• Locals' views about what wealth means</li> <li>• Small scale of benefits provided by tourism in comparison with other sectors</li> <li>• Lack of key players to take lead and initiate new tourism development projects in the communities</li> </ul>
A holistic livelihood approach and opportunities	Sources of local communities' livelihood	Depend on land and natural resources	The people still practise traditional farming and rely heavily on land and natural resources to support their subsistence livelihoods.
	Roles of tourism in local economic stimulation	Tourism is not the main priority for local community livelihoods.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The scale of benefits provided by tourism compared with other livelihood options</li> <li>• The nature of seasonality in tourism</li> <li>• Tourism benefits were very concentrated among small groups of people in the communities.</li> </ul>
Distribution channels in tourism	Roles of local people	Involved only at the operational level	Lack of full participation from local communities due to the novelty of ideas about tourism and limited knowledge about tourism.
	Roles of intermediaries	Private sector took control over tourism development in the sanctuary and in the province as a whole	Private tour operators function as gatekeepers who can highly influence tourists' destinations.
Cross-disciplinary learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The presence of income generation capacity-building</li> <li>• Skills obtained by the communities beside tourism and hospitality related skills</li> </ul>	There are several trainings in place, yet limited ability to transfer those skills to local villagers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training that did not respond to local needs as first priority for developing tourism</li> <li>• Lack of training needs assessment</li> <li>• Problems with length and regularity of those trainings</li> </ul>
Empowerment	Local capacity to influence and be involved in matters related to their communities	Remained questionable until recently	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tourism projects were mostly donor-oriented, which reflects the lack of consideration of communities' needs</li> <li>• Control and influence by private actors over tourism in the community</li> </ul>

Flexibility	Specific management plan and strategies to different context	There are strategic tourism plans for the whole province, yet there is still a lack of specific plans for specific areas like the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary.	Key components used to evaluate existing plans: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CPEST Analysis</li> <li>• Multi-stakeholder contribution</li> <li>• Coordination between regional development planning and tourism planning which should cover specific issues: environmental, economic, and socio-cultural impact</li> <li>• Should be integrative, long-term, community-based approach</li> <li>• Include a wide range of issues and stakeholders</li> <li>• Local community contribution into planning.</li> </ul>
Second Objective	Key Discoveries		Explanation
Suggested Model: Joint-venture partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Key informants were in favour of having private actors collaborating with the local community to develop tourism.</li> <li>• Private actors can make tourism processes even faster and more effective because they have enough financial capital to start up tourism businesses and have knowledge and experiences in tourism sector.</li> </ul>		Important aspects that planners should take into consideration: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• clear benefit-sharing mechanisms</li> <li>• agreement between local communities and private actors</li> <li>• on-the-job training and capacity-building plans</li> <li>• key facilitators or actors taking responsibility for connecting community with tourist markets</li> <li>• clear monitoring and evaluation programme</li> <li>• having policy support from the government</li> <li>• the proper timeframe for investment and project implementation.</li> </ul>



## **Chapter 6. Conclusion**

This chapter draws conclusions and implications from the previous chapters. This study interrogated the current practice of ecotourism in the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary by analysing pro-poor tourism principles. In order to do this, two objectives were pursued: 1) to analyse the current form of tourism development in Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary with regard to pro-poor tourism principles; and 2) to explore alternative models that encourage stakeholder collaboration and poverty alleviation.

In order to understand how current ecotourism follows the principles of pro-poor tourism, this thesis took into account different perspectives ranging those of the government authorities, and NGOs to local tour operators. Semi-structured in-depth interviews were used in order to garner the data from nine informants (four representatives of the government at provincial level, three representatives of NGOs, and two local tour operators). The interviews were conducted in Monduliri Province. A documentary review was used in order to analyse Monduliri's Development Strategic Plan for Tourism 2014-2018 to assess the last principle of pro-poor tourism, namely flexibility.

This concluding chapter is structured into five main sections. It starts with the presentation of important findings and discussion of the first objective, followed then by the second objective. Next come the limitations of the study and other considerations. After that, the practical and theoretical implications as well as recommendations for future study are discussed. The chapter ends with the presentation of the significance of this thesis particularly to the research participants themselves and to the body of knowledge regarding ecotourism and pro-poor tourism.

## **6.1 Current Ecotourism Analysis Based on Pro-poor Tourism**

### **Principles**

The key findings and discussions are highlighted in Table 8, page 121 above. That table shows that the alignment of current tourism development with the principles of ecotourism remains questionable. The critical discussion showed that the ecotourism in the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary did not necessarily meet pro-poor tourism principles.

With regards to the first principle, namely commercial realism, tourism businesses in the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary do not necessarily provide benefits to local villagers. It was shown that tourism may not be able to secure income for local villagers settled in the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary due to the numbers of tourists visiting the sanctuary. This was compounded by issues of its seasonality, and a lack of tourism skills and knowledge of tourism by the local villagers who provide services. Additionally, the notion of sustainability and destination competitiveness of the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary also meant that benefits from tourism were not as expected.

The second principle is local participation. Local villagers tend to be followers rather than leaders and they are generally operation service providers whose power and knowledge about what they can do with tourism inside their area is limited. The problem of limited public participation in tourism planning and management and local participation in the tourism economy involved: 1) limited knowledge about tourism and language barriers; 2) different views on what wealth means to the villagers; 3) the small volume of benefits provided by tourism within the sanctuary; and 4) the lack of a key player who works hand-in-hand with local villagers from the very beginning of the process of tourism development through to daily operations. The most surprising part of

the study is that the lack of a key player to facilitate and work hand-in-hand with local villagers contributes to dysfunctional tourism development in the community.

The third principle is holistic livelihood approach and opportunities. Tourism is not the top-priority occupation for local communities in the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary. Other occupations ranging from traditional subsistence livelihoods to manual labour appeared to provide considerable benefit compared to the benefits offered by tourism within the area. Moreover, the benefits of tourism appeared not to be widely spread as many local villagers expected, or instead they were concentrated in a limited group due to the range of tourism facilities (homestay), which remains small.

Fourth, there are two complex problems associated with the distribution channels of tourism. This thesis focused on the roles of two key factors involved in tourism; the first is the local community's roles; and the other is the role of intermediaries in daily tourism operations. Local communities play a role as operational tourism service providers such as local guides and homestay providers who accompany tourists and a guide from a provincial town to do the trekking in the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary. However, the whole channel relies on gatekeepers in the form of groups of tour operators who work from the provincial town. One of the reasons that the number of tourists decreased over these last few years is due to the lack of information about the site given to those provincial tour operators. This problem makes the other nearby destinations such as the Seima Wildlife Sanctuary and other attractions located near the central town preferable for tourists.

Fifth, with regards to the principles of cross-disciplinary learning, this research revealed that although there is training provided to local communities, the ability to transfer the

knowledge about the training to local villagers remains limited. A lack of training-needs assessment leads to the provision of secondary-priority skills to local villagers and forgetting about first-priority skills. Thus, local villagers received training on traditional dance rather instead of training on guest hospitality and homestay service. Moreover, although there was training on hospitality, cooking and weaving, the training was not conducted regularly.

The sixth principle is local empowerment. The study found that local empowerment remains problematic. Because of most of the projects in the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary are donor-driven, local needs' appeared to be overlooked by the donors and external experts. When there are only donor-oriented projects, a self-interest and donor policy in spending money on each project are the most dominant factors while local needs may be left behind. This means locals may not be able to influence the types of project provided, which instead are based on donor policy and the direction of the allocation of funds and support. Moreover, where the control and influence from the provincial tour operator over the choice of destination was stronger, tourism operations inside the sanctuary were worse, particularly if those tour operators were not able to get access to information about the site and led the tourists elsewhere. It appeared that the entire system relies heavily on the lead of the tour operator. Furthermore, when those tour operators change the choice of destination offered in their tour, the number of visiting the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary decreased.

The seventh principle is flexibility. Although the tourism strategies in general for the whole Mondulkiri Province touched on some important elements in the C-PEST analysis, most of the strategies appear to focus on what the other tourism destinations, in general, are doing, and lack a specific focus on the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary in order

to make it a unique destination. Due to the lack of any specific plan on tourism for the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary, this study analysed Mondulkiri's Development Strategic Plan for Tourism. A suitability analysis was conducted in order to understand how satisfactory the tourism strategies are given to the current situation of ecotourism. In terms of competitive environment, the strategies focused on creation of new events in order to attract tourists' attention. However, they did not necessarily put any attention on creating new tourism activities that could make the destination distinct from others. In terms of the political environment, no strategies address how to cope with change in the political climate. With regards to the economic environment, there is a lack of specific tools for tourism promotion and marketing. The point is, rather than saying "the strategies focus on promoting the destination and marketing it", the strategies should be developed to answer how specifically the tourism destination could reach the target visitors as expected. In addition, the strategies take into consideration an important element in the socio-cultural environment, namely the cultural effect of tourism and how to eliminate the negative impact on the culture of local villagers. However, there are parts missing in the strategy in that it appears to overlook what the tourists' preferences are. Crouch and Ritchie (1999) and Tribe (2010) argued that tourists' preferences also contribute to the success of tourism destinations, so the strategy should also address these two aspects. With regards to the technological environment, this study concludes that the strategy does not necessarily take advantage of information and communication technology. Although part of the strategy intends to improve communications within key tourism spots, the strategy has not focused on the creation of new technology to advance and improve ways of communication yet.

## **6.2 Alternative Tourism Development Model and Its Mechanisms**

After identifying the issues of current ecotourism in the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary, this study suggested an alternative tourism development model which may be more suitable for current ecotourism inside the sanctuary and respond to the issues regarding each principle of pro-poor tourism. The study found that the joint venture partnership may respond to the current problems of the destination and contribute to the alleviation of poverty at the grass-roots level inside the sanctuary. This was confirmed by the wide range of the literature and the informants from various backgrounds and organisations. This model is believed to make tourism inside the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary work better than it does currently because: 1) the community owns a wide range of natural and cultural resources, yet has a lack of skills and experiences in operating tourism daily; and 2) the private actor, who shares an interest in collaborating with the local villagers, has the financial resources and knowledge and commitment to developing tourism. These two players could make tourism development more effective.

However, Boyd and Singh (2003) advised that it is a difficult task to suggest a tourism development model to communities, therefore the suggestion should be made with caution. As a result, this thesis proposes careful consideration before adopting this model in the area. Adopting this model involves aspects that the planners should put into place prior to the start of the partnership. These aspects consist of: 1) setting clear benefit-sharing mechanisms; 2) developing an agreement between local community and the private actors; 3) providing on-the-job training and capacity-building programmes to local villagers; 4) assigning a key facilitator to link communities with tourist markets and coordinate the communication between local communities and the private sector; 5) developing monitoring tool kits and evaluation programmes in order to track the progress of the partnership and its tourism businesses; and 6) setting a proper timeframe

for the project implementation that is long enough to make sure the outcome of the collaboration is apparent and the communities are able to work in their own right after the end of the collaboration or investment.

### **6.3 Limitations of the Study and Other Considerations**

The researcher identified potential limitations after the data collection. This is because no research study is perfectly designed and every proposed study has its own limitations (Marshall & Rossman, 2014). This section structures the limitations of the study into two main categories: 1) limitations derived from the methodology of the study; and 2) limitations generated from the existing body of literature.

In terms of the methodology, the research was guided by a case study approach. Rossman and Rallis (2012) advised that a case study requires thick description from both the existing documents and in-depth data from the interviews. However, many important documents were not available in place when the researcher requested them. For example, the document on the Sraepok tourism plan was not available, while the number of tourists visiting this site was not provided although the Department of Tourism was approached for interview.

Additionally, the qualitative data relied on the interviews with nine key informants who represented different organisations. Although the topic is not a sensitive topic, some of the questions touched on the stakeholder collaboration among different provincial departments and NGOs. It was difficult because each of the informants had to represent their official organisation, so there may be a concern about how willing they were to express their views freely outside of their official views. Different informants brought different knowledge and contributions to the topic. Moreover, the researcher did not get

a chance to interview representatives of the local community living inside the sanctuary due to the distance and road conditions. Another concern is the status of being an outsider to the community in studying this topic.

These considerations do not necessarily affect the result of the study because the researcher speaks the same language and shares similar culture and religion. Most importantly, the researcher has nearly three-years experience working directly in the north-eastern part of Cambodia, Mondulkiri. The researcher also used to visit the core attractions inside the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary during her previous work. Her previous experiences gave her an understanding of the development context within the sanctuary and equipped her well for study. The researcher took the position of someone learning from the key informants and ensured that she was not using pre-knowledge to judge what she was told. Simply put, she was passive during the interviews and listened to what the informants told her.

Next come the limitations derived from existing literature. These revealed what remains out of the scope of this thesis. The researcher realised that not all of the key components in the framework that the researcher used to guide this study were able to be measured. To be exact, some of the components of the framework were not investigated, namely three components: 1) in the conceptual framework of destination competitiveness, supporting factors and resources, destination management and qualifying determinants were not investigated (only the core resources and attractors aspect was studied); 2) in the distribution channels, the study focused on the roles of the community and intermediaries in order to understand who exactly takes control over tourism distribution channel of the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary; and 3) among the four processes



of developing strategy, this study focused on only the strategic choice; this means other aspects were excluded from the study due to the time constraints of a Master's thesis.

## **6.4 Implications and Recommendations**

This study intends to contribute to the actual practice of ecotourism inside the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary and the theoretical development of pro-poor tourism and its relationship to ecotourism. Consequently, the implications and recommendations are divided into three categories: 1) practical implications and recommendations; 2) theoretical implications; and 3) implications for future study. These three types of implications are discussed in the following sub-sections.

### ***6.4.1 Practical Implications and Recommendations***

The study found that the current form of ecotourism in the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary does not necessarily follow the principles of pro-poor tourism (Table 2 on page 21). The point is that tourism inside the sanctuary could not provide similar benefits to local villagers compared with other occupations. This could be a result of externally imposed tourism projects that may not necessarily take into account local needs. This could also be reflected in the fact that there was a lack of local needs assessment before introducing tourism into the communities. The most important thing for every project is to answer whether or not the local villagers truly need it; otherwise the implementation of the project may not be effective due to a lack of input from local communities. Another explanation for this observation may lie in the timeframe of the project supported by the NGOs, which may be considerably shorter than required. In fact, working with the community requires a reasonable time based on the issues generated from the local needs assessment because that assessment will show what the issues inside the communities are. The solution should incorporate a proper timeframe based on the level of the issues.

Another possible explanation for the inability to receive the benefits from tourism may involve the lack of knowledge about tourism. “*What does tourism mean to them?*” and “*what can they do with tourism?*” still remain questions for local villagers. Another explanation may be that there is a lack of tourism plans in the sanctuaries. A lack of tourism plans means that the communities may end up directionless. Having a lack of clear marketing and product development plans and visitor surveys may also blur the focus of the community. This means that they might not be able to know what to do with their attractions, how to get tourists to visit their sites, and what they have to do to make sure they can benefit.

When using pro-poor tourism principles to determine how ecotourism in the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary performs, the study found that there are problems with each of the principles. Therefore recommendations are suggested separately based on the issues derived from each principle. First, the study revealed that the benefits from tourism businesses in the sanctuary are not realistic. This is due to the decreasing number of tourists visiting the site, which affects the income that could be generated. Another possible explanation may be a lack of a specific marketing plan that guides local villagers on how to improve their existing and new products and services, deal with tourists’ complaints, and build on improving destination sustainability and competitiveness. Therefore, there should be an operational and marketing plan for tourism specifically designed for the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary. This is important because, although tourism is developed in the community, it has to be financially beneficial to the local villagers otherwise there may be a lack of motivation for the local community to get involved.

As regards the second principle, local participation in both planning and the local economy in relation to tourism remained quite small. The most critical part of the data lies in the lack of any key player who can work hand-in-hand with local villagers in the day-to-day operations. Consequently, there should be a key organisation whose role is to facilitate the flow of tourists and help the community build up everything they need for tourism. Doing this may help communities who lack knowledge and experience to establish what they need in the first place. In order to ensure local participation, the benefits generated from tourism should be realistic and each of the members involved should directly get them, while other villagers inside the sanctuary could also benefit from the infrastructure or services developed for tourism too.

As regards the third principle, tourism is not perceived as the first option for local livelihoods due to the perceived lack of benefits that it can provide. Compared with other occupations, tourism appeared to provide one-off and seasonal benefits which only concentrated in a small group of community members. In order to deal with the seasonality issues, two activities should be considered: 1) creating new tourism activities at the existing attractions that align with current livelihood activities such as traditional farming, techniques to collect NTFPs and existing traditional events that the local villagers have had passed down from their ancestors; and 2) creating a walking circuit and different types of package tours based on the changing of the seasons to make sure that even in the low period, there are still tourists visiting the site.

As regards the fourth principle, the private tour operators take control over tourist flow and choices of destination, and this affects tourism inside the sanctuary. This means that the distribution channel in tourism depends on the gatekeeper, and private tour operators. Due to the lack of information about the key attraction inside the sanctuaries,

inadequate safety systems and the problem of site accessibility, the private tour operators took tourists to other nearby attractions instead. In order to deal with these issues, several strategies should be considered: 1) develop a guidebook to highlight available attractions, existing tourism services and activities, means of transportation and accessibility of different attractions inside the sanctuary; 2) a safety and risk and crisis management plan should be developed and implemented; and 3) road conditions and accessibility should be improved in order to ensure that there is a proper way to get into the core attractions inside the sanctuary. In order to reduce the risk of private actor dependency, there should be an organisation like an NGO who could be a bridge to the tourist market.

Fifth, although there are training programmes in place, the skills and knowledge are not necessarily transferred to local villagers. This is a result of not having local needs taken into consideration when conducting the training as well as the regularity and length of the training. Consequently, several factors should be considered when providing training to villagers in the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary: 1) the period that local villagers are busy should be taken into account; 2) the length of the trainings should be sufficient to meet the learning outcomes; and 3) training should not be a one-off event; the calendar for training should be developed and community members informed in advance.

As regards the fourth principle, although there are tourism projects in place trying to help the local community in developing tourism and empowering them, the result of that effort is not as fruitful as expected. This is because of the donor-oriented policy and the complete control of tourism by the private tour operators. In order to deal with this problem, the policy makers and donors should think about the following two important

aspects: 1) conduct local needs assessment in order to investigate the importance of needs so that the project could address them directly; 2) local knowledge should not be overlooked when developing a project at the village level as external experts might overlook the problems that exist inside the community.

The last principle of pro-poor tourism is flexibility. In this regard, the study conducted a suitability analysis. The study found that most of the strategies being put into place appear to miss a lot of the important aspects of C-PEST analysis. Consequently, some sort of consideration should be suggested in order to make those strategies more suited to the current situation of ecotourism. These are as follows: 1) the strategies should address specifically how to create new tourism activities in order to improve the destination competitiveness and make it distinct from other nearby destinations; 2) changes in the political environment should be taken into consideration as none of the tourism strategies touch on the possible changes in political climate; 3) the changes in tourist expenditure, taste, and preferences should be determined; and 4) the strategies should not overlook the power of ICT in increasing the attention of domestic and international visitors, as it is an effective tool in reaching the target visitors and enhancing the image of the destination.

#### ***6.4.2 Theoretical Implications***

This study has contributed to the existing body of literature on pro-poor tourism and provides an understanding about adopting pro-poor tourism principles to measure the exact performance of ecotourism. There are three theoretical implications.

First, the study fills a gap in the knowledge about pro-poor tourism and the evolution of it as a concept. The study provided an evolution of the concept of pro-poor tourism (see

Figure 4 page 17), so that future researchers may have an understanding why pro-poor has become a central focus of tourism development and how the focus of pro-poor tourism has changed over time. Pearce (2010) maintained that none of the previous research analysed the theoretical framework and models even though some of them acknowledges the importance of such an analysis. Therefore, this research is important because it employed a variety of frameworks and analysed them in relation to the principles of pro-poor tourism. The frameworks consist of: 1) an integrative framework for anti-poverty tourism research to guide the choice of principles that fit with the context of the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary; 2) a conceptual framework of destination competitiveness to give an understanding on how to measure the destination competitiveness with a small set of indicators; and 3) C-PEST analysis tools used to conduct the suitability analysis which allowed the researcher to understand how suitable the strategies that have been put into place are compared with the current situation of tourism development inside the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary.

Second, this study contributed to an understanding of poverty which is lacking according to Truong (2014). He indicated that there is a lack of understanding about poverty in Asia as most research has been conducted in African countries. In responding to this issue, the study has contributed how local villagers view their wealth and poverty. The study found that local villagers in the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary place more value on their land and natural resources, traditional farming and other subsistence livelihoods. Those factors define their wealth. As mentioned at the beginning of this study, wealth and poverty are defined differently across the nation and regions.

Third, the study confirmed theoretically that although ecotourism does not necessarily follow the principles of pro-poor tourism, it could bring some benefits to local villagers

and the region. The researcher understood that the benefits of ecotourism lies on how properly it is implemented.

#### ***6.4.3 Implications for Future Study***

A reflection on the limitations of the study has shed light on what possible lines of study should be suggested to future researchers. They are as follows:

- Communities' perspectives on whether, and how ecotourism can contribute to the improvement of their livelihoods and the development of their region. Due to a lack of perspectives from the local villagers inside the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary, the next study should cover this part as it may give researchers a deeper understanding and help complete the picture.
- Another possible line of study regards destination competitiveness. This is because this study focused only on one aspect of the framework, namely the core resources and attractors. Other factors are 1) supporting factors and resources; 2) destination management; and 3) qualifying determinants, which should be investigated within the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary.
- Next, future study should also focus on the strategic implementation of the existing strategies proposed in Mondulkiri's Development Strategic Plan for Tourism in order to assess the performance of the strategies.
- Another future study could also touch on the effect of adopting joint-venture partnerships between local communities and private actors. This would give an idea of what sort of important mechanisms should be in place before introducing such a partnership to local tourism destinations.

## **6.5 Significance of the Study**

This study aims at: 1) contributing to the body of existing literature (as mentioned in the Theoretical Implications); 2) suggesting strategies for consideration in tourism development policy in Monduliri Province, especially in the local villages in the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary; and 3) sharing knowledge about developing tourism in the community to the research participants and other community tourism sites in Modulkiri Province and the rest of Cambodia or in the regions that share similar conditions to the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary.

First, at the end of this study, the researcher mentioned how to theoretically improve the benefits of ecotourism using pro-poor tourism principles. Because this study looked at the weaknesses of ecotourism development in theory, the researcher was able to address what hinders the benefits of ecotourism to local villagers. Second, the study offered strategies which specifically address the policy gap in supporting the current form of tourism in Monduliri Province. More than this, the study also provided practical strategies to tackle the current issues of tourism development, specifically in the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary.

Moreover, this study served the interest of the following actors: 1) the research participants; and 2) students at Royal University of Phnom Penh. To the research participants, this study benefited them in a number of ways: 1) they were able to express their thoughts, knowledge and experiences about the current situation of ecotourism development in the province during the interviews; and 2) they were provided with the summary of the study findings in the Cambodian language. Through this, they and their organisations may come up with more ideas on how to help local villagers with their tourism. To university students, this study provided food for thought



for their own particular field. The researcher has a plan to present her work at the Royal University of Phnom Penh (the university that the researcher used to work for), and the students will have opportunities to develop their line of thinking and knowledge.

The last importance lies in the key study findings. These contribute food for thought for other tourism communities which share a commonality with the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary. These characteristics are: 1) being located in a remote area; 2) the dependency on support from NGOs; 3) local villagers with limited human resources and experience in tourism businesses; 4) communities in which tourism is externally introduced and still remains stagnant albeit with the help from NGOs or other specific partners; and 5) communities with weak connections with other businesses in towns like tour operators or travel agents. Sites with these characteristics may take this study's findings into consideration in order to ensure that the benefits of tourism stay inside the communities.

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## **Appendix 1. Indicative Questions for In-depth Interviews with Government Workers and Staff of NGOs**

The logo consists of the letters 'AUT' in a bold, white, sans-serif font, centered within a solid black square.

Interview Code: .....

Date:.....

Time:.....

**Topic: Assessing Ecotourism Using Pro-poor Tourism Principles: The Case of Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary, Cambodia**

### **I. General Information about Participant's Role and Responsibilities**

1. How long have you been working in your organisation?
2. What are your major roles and responsibilities in the organisation related to tourism in the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary?

### **II. Current Situation of Ecotourism Development in the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary**

3. How many tourists are there travelling into Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary?
4. What are the main tourist spots / attractions within Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary?
5. What are the tourists' favourite activities in Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary?
6. How long does the peak season last? How about the low season?
7. Are there any tourism plans which take place in the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary?  
Can you tell me briefly about those plans?

### **III. Analysis of Ecotourism Development in Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary Using Pro-poor Tourism Principles**

#### ***Local Participation***

8. Who are the key stakeholders involved in MPF tourism development?
9. What are the roles of local communities in tourism development in the ecotourism sites in MFP?
10. How do local communities are involved in ecotourism development in MPF in terms of engaging in public councils and related forums as community members?

11. Are there any challenges regarding local participation? What are they?

### ***Empowerment***

- 12. Is there any platform on which local communities can make their voice heard to the development agents?
- 13. How can local communities influence the decision making related to tourism in their area?
- 14. Are there any capacity-building events in terms of guiding the aspects that local communities can get involved in? How are they held?
- 15. Are there any social safety nets in place to protect local communities from ill health, economic shocks and natural disasters? What are they? Who supports them?

### ***Commercial Realism***

- 16. Have local people got access to economic advantages from tourism as community members in the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary?
- 17. What are the occupations most preferred by local communities in the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary?
- 18. Are there any tourism businesses operated by local people within the region? Are they profitable? Why?

### ***A Holistic Livelihood Approach and Opportunities***

- 19. What are the sources of livelihood for local communities (beside tourism)?
- 20. How does tourism play a role in the enhancement of local livelihoods and poverty reduction at a local level? (Is it the key player?)

### ***Distribution Channels in Tourism***

- 21. Are there any intermediaries who bring tourists into communities?
- 22. Who play important roles in bringing tourists into Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary? Why them?
- 23. Do local communities have direct contact with tourists in providing their service?
- 24. What are the challenges in getting local communities to deal directly with tourists?

### ***Cross-disciplinary Learning***

- 25. Are there any measures for building income-generation capacity in place to help local better their services?
- 26. What can communities learn besides tourism and hospitality skills?

### ***Flexibility***

- 27. Are there management plans in place specifically designed for the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary? What are they? Describe the purpose of the plan?
- 28. Does it work? Why?
- 29. Who are the important stakeholders in operating this plan?

## **IV. Alternative Forms for Stakeholder Collaboration and Poverty Reduction**

- 30. What are the challenges in working with and getting local people involved in tourism with regard to poverty reduction?
- 31. What sorts of communication or working platforms should be implemented at the ground level to ensure the effectiveness of local participation to aid poverty reduction?
- 32. What aspects or resources should be supported to help improve local livelihoods?
- 33. Anything else would you like to add?

## **Appendix 2. Indicative Questions for In-depth Interviews with Private Tour Operators**

Interview Code: .....

Date:.....

Time:.....

**Topic: Assessing Ecotourism Using Pro-poor Tourism Principles: The Case of Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary, Cambodia**

### **I. Products and Services Provided by the Private Tour Operators**

1. How long has the company been operated?
2. What type of products and services provided by your company?
3. Who are the major markets for your company? Why?

### **II. Involvement of and Contribution to Local Communities in the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary**

4. Have you contacted local people in the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary for the services provided in places for your tourists? If so, in what form? Please explain.
5. What is your plan to make your package tours involve with more local communities?
6. What are the difficulties in working with local communities to organise tours together? Why?
7. Based on challenges in working with local people, what sorts of actions should be taken into account to improve local involvement in tourism?
8. What are your suggestions to make all of your strategies work?

### **III. Contribution to the Whole Tourism Development in General**

9. What sorts of contribution your company has done to the whole tourism sector in Mondul Kiri Province?
10. How do you think your company can benefit tourism in the province as well as in the Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary?
11. Can you tell me how to make your company contribute more to tourism development, especially local welfare enhancement?

### **IV. Suggestions for Stakeholder Collaboration**

12. What are the barrier for stakeholder collaboration? Why?
13. What strategies should be taken into account to improve stakeholder collaboration?
14. How to make those strategies work?

## Appendix 3. Participant Information Sheet

**AUT**

TE WĀNANGA ARONUI  
O TĀMAKI MAKAU RAU

### **Date Information Sheet Produced:**

1 August 2016

### **Project Title**

“Assessing Ecotourism Using Pro-poor Tourism Principles: The Case of Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary, Cambodia”

### **An Invitation**

I am Socheata TAO, currently doing my Masters in International Tourism Management at Auckland University of Technology (Limited). I am conducting research for a thesis and I would like to request for your participation in this study. Please note that your participation is entirely voluntary.

### **What is the purpose of this research?**

This study aims at assessing ecotourism in Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary, Cambodia using pro-poor tourism principles. There are three objectives: 1) to analyse the current form of tourism development in Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary with regard to pro-poor tourism principles; and 2) to explore alternative models that encourage stakeholder collaboration and poverty alleviation. The results of this research will be presented in a thesis for my qualification at Auckland University of Technology. There is also a possibility to publish the findings in academic publications.

### **How was I identified and why am I being invited to participate in this research?**

You were selected based on specific criteria. You have been working in developing and providing services of tourism within the province more than 1 year, hence you understand the context of this province.

Your contact details were found using my previous professional networks.

### **How do I agree to participate in this research?**

If you agree to participate in this research, I will give you a Consent Form to obtain your official agreement. Your participation in this research is voluntary and whether or not you choose to participate will neither advantage nor disadvantage you. You are able to withdraw from the study at any time. If you choose to withdraw from the study, then you will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging



to you removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of your data may not be possible.

**What will happen in this research?**

You will be interviewed at either your working office or public café. The information provided will only be used for the purpose of this study.

**What are the discomforts and risks?**

There will no discomforts and risks because the study will not obtain personal information.

**How will these discomforts and risks be alleviated?**

You have the right not to answer any particular question that you uncomfortable with.

**What are the benefits?**

This study will benefit two groups: 1) the research participants; and 2) the researcher. This study will benefit the research participants in a number of ways: 1) they will be able to express their thoughts, knowledge and experiences about the current situation of ecotourism development in the province; 2) you will be provided with the summary of the study finding in Cambodian language upon your request. To the primary researcher, this study will: 1) contribute to capacity building and critical thinking ability in a more systematic way; and 2) enable the researcher to complete a Master Degree of International Tourism Management.

**How will my privacy be protected?**

If you do not wish to be identified in the findings then I will use a nom de plume for your comments. Considering the small sample of respondents, only limited confidentiality can be provided. The consent form clearly states whether you wish you and your official position to be identified. I will be transcribing the interviews, so the only people to have access to the raw data is myself and my academic supervisor.

**What are the costs of participating in this research?**

You will contribute approximately up to 1 hour of your time.

**What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?**

It is not an urgent invitation. You will have one week to decide whether to participate in this study or not.

**Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?**

If you so request I will provide a summary findings in Cambodian language.

What do I do if I have concerns about this research?

- Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisor, who is Dr. Hamish Bremner. His email is [hamish.bremner@aut.ac.nz](mailto:hamish.bremner@aut.ac.nz)
- Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary of AUTECH, Kate O'Connor, [ethics@aut.ac.nz](mailto:ethics@aut.ac.nz) , 921 9999 ext 6038 (Limited).

**Whom do I contact for further information about this research?**

Please keep this Information Sheet and a copy of the Consent Form for your future reference. You are also able to contact the research team as follows:

***Researcher Contact Details:***

Socheata TAO, Email: [socheata.tao@yahoo.com](mailto:socheata.tao@yahoo.com) , Tel: (855)12609616

***Project Supervisor Contact Details:***

Dr Hamish Bremner

Email: [hamish.bremner@aut.ac.nz](mailto:hamish.bremner@aut.ac.nz)

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 16th August 2016, AUTECH Reference number 16/294.

## Appendix 4. Consent Form

**AUT**

TE WĀNANGA ARONUI  
O TĀMAKI MAKĀU RAU

**Project Title:** Assessing Ecotourism Using Pro-poor Tourism Principles:  
The Case of Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary, Cambodia

**Project Supervisor:** Dr Hamish Bremner

**Researcher:** Socheata TAO

- ☐ I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated 01<sup>st</sup> August, 2016.
- ☐ I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- ☐ I understand that notes will be taken during the interviews and that they will also be audio-taped and transcribed.
- ☐ I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary (my choice) and that I may withdraw from the study at any time without being disadvantaged in any way.
- ☐ I understand that if I withdraw from the study then I will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to me removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of my data may not be possible.
- ☐ I agree to take part in this research.
- ☐ I agree to be identified in the research. Yes ☐ No ☐  
Considering the small sample of respondents, only limited confidentiality can be provided.
- ☐ I wish to receive a summary of the research findings (please tick one):  
Yes ☐ No ☐

Participant's signature : .....

Participant's name: .....

Participant's Contact Details (if appropriate):  
.....

Date: *Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 16th August 2016, AUTEK Reference number 16/294.*

*Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form*

## Appendix 5. AUTECH Research Ethics Approval



### AUTECH Secretariat

Auckland University of Technology  
D-88, WU406 Level 4 WU Building City Campus  
T: +64 9 921 9999 ext. 8316  
E: [ethics@aut.ac.nz](mailto:ethics@aut.ac.nz)  
[www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics](http://www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics)

16 August 2016

Hamish Bremner

Faculty of Culture and Society

Dear Hamish

Re Ethics Application: **16/294 Assessing ecotourism using Pro-poor tourism**

**Principles: The case of Sraepok Wildlife Sanctuary,  
Cambodia**

Thank you for providing evidence as requested, which satisfies the points raised by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTECH).

Your ethics application has been approved for three years until 16 August 2019.

As part of the ethics approval process, you are required to submit the following to AUTECH:

- A brief annual progress report using form EA2, which is available online through <http://www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics>. When necessary this form may also be used to request an extension of the approval at least one month prior to its expiry on 16 August 2019;
- A brief report on the status of the project using form EA3, which is available online through <http://www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics>. This report is to be submitted either when the approval expires on 16 August 2019 or on completion of the project.

It is a condition of approval that AUTECH is notified of any adverse events or if the research does not commence. AUTECH approval needs to be sought for any alteration to the research, including any alteration of or addition to any documents that are provided to participants. You are responsible for ensuring that research undertaken under this approval occurs within the parameters outlined in the approved application.

AUTECH grants ethical approval only. If you require management approval from an institution or organisation for your research, then you will need to obtain this. If your

research is undertaken within a jurisdiction outside New Zealand, you will need to make the arrangements necessary to meet the legal and ethical requirements that apply there.

To enable us to provide you with efficient service, please use the application number and study title in all correspondence with us. If you have any enquiries about this application, or anything else, please do contact us at [ethics@aut.ac.nz](mailto:ethics@aut.ac.nz).

All the very best with your research,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K O'Connor', written in a cursive style.

Kate O'Connor

Executive Secretary

**Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee**

Cc: Socheata Tao