Bringing Research into the Cambodia Trade SWAp
A TRADE AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY STUDY FOCUSING ON RICE, CASSAVA AND FISH

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Overview

- The Cambodia Trade SWAp
- Bringing research into the SWAp
- the UNDP/MoC TRADE Project Research Component
- Presentation of the Study
  - Approach
  - Management of the literature
  - Building HPs, research design and fieldwork
  - Main findings
  - Opportunities and challenges
- Lessons learnt and the way forward
- **What is a SWAp?**
- A political and economic enabling environment
- Cambodia pilot IF country (DTIS 2002)
- WTO accession: an ambitious reform program
- The Cambodia Trade SWAp takes shape
- A new DTIS 2007

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### The Cambodia Trade SWAp

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Human Development Impact</th>
<th>Export Potential</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low</td>
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<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Medium High</td>
<td>Silk</td>
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<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Livestock Cashew nuts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Medium Low</td>
<td>Corn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Beer Web-based services Transport services</td>
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Higher political endorsement

Set-up of structure along 3 Pillars/working groups:
1. Legal Reforms and cross cutting issues
2. Products and services export development
3. Capacity building and management of trade development

Institutional changes at MoC to enhance the management capacity of the SWAp

The challenge of inter-ministerial coordination

Results Vs. Resources

The elaboration of Pillar Roadmaps
"The DTIS 2007 lists as one of its objectives the need to link more clearly trade sector development with human development and poverty reduction in Cambodia (mainstreaming). Mainstreaming of trade into national objectives of poverty reduction is an issue much talked about since the late 1990s but clearly one that calls for much improved research and conceptualization that can then be translated into better policy and strategic decisions" {stress added}

The DTIS 2007 HDIA

- The DTIS HDIA paves the way for a pilot research initiative under the UNDP/MoC TRADE Project
The UNDP/MoCTRrade Project Research Component - A “Network” approach

- **Local Research Team**
  - Pool of outstanding students/civil servant trainees trained on social sciences research methods

- **Senior Researcher**
  - Regional/International Expert to lead the Study and ensure research capacity development of the Local research team

- **International Advisors**
  - Peer reviewers/International academics who will take part in the final stage of the Study

- **RULE**

- **RSA**

- **UNESCAP/ARTNeT**
  - Delivery of high quality research
  - Regional outreach

- **Trade Policy Study/DTIS HDIA**
  - Analytical support for Trade SWAp implementation
A Trade and Environmental Sustainability Study focusing on Rice, Cassava and Fish

... before the Study starts:

- A consultative process to select the topic
- Intensive training on research methods for the RAs
- On the job training for the RAs (review of development literature, DTIS and AfT documents)
- Selection of the Senior Researcher TL (emphasis on capacity development of young researchers)
- Scope of the study not clearly defined
Our approach

- Broad mandate. Where do we start?
  - Avoid duplication.
  - Strong emphasis on the analysis of the literature
- Division of labor: local researchers are a valuable asset, not just data collectors
  - SR: critical review/architecture of the literature survey
  - RAs: Literature collection, classification and survey + Scoping missions
- ‘Challenging the unchallengeable’: open and thought-provoking discussions about the materials and methodological issues.
  - This is true with regards to internal Team roles
  - ...as well as to what is usually defined as “knowledge management” Vs “management of ignorance”
Understanding the Literature

A critical literature review that:

- summarizes and gives a comprehensively overview of the “state of knowledge”
- Doesn’t identify a theory or a model
- ...but rather a framework for debating issues of trade and environment within contemporary Cambodia
- Focuses on the understanding processes of political/societal change
- Tries to deconstruct underlying assumptions and positions
- ...and finds that internal articulation is rather weak
- provides the basis to identify the level of analysis (farmers’ views and perceptions)
- Contains insights from initial scoping missions
- Recognizes the importance of “subjectivities” and interpretivism
In our view, if we bear in mind that rural change is now occurring rather fast, part of the question is probably that the situation is complex and research lacks depth {...} In the context of the ‘mutable institutions’ referred to, it is likely many articles are simply ‘looking at different parts of the same elephant’. It may be that precisely the mutability that Ledgerwood and Vijghen, and Lee, refer to is what is helping to generate the confusion in the literature, which tends to identify ‘constraints’, as though these were ‘objectively given’ “
Making livelihood strategies matter

- firm separation of domestic/foreign trade doesn’t really matter for farmers willing to market their output
- Explaining economic growth in absence of good policy/good governance conditions. What is missing?
- flexibility and adaptability, in societal structures, for example in gender relations and patron-client links, plus the idea that accumulation of human capital, social capital and physical capital at farm level takes time provide an analytical framework to understand sources of change.

Farmer’s views and perception and how they maneuver their livelihood strategies, of which trade opportunities are part, are crucial
“Those analyses that underplay farmers’ innate potential, and the possible effects of time upon their productive capacity as they improve their human and social capital, focus as we have seen upon ‘constraints’, hoping that some external factor, such as aid or policy, can overcome them, creating the necessary conditions (in that logic) for farmers to realise their potential”
Literature on Rice: a story of increasing export-led production
This is posing environmental concerns (soil degradation due to increasing use of chemical fertilizers) not always acknowledged by the literature. Further, the latter is quite divided between the use of chemicals and SRI techniques (and the long-term value of the land is not consistently incorporated in the debate).

Literature on Cassava: Environmental concerns exist, but are manageable
There is no clearly argued research that tells us whether, the concerns of some authors about possible environmental damage, are justified in practice.

Literature on Fish: focusing on small-scale aquaculture and ‘sub-systems’ of production
Large and complex literature, need to define the subject area. No clear studies of interactions between fish, rice and other cash crops at farm level with domestic markets and foreign trade, but in general, environmental concerns in fisheries are widely explored.
Building HPs and design fieldwork

- The ‘hypothesis-development’ process
  - Insights from the scoping missions complemented the literature review
  - It was kept rather open and sought to bring out areas of puzzlement and curiosity
  - HPs are not to be understood as in positivist epistemology, but rather as “ideas that energise the research”
  - ...while being consistent with the ‘positive’ Vs ‘normative’ discourse
  - The Senior Researcher ensured guidance and led the process

- The design of questionnaires
  - A common framework for fieldwork investigation
  - The importance of networking...
  - Bridging the divide between quantitative and qualitative techniques

- The selection of sites
  - Defining criteria
  - Understanding the sample and its representativeness
  - Time management and coordination constraint
Carrying out fieldwork

- Planning a calendar
- The importance of on-site support
- Understand interviewees behaviors and local peculiarities
- Adapting interviewing strategies
- Checking the reliability of answers
- Team work synergies
- Managing the unexpected
- Wrap up and data analysis
- Are the data consistent with the HPs?
Main findings

- **Rice**
  - Increasing output (domestic/foreign trade) doesn’t sit well with farmers’ desires to increase their incomes.
  - Shifting farming costs into the future by ‘mining’ their soil
  - …whilst avoiding use of chemicals on rice kept for own consumption.

- **Cassava**
  - Closely associated with foreign trade dynamics.
  - Farming and family scale processing manage the externalities, because they are the ones who bear the cost.
  - Industrial processing is a case where local mechanisms for managing externalities are weak. Social capital is low.

- **Fish**
  - Increasing aquaculture production can have indirect foreign trade implications, through ‘import substitutions’ in border provinces.
  - Negative environmental consequences are manageable, but integration of aquaculture in sub-systems of production is weak.
  - The flooded forest issue is politically very sensitive. Not easy to deal with for researchers.
**Opportunities and challenges**

**opportunities**

- No pre-defined agenda (a typical constraint in client-driven research)
- Resident research project coordinator
- Flexible timeframe
- Loose institutional ties with the MoC

**challenges**

- How to involve SWAp stakeholders?
  - Weak monitoring instruments
  - Occasional exchange of information
- Flexible timeframe
- Coordination of a relatively imbalanced Team
- Bureaucratic delays
- Institutional/Political constraints
Lessons learnt and the way forward

“Am I doing right or wrong? “
- Research is not a ‘tick the box checklist’ but a continuous, intellectually challenging process, made of attempts, failures and successes

- **Capacity development takes time**
  - In this regard, the process and conditions to deliver the output really matter
  - The learning process must be constantly monitored and followed-up

- **Peer review and stakeholders dissemination**
- The political and institutional context will greatly determine the impact of the research output

- **GREEN RESEARCH FOR GREENER TRADE!**
References

- Cambodia DTIS 2007 – Executive summary and action matrix
- ODI (2009) – Cambodia Trade SWAp
- Cambodia NHDR 2010, coming soon