Public Forum on Extractive Industry : Potential of Public Consultation for Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Process

The Extractive Industry Social and Environmental Impact (EISEI) network of Development and Partnership in Action Organization (DPA) collaborated with network member in Mondulkiri province in organizing a public forum on the extractive industry entitled “Potential Public Consultation for Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Process”.

The public forum was conducted according to the current situation of the Royal Government of Cambodia, which is focusing more on the development of the extractive industry and encouraging better transparency and public participation.

This forum was held on 26th October 2011, at Pichrea Da Restaurant, Mean Leap village, Sok Dom commune, Sen Monorom city, Mondulkiri province. There were 79 participants (25 women) who participated in the forum under the presidency of H.E. Tan Navan, deputy governor of Mondulkiri province.

The aims of the forum included (1) Providing the opportunity for communities, civil society organizations and governmental institutions to work together to discuss difficult issues which occurred due to lack of participation in the environmental impact assessment process on the extractive industry; (2) Discussing relevant laws about the participation of communities in the extractive industry; (3) Introducing the extractive industry social and environmental impact (EISEI) network and (4) Sharing information on mining activities in Mondulkiri province. (Continued on page 6)
Agriculture cooperative

The Integrated Community Development in Kampot province (ICD-KP) of DPA facilitated a series of trainings/workshops for communities related to their daily livelihood which covered such subjects as health, sanitation, community organization, rights-based approaches, decentralization, local governance, food security, gender and natural resource management. All the trainings/workshops provided knowledge and ideas for the community in order to consider and find appropriate ways for organizing and managing their project in sustainable ways when the ICD-KP project prepares to hand it over in late 2011.

At the same time, the establishment of agricultural cooperatives is one of the activity plans focused on organizing the village development. ICD-KP has helped establish five agricultural cooperatives including: (1) Raksei Samaki Acmotak agricultural cooperative, (2) Romdoul Sarey Reing Ta Reak agricultural cooperative, (3) Samaki Acmotak agricultural cooperative, (4) Por Samrong agricultural cooperative and (5) Kasekor Prey Pdau agricultural cooperative.

“I think cooperatives are better than self help groups (SHG) because legal institutions such as cooperatives are recognized by the Provincial Agriculture Department and they are not taxed for selling agricultural products.” said Mr. Nget Nguim.

Mr. Nget Nguim, aged 62, lives in Thmear village and is a cooperative member of the Raksei Samaki Acmotak agricultural cooperative. He started with six shares, totaling 300,000 riels. “The formation of cooperatives is very important for my villagers,” he said. “We begin with capital for running a business and the end of each year receive a profit on that capital can get profit.”

“In addition, all members can access loans from the coop to run private income generation instead of getting loans from outsiders so that the profit goes to the cooperative members. In my village, there were some people who received loans of approximately 2,000,000 riels to buy hand tractor.” added Nguim.

The Raksei Samaki Acmotak agricultural cooperative was established on December 15, 2009 with 154 members (64 women) and has 264 shares of 50,000 riels per share. The main purpose of the cooperative is for business related to agricultural activities. This cooperative organized its first annual assembly on 20th December, 2010 and there are around 355 families registered as cooperative members with approximately 1,220 shares with 20,000 riels per share.

Most of the members have faith in the cooperatives because this one provides proper recording, transparent bookkeeping and wide-ranging dissemination of crucial information about financial transactions, including income, expenditure and profit.
Improve Family’s Livelihood Through Corn Planting

Chres commune is one of DPA’s target areas in Chumkiri district, Kampot province. It has four villages: Chres, Trapaining Chher Teal, Thmar and Ta Ten with a total of 1,711 families, most of whom are farmers.

In Chres commune, there is a large dam called Malec dam which makes it possible for communities living in the area to farm their rice fields twice a year, during both dry and rainy seasons. However, in 2007, the rice fields underwent serious damage from insects during the dry season and, while the villagers tried to repair the damage, their attempts were not effective. After a study visit to Kandal province in 2009, it was discovered there were a few families who tried planting corn and who received a satisfied yield so that next year, they plan to expand their farm and to plant double the amount of corn. After observing the crop was good, other farmers in the commune started growing the same crop and so there is now 60 percent of total lands which is covered with corn.

“Corn is one of the crops that is easy to plant and care for and it endures damage from insects. It is also easy to sell and gets a high yield compared with rice grown in the dry season.” Said Khim Pheoun, Trapaining Chher Teal village chief. “When they started growing corn, the villagers found they were able to improve their livelihood because they brought in more income.”

Mr. Phim Phen, aged 53, is a farmer in Trapaining Chher Teal village, Chres commune, Chumkiri district, Kampot province who said “I have a parcel of rice field measuring 0,70 hectares and farm land measuring 0,75 hectares, both of which are never free. After harvesting the rice from the rainy season rainy season rice field, I cut back the stubble and started planting corn. After harvesting the corn, I chopped back the corn crops and plowed the field for farming. I also grow sugarcane that provides high yield and is easy to sell because buyers buy from my home”.

On average, he can make approximately seven million riels for the year from harvesting rice, corn and sugarcane which causes his family’s livelihood to improve.

Mr. Phim Phen is grateful to Development and Partnership in Action (DPA) for providing training courses for him and other villagers. Through this capacity building, he is able to learn how to solve the difficult issues of the villagers through his work in agriculture.
Land Titles for Indigenous Minorities

The communal land title project for indigenous minorities which was initiated by the government is a cornerstone for land conflict prevention and has the potential to avoid other impacts for public interests in the future.

By providing the indigenous groups with access to land certificates, the sensitive issues of illegal land trading (particularly large scale), village boundary conflicts and migration of people from outside the area will decline. Consequently, those ethnic minorities will be able to preserve their own customs and traditions as well as natural resources in their community.

La In village started the process of land use planning since 2001. With initiative and support from DPA collaborating with the Provincial Land Management, Urban Planning and Construction Office, and Partnership for Local Governance (PLG); The Ministry of the Interior agreed to recognize the indigenous Tompoun community in La In village as a legal entity on January 4, 2007. Furthermore, in 2011, DPA-RTK works to encourage the Ministry of Land Management Urban Planning and Construction, to approve their requests as soon as possible.

The process of land use planning has eight steps including:

1. Dissemination of relevant laws and polices on communal land titling to the community.
2. Conducting training workshops and community congress about land titling awareness and other proofs for land tenure selection of indigenous communities.
3. Organizing community and bylaws of the indigenous community.
5. Controlling village-commune administrative boundaries and drawing up a draft of village/ communal land.
6. Conducting identification on map of the state land and community land.
7. Practicing the procedure of registering land of the indigenous community, according to sporadic land registration procedure.
8. Design land management planning

Mr. Nan Chrong, a 55-year-old Tompoun indigenous person in La In village, Teun Commune, Koun Mom district, Ratanakiri province, said “Land titling is crucial to every individual and their land. We can preserve their identity, reduce the clearing of forestland in order to expand their own property, assist the community in managing their land and reduce land grabbing from outsiders or powerful people.”

DPA-Ratanakiri provided trainings and workshops related to communal land entitlement and prepared important documents including those about ground rules, community bylaws and application forms.
DPA in Addressing Climate Change

Climate change problems often become world issues and are of concern to every country. Climate change is one of those significant concerns and it believed that thousands of people have been suffering and will continued to suffer from climate change and disasters if there is no plan to minimize this problem. Cambodia is one of the countries affected by this dilemma.

In this regard, Development and Partnership in Action (DPA) is starting to focus more on climate change and, as a first step, has begun a project in Ratanakiri province. The project is called “Integrated Community Development and Climate Change Adaptation (ICD & CCA)” and is being implementing in three villages (Dey Lo, Lum Phat and Phnom Kok Lao).

The communities in those areas are among the most vulnerable since they face extreme weather events such as storms, droughts, floods, typhoon, animal and human disease and pest damage.

In response to the impact of climate change, DPA has become actively involved in addressing the issue in terms of capacity development, piloting learning into adaptation activities and taking part in policy debate at all levels.

Through the project design to the implementation, DPA has helped communities to analyse their capacity and vulnerability and to learn which group is the most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and subsequently designed a community action plan called Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) Action Plan at the village levels.

DPA’s Integrated Community Development programme was actively involved in capacity building for staff, community leaders, commune committee for disaster management, village disaster management team and partners who were given a basic understanding of climate change and DRR concept.

Part of the strategic focus for DPA was to provide a development framework focused on addressing climate change impact and disaster risk as a central focus. This challenge will require lengthy and concentrated efforts and the DPA staff capacity development is fundamental in order to help them build the capacity of the communities.

Additionally, the future project designs incorporated a strategic response plan which would reduce the impact of climate change through disaster risk mitigation and provide increased capacity of communities to adapt to climate change with regard to natural resource management and food security in agriculture. DPA continues to be involved in external capacity development, sharing experiences, networking and advocacy on the issues of climate change at all levels.
On behalf of DPA and EISEI steering committee, Mr. Thy Try, EISEI coordinator said “This forum is very important for increasing public awareness about responsible mining activities and the involvement of women, the local community and indigenous people in discussions with NGOs and relevant government institutions.

“If women and indigenous people are not involved in the process of mining or sustainable environment management, there may be some negative impact on them in the future.”

“The Cambodian government focused on empowering indigenous people and create an open space for them to be involved in all development activities, which are the key success of sustainable development,” said H.E Tan Navan.