

**THE DEVELOPMENT OF CULTURAL TOURISM IN KG. THOM  
PROVINCE: AN EXCERPT**

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## 1. Executive Summary

1. The tourism sector has been recognized worldwide as a major trade engine for sustainable growth, socioeconomic development and poverty alleviation, actor and promoter of the conservation of natural and cultural heritage, and as a harbinger of peace and friendship. It is an industry that is global in size, local in character, with the capacity to mobilize resources (public/private), shape rapid, deep, and wide contributions to Cambodia urban and rural socioeconomic development, and – most importantly – contribute to poverty reduction. While the country targets 3 millions tourists by 2010, its travel industry desired the Government to invest in projects and improve tourism infrastructures to increase length of stay. For Cambodia, there is an urgent need to develop other destinations than Angkor Wat, Siem Reap province and Sihanoukville.

2. This project offers a potential for the country to develop not only a new destination. But, also provide the municipal and provincial Tourism Taskforce the ability to tailor the offering to target specific segments of the global tourism market with an open interest in natural and cultural heritage in areas occupied by the poor, and/or indigenous communities. This makes it possible to sharply focus tourism development on poverty alleviation, by creating job opportunities through educational and vocational training of the local human resources – rural sustainable human development will results in fewer migration from the rural to urban areas – to wit.

- Identification of trainees at the commune level through decentralized planning process.
- Vocational training through existing GTZ Private Sector Promotion (PSP) and Rural Development Program (RDP) in support of, e.g., agronomics, construction, hospitality and tourism services industry, general business services, etc...
- Educational and cultural awareness program for the village and commune to be proactive in the tourist activities.

3. Timely interventions couple with strengthening local capacity programs shall be implemented by the Kampong Thom Tourism Taskforce<sup>1</sup> to assist in enhancing economic linkages between village producers, tourism service providers, and other sectors of the local economy. The enhancement of economic linkages resulting reduction in the level of economic leakages (imports) can create an upward growth spiral that could help to finance and share access to electricity, potable water and sanitation, health and education, roads and public spaces, resource protection and preservation, and overall raise living standards for poor local communities.

4. To be effective trade/tourism development strategy must be “owned” by both the public and private sector. Hence, through cooperation and consultation with the representatives from the private sector, public sector, and institution in the provincial and local level.<sup>2</sup> The comprehensive strategy/statute for The Development of Cultural Tourism in Kampong Thom Province under Kampong Thom Tourism Taskforce auspices shall have the characteristics of a mandate to regulate the public and private sector in the development planning and management of the tourist sites and/or circuits. Facilitating ways and means for the tourist to interact directly with the communities to reduce leakage, (**adding-, creating-, and retaining-value**) and to effectively delivering economic and other social benefits (**distributing-value**) directly to these communities.

5. Best practices recommend developing and strengthening the structures and networks of Public Private Partnership “top down – bottom up approach” at the provincial and local level will facilitate effective and efficient implementation of the strategy/statute. The private sector shall set strategic priority for short-term commercial objectives, while the public sector charged with responsibility for long-term developmental objectives and addresses key issues at the macro, meso, and micro-level simultaneously, e.g., environmental safeguards, conservation aspects, poverty alleviation, sustainability issues.

### a) National Government Tourism Development Strategy and Policy

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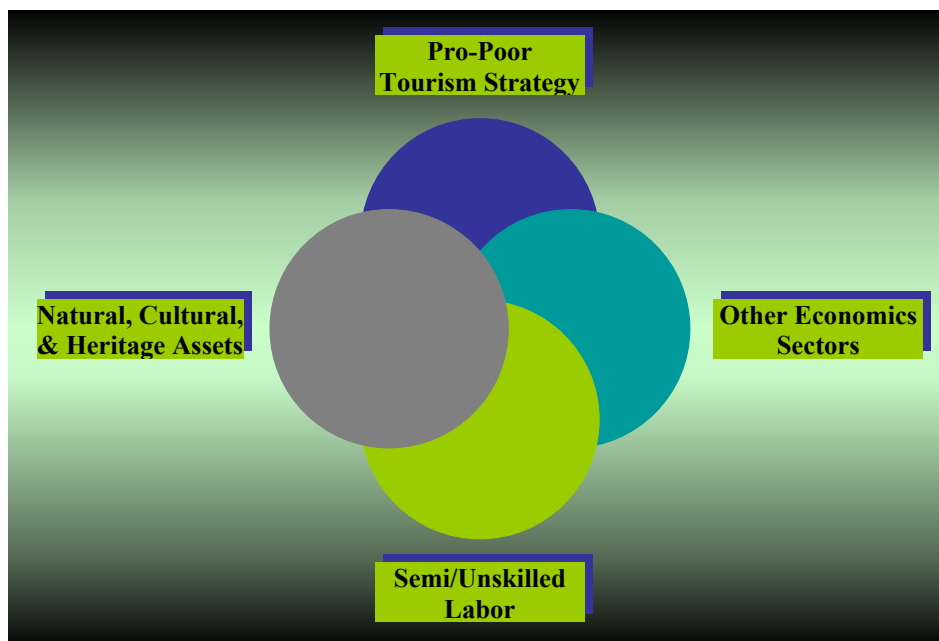
<sup>1</sup> Technical Assistance provides by the GTZ’s RDP/PSP provincial programs.

<sup>2</sup> Consolidated GTZ’s RDP/PSP in Kampong Thom Tourism Development, 2005.

6. The Government policies for tourism sector are based on three basic principles; (a) the development of tourism should be sustainable, anchored in the rich cultural heritage, history, and the exquisite nature of Cambodia's terrain, but more importantly, development that contributes to poverty reduction; (b) active and creative promotion of tourism to make Cambodia a preferred "Culture and Nature" tourist destination in the region and the rest of the world; and (c) apart from increased tourist arrivals, increase in the number of days tourist stay, and the amount they spend, in the country and diversify their destinations (excerpt from National Strategic Development Plan 2006 – 2010, for Tourism Sector, approved at the meeting of the Council of Ministers on 01/27/06.)<sup>3</sup> In light of, the Government limited resources (finance and human capital) and reflecting on sectors competitive and comparative advantage, the National Export Strategy, 2006 – 2008, tourism sector was selected, because priority has to be given to sector/s that are more labor intensive, which enhance the employment opportunities thereby contribute to poverty alleviation in rural and urban areas.<sup>4</sup> In addition, conscious efforts will be made to ensure that appropriate benefits of tourism go to people living in the vicinity of tourist destinations, both to reduce poverty and improve their livelihoods.

7. Accordingly the national strategy for tourism development builds upon three pillars (Fig. 1.1).
- The linkage between the employment of semi-skilled and unskilled labor in the tourism industry and urban, rural, coastal and high-land tourism areas with large concentrations of persons living at/below the poverty line.
  - The linkage between natural, cultural, and historic tourist attractions and the location of poor rural and high-land communities making it possible to move and host tourists to these areas.
  - The linkage between tourism and the opening up of new markets for – domestic – farm, handicraft and other products and commodities arising from improvements in access and social/commercial infrastructure.

**Figure 1.1: Pro-Poor Tourism Strategy**



<sup>3</sup> Ministry of Planning and Tourism Taskforce for Poverty Alleviation, 2006.

<sup>4</sup> Ministry of Commerce Working Draft National Export Strategy, 2006 – 2008.

## **b) Government Policy for Pro-Poor, Equitable Tourism and Poverty Alleviation**

8. The issue of poverty eradication in Cambodia is extremely urgent. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) adopted by the United Nations Millennium Summit in September 2000 are supported and reflected in the Government's policies and strategies.<sup>5</sup> The first MDGs is to eradicate extreme poverty by half between the years 1990–2015, i.e., the proportion of people who suffer from hunger (the common formula is to reduce by half the number of people living on less than US\$1 a day). Hunger introduces a critical dimension in the fight to eradicate poverty because it influences and limits people's productivity and hindrance upon labor ability to realize its full potential capabilities.

9. The Government recognize that the tourism sector has myriad advantages over other traditional productive sectors, e.g., agriculture and light manufacturing industries for pro-poor initiatives, especially in areas rich with natural and cultural assets because:

- customers (tourists) come to the destination, so it's an export in reversed;
- tourism is relatively labor intensive (semi/unskilled and gender balanced);
- Cambodia has few other suitable exportable commodities and products;<sup>6</sup> and
- tourism is a commodity; tourist can use and enjoy assets that the poor often have access to – natural resources, cultural assets, etc...

10. Although the concept of pro-poor/equitable tourism is relatively of recent phenomena, the idea of an approach to provide opportunities for the poor is concrete and doable.<sup>7</sup> Tourism is pro-poor and balanced if and when it provides:

- equitable and fair distribution of economic gain and sustainable human development;
- generating and sustaining employment, especially to the bottom end of the economic ladder;
- small/medium-sized enterprise (SME) opportunities;
- other social security benefits, i.e., improved access to clean water, sanitation, communications, roads (access to markets), improved health and education services, protection and preservation of natural and cultural resources; and
- local opportunities and capacities for involvement in decision-making process which allows the poor to improve and control their lots through access to tourists and tourism enterprises.

## **c) Socioeconomic Impact of Tourism Development in Kampong Thom Province**

11. The development of cultural tourism in Kampong Thom should be seen as a cutting-edge paradigm, which could be replicated to other locations in Cambodia rich with cultural heritage assets. Developing not only a new destination but it is targeted to extend the average length-of-stay of tourists (presently 3.2 days) in the country. With Sambor Prey Kuk it encompasses one of Cambodia's most significant historical monuments (ancient capital city of pre-Angkorian and cradle of the nation) and has an important role to transform the image of the entire country. An undesirable and inexpedient development of this archaeologically protected area would results in undue pressure, which not only destroy nature and environment that makes this archaeo-historic sites valuable, but would also have an extremely negative impact and effect on Cambodia as a tourist destination in competition with Thailand, Vietnam, Laos, and China.

12. For this project the aim will not only present and glorified Cambodia's historical achievement, but to also make a case for, there's an alternative routes to allow simple, peaceful, and enjoyable country life experience accessible to tourists. It will further portray that Cambodia as an emerging modern nation concern with long-term social and environmental degradation by using latest and appropriate technologies (e.g., solar energy, biomass waste treatment, etc...) when it comes to

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<sup>5</sup> "Rectangular Strategy" for Growth, Employment, Equity, and Efficiency, first cabinet meeting of the Third Legislature of the National Assembly at the Office of the Council of Ministers chaired by the Prime Minister. Phnom Penh, July 16, 2004.

<sup>6</sup> Garment and Tourism Sectors make up almost 2/3 of current export with the world.

<sup>7</sup> Community Based Tourism is being implemented in Rattanakiri and Stung Treng provinces by the Mekong Tourism Development Project, ADB and Ministry of Tourism.

cultural heritage, natural resources, and environmental protection and conservation. Important of all the project will demonstrate an example of: *“how one of the poorest and trouble past’s country in the world values and uses its cultural heritage endowment and natural resources in a quick-witted way that it contributes to increasing wealth/prosperity for its citizen and alleviates poverty in the respective communities.”*

#### **d) Plan Activities in The Tourism Development Plan for Kampong Thom Province**

13. This project will create an alternative tourism offering to that of Siem Reap (sight seeing of the majestic Angkor Wat and bustling tourists), to Phnom Penh (urban life style and entertainment), and to Sihanoukville (beach life). The entire protected areas will be kept in its pristine environment but with international standards of amenities for tourist, which shape an atmosphere of relaxed activity, playfulness, and creativity without urging the visitor.

14. Brief descriptions of the potential tourist sites, attractions and activities are listed herewith.

- Sites and attractions: Sambor Prey Kuk Central Temple and Ancient City; tourist village; Santuk mountain; water birds sanctuary in the Tonle Sap biosphere reserves; stone carving village; homestay and agro tourism (paddy planting/harvesting); museum and tourist information; etc...; tourist village should be located near the Atso village or to the eastern side of the Central Temple<sup>8</sup> with appropriate terrain for 50 – 100 free-style Khmer bungalows; swimming pool; handicraft and souvenir shops; restaurants; artist’s house and cultural/assembly hall; and local product exhibition hall.
- Entertainment: restaurants; cafés and internet cafés; multipurpose hall for cultural events – cultural dance and musical performances, theater, films, lectures on Buddhism, and Khmer art/history; but no loud karaoke/bars.
- Business services: mini mart; photo shop; travel agency and tour operator; traditional massage and spa; hair dresser; tailor; laundry service; chariot and bullock carts; bike and motorcycle rental; motodop; taxi and minibus.
- Agro-production: rice, fruit and vegetable, poultry, meat, fish, other cash crops, etc...
- Sports: horseback riding; jogging and trekking; canoeing; badminton and tennis; billiards; archery; guided/unguided cross country bicycle tours (in connection with home stay).
- Culture: special house for Cambodian artists (poet and writer, sculptor, painter, traditional musician) with scholarship from international sponsor; traditional dance and theater; modern art performance; lecture on Buddhism, history, and archaeology.
- Other special activities: involvement of tourists under professional guidance<sup>9</sup> in excavation and conservation of archaeological sites; classes in sculpturing and painting; meditation and yoga; etc...

#### **e) How will this Development Strategy Plan be implemented?**

15. Participatory decision making process at the provincial level including districts and communities, close cooperation with the national authorities Tourism Taskforce for Poverty Alleviation and Ministry of Tourism. To turn this vision into reality the private sector – social entrepreneur will be tapped for the resource in financing and expertise in marketing, and operations, while the function of conservation, preservation, protection, and management of the cultural heritage assets will be entrusted with the Sambor Prey Kuk Conservation Project and Sambor Prey Kuk Conservation and Development Community.

16. German Technical Cooperation (GTZ) main fields of activities in support of implementing this project at the national and provincial level are; awareness campaigns, training in a variety of fields, improvement of infrastructure, community development, establishment of networks and information services, business development services, business startup training/coaching, and product development and improvement.

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<sup>8</sup> Suggested by Sambor Prey Kuk Conservation Project’s field expert Mr. Ichita SHIMODA.

<sup>9</sup> Under the aegis of Sambor Prey Kuk Conservation Project, Waseda University, Tokyo and Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts.

#### **f) Brief Guiding Principles**

17. During the workshop in Phnom Penh on September 19, 2005, attended by the members of the public and private sector and presided by H.E. Veng Sereyvuth, Sr. Minister and Chairman of the Government Tourism Taskforce for Poverty Alleviation and H.E. Dr. Thong Khon, Secretary of State of Ministry of Tourism a common understanding among all the participants evolved into and emphasizing on the following guidelines/principles for tourism development in Kampong Thom Province.

- Local involvement – local actors should be involved in tourism development in order to avoid a lack of local ownership.
- Equity in development – the local communities and the neighboring regions should be the primary beneficiaries of tourist related income and employment opportunities generated therefrom.
- Local resources – should be used as much as possible in providing services and products such as food items, e.g., locally produced organic rice, handicrafts, etc...
- Ecotourism – intervention should be environmentally friendly ensuring conservation and preservation of the natural resources such technology is available with local consulting firm.
- Respect for Culture – local traditions and culture is to be maintained and integrated as part of the concept for example, in handicraft production by using traditional methods and designs, ensuring local craftsmanship and artisan but with good quality and innovation.



## 2. Introduction

18. Kampong Thom as described by Lonely Planet<sup>10</sup> is a bustling commercial center on the banks of Stung Sen River. Strategically situated on National Highway 6 (NH6) between Phnom Penh and Siem Reap, Kampong Thom is 168km north of Phnom-Penh and 147km Southeast of Siem Reap. The town is for every traveler a natural stop over. Bus companies running Phnom-Penh and Siem Reap route and vice versa often drop off and pick up passengers when passing through. This make the province a natural potential location for attracting the tourist traffic bound between the two cities. But there's draw back. The tourism industry in Kampong Thom is based on shared resources – which are limited and fragile<sup>11</sup> – has important implications for tourism development. It is therefore, crucial to recognize that tourism is a place-dependent industry.

19. In other words, tourism activity in Kampong Thom is to be developed from the natural, cultural, and historical resources found in Sambor Prey Kuk<sup>12</sup> and its vicinity among other archaeological sites within the Province. The value of these resources arises from the natural environments for which they exist, not to be confused with the artificial and/or recreate environments.<sup>13</sup> Active participation of local communities in or adjacent to these sites can contribute to conservation management by transforming the local community's relationship with these resources from predatory practice to protective activity secured by income and annuity derived from hosting tourists.<sup>14</sup>

20. Empirical observation has shown however that, laissez faire, tourism development in Cambodia does not necessarily and naturally fulfill its objectives or trickle down to those at the bottom end of the economic ladder.<sup>15</sup>

21. For example, early unofficial estimated of international tourism to Cambodia in 2005 probably generated over US\$1.3 billions in output, US\$800 millions in domestic income, US\$139 million in government revenue, and sustained over 150,000 jobs,<sup>16</sup> yet the largeness of this is aggregated in few urban areas (Phnom Penh, Siem Reap, and Sihanoukville) and a handful of well-oiled/connected enterprises are the primary beneficiaries. The wealth's distribution of these benefits to those in greatest need – disadvantaged groups such as the poor farmer, women, children, and ethnic communities are very minimal.<sup>17</sup> Extraordinary economic leakage (import) levels of tourism expenditures (40% or more), weak and/or non existence economic linkages between tourism and other sectors of the economy especially at the provincial and local level, and the absence of

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<sup>10</sup> Published by Lonely Planet Publications Pty Ltd, [www.lonelyplanet.com](http://www.lonelyplanet.com), 2005.

<sup>11</sup> As in many others locations around Cambodia, i.e., Preah Vihear, Banteay Chhmar, Koh Ker, Phnom Kulen, **Angkor**, Beng Mealea, Preah Khan, and Angkor Borei. Main monuments in Cambodia, Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts.

<sup>12</sup> Sambor Prey Kuk a 30km<sup>2</sup> of 179 temples complex dated back to the 7<sup>th</sup> century of which 40 temples are accessible to tourist and Santuk Mountain. Archaeological remnants of Sambor Prey Kuk monuments are distributed in the vast areas of more than 4km in North-South direction and 6km in East-West direction which presently contains 7 villages. Groups of monuments can be largely divided into two groups in two different areas: the area of the eastern temple group and the western city area delineated by O' Krou Keo stream. Sambor Prey Kuk Conservation Project, Waseda University, Tokyo & Ministry Culture and Fine Arts, Cambodia.

<sup>13</sup> A situation recently emerged in China was the concern about "killing the goose that lays the golden egg." Visitors and tour operators all expressed and were fairly consistent in warning about the necessity to improve the archaeological, heritage, and cultural conservation and preservation practices around the country. Tourist will reject paying good money to visit a fabricated cultural heritage and/or piles of ancient stones. ADB GMS Tourism Sector Strategy Vol. 1 Final Report June 30, 2005.

<sup>14</sup> See Statutes of the Sambor Prey Kuk Conservation and Development Community, April 2004.

<sup>15</sup> New Sources of Growth, Trade and Poverty "Provincial/Regional Diagnostic Trade and Integration Study: Private Sector Development in Rural Cambodia", Final Report May 2005. WB/MoC.

<sup>16</sup> Based on the assumption of 40% leakage, real rate however, which cannot be confirmed or denied, is more in the range of 65-70% of the aggregated output. The volume and pattern of international tourism activity generates additional demand for goods and services (outputs). This demand is either met by producing more of these goods and services domestically or by importing (leakage) if the local production capacity is constrained. To reduce leakage and capture more shares of the international tourists, it's necessary to develop a broad-based economy that can meet most of the requirements of international tourism demand at the domestic level.

<sup>17</sup> Sources and data are from Ministry of Tourism Statistical Report 2005, ABD GMS Tourism Sector Strategy Vol. 1 Final Report June 30, 2005, and Draft National Export Strategy 2006-2008.

appropriate enabling policies are some of the main factors/forces behind the imbalance in the distribution of wealth and benefits of tourism. “Sadly, the country may benefit from globalization, but the people do not get to keep the profits of globalization.”

22. In Kampong Thom, the focus cannot be just on a destination of a particular area or village, an attraction or activity, but must be directed to other economic sectors and producers in the broader local economy – agriculture, horticulture, aquaculture, livestock, art and craft, etc... and religious institution – that may encompass the main town and many other surrounding villages. Establishes special support and training programs in the area of micro and small business formation, basic skills training, sanitation (cleanliness, hygiene, and pollution), financing, and partnerships with medium to larger scale tourism service providers in towns and cities (Phnom Penh, Siem Reap and Sihanoukville) will provide the framework for the local population to engage in businesses and in direct employment opportunities in the lodgings, local area guiding, local land and water transportation, cultural and natural protected area management, folklore dance and music, and handicraft production and sales.<sup>18</sup>

23. Hence, the country, municipal, and provincial must adopt a pragmatic approach, paradigm shift to tourism planning with strategy/statute which recognizes the multiplicity and complexity of competing interests of all benefactors/beneficiaries according to the natural, cultural, and historical significant and resources found in a particular place or location throughout the country.

24. Equally important tourism development requires substantial inputs and on-going supports from other economic sectors such as:

- the financial services;
- building materials and construction;
- transportation and telecommunications;
- electricity, water, and sanitation services;
- agriculture, aquaculture, and food processing; and
- other sectors of local economies.

25. Thus, well-planned/executed tourism strategy/statute makes a powerful contribution to the formation and strengthening of back/forward linkages with other sectors of the economy and in the process, stimulates the formation and expansion of micro, small and medium sized enterprises at a local level, and helps to generate supplementary (in some cases primary) cash income opportunities for women and those of disadvantaged groups.



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<sup>18</sup> Sambor Prey Kuk Conservation and Development Community – “Isanborei Craft Center.”



### 3. Guidelines for Developing Cultural Tourism in Kampong Thom

26. Based on the guidelines/principles resolved at the workshop in September 19, 2005. The strategy/statute for The Development of Cultural Tourism in Kampong Thom Province shall have the characteristics of a mandate to regulate the public and private sector in the development planning and management of the tourist infrastructures and sites/circuits. These are positive approach procedures intent on promoting sustainable development and conservation of national cultural heritage, forest, natural environment, traditions, customs, ethnic culture, and settlements. It is also to avoid uncoordinated buildup of tourist infrastructures, risks killing the proverbial golden goose with over development, which destroys the natural harmony of this specific area.

27. The guidelines and procedures which are defined, but not limited to, for the purposes of this strategy/statute paper, are proposed herewith.

- Geographical area/s to be designated for the development of tourist village shall be in Sambor commune and/or its vicinity...
- Accommodations and its architectural design thereof within the tourist village shall comply with the specifications described in...
- Homestay and other small lodging establishments and its standards within the vicinity of Sambor Prey Kuk Heritage Park Area shall be in according to the criteria set forth in...
- Infrastructures within the tourist village, connecting circuits, and its related services shall comply with the specifications described in...
- Utilities (water, electricity, cooking fuel, etc...) shall comply with the specifications described in...
- Solid waste collection and disposal thereof and sewage treatment and discharge thereof shall comply with the specifications described in...
- Construction materials for all structures within the tourist village shall comply with the specifications described in...
- Entertainments establishment stationary and/or mobile and its programs shall be in according to the criteria set forth in...
- Food/retail establishment and business services stationary and/or mobile shall comply with the specifications described in...
- Leisure-time and sporting activities and its programs shall comply with the specifications described in...
- Art and craft activities and its programs shall comply with the specifications described in...
- Cultural heritage and natural resources shall be conserved, preserved, protected and promoted in according with the criteria described in...
- Management of the tangible and intangible cultural heritage assets and natural areas protected and unprotected, which of importance to tourism shall comply with the specifications described in...



