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Cambodia Development Resource Institute

Understanding Decentralisation in Cambodia

A Research Framework to Support the Processes of Devolution and Deconcentration in Cambodia

Prepared for the CDRI by

PADRIGU CONSULTANTS
Göteborg/Phnom Penh

Joakim Öjendal
Robin Biddulph
Pia Wallgren
Kim Sedara (CDRI)

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Executive Summary

This is a research framework developed to support the ongoing decentralisation reform in Cambodia. It takes a comprehensive approach and aims to provide a grounded reflection on the evolution of the key aspects of the reform. It is designed to be policy relevant, and ultimately it aims to strengthen the decentralisation process. It is also constructed so as to contribute to capacity building within CDRI, which will allow the institute to strengthen its capability to increasingly operate on the international scene as both a 'giver' and a 'taker'.

The proposed research will be implemented through a mix of qualitative and quantitative methods with an explicit longitudinal interest. Initially, it will be exploratory, problem-oriented, holistic, and flexible in nature, whereas at a second stage, it may move to a more 'hypothesis-testing' mode of research. It also recommends that fairly comprehensive baseline studies be conducted as soon as possible. It is expected to cover the next four years.

The content of the proposal is principally derived from five different sources. The *first* is the actual aim of the reform as expressed by different branches of the Royal Government of Cambodia. The *second* is Cambodia's experience with governance reforms in the post-UNTAC era, particularly the Seila experience, but also other related interventions. *Thirdly* are the opinions of key stakeholders to the reform, ranging from the commune level to the key policy-makers in Phnom Penh, collected through interviews during the preparatory phase of this report.. *Fourthly*, key insights gleaned from other decentralisation processes, as well as from some of the theoretical literature on the topic are also considered. *Finally*, consideration was given to the experience and competence of the CDRI to carry out this kind of research.

Emerging from these inputs, the plan proposes to concentrate on four interrelated research themes:

Decentralisation Design;
Institutional Performance;
Poverty Alleviation and Local Development;
Political Participation and Local Governance.

Decentralisation Design is an attempt to research the overall design of the reform and relate this to decentralisation processes in other countries. It is envisaged to be largely a desk study with limited fieldwork. *Institutional Performance* aims to measure the overall performance of the newly established institutions in the decentralisation process in terms of output (i.e. what the institutions do); particularly the Commune Councils and their up and downward relations. It is operationalised mainly as a quantitative study, and includes numerous cases with a limited number of criteria, and with the intent to make national generalisations. *Poverty Alleviation* and *Local Governance* both constitute assessments of the empirical outcome of decentralisation, with a local economic and political perspective respectively. These are implemented with qualitative methods and a qualitative research interest.

The framework/proposal is designed so that it defines its primary interest, while at the same time outlining secondary and in-depth research interests in relation to each theme. While each theme operates discretely, the synergy effect of the fieldwork will be tapped and the respective findings eventually assessed comprehensively. The compatibility and co-operation

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with other activities in the field are also scrutinised – particularly important here are the PMA process and the emerging Seila M&E unit.

Moreover, the proposal outlines an ambitious dissemination plan, including a series of workshops; staffing requirements, including new recruitments; deadlines for output also encompassing international publications; and, not least, a complete budget. Finally, the proposal also presents a number of important appendices, such as a *literature review*, *stakeholder comments* and a table illustrating the *external players, their interests* and *plans* for engaging in the decentralisation process.

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During the weeks that we have conducted the work we have rarely all been in the same place at the same time. This of course caused some exceptional demands on the people in our surrounding. We are grateful to you all for both having patience with us, and performing such excellent work.

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Most importantly, however, we have relied on the people we have interviewed for this study. These have included policy makers from the Royal Government of Cambodia, Provincial Governors, district chiefs, commune councillors, and staff and representatives of Cambodian and International NGOs and donors. We thank you for allowing us to 'take' your time and 'tap' your knowledge. We hope that we have handled it carefully and fairly.

The field we address is vast, and shortcomings are bound to appear. For these we take full responsibility.

Robin Biddulph
Kim Sedara
Pia Wallgren
Joakim Öjendal (Team Leader)

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Acronyms

ADB:	Asian Development Bank
CAL:	Commune Administration Law
CAR:	Committee of Administrative Reforms
CC:	Commune Council
CCSP:	Commune Council Support Project
CDC:	Commune Development Committee
CDRI:	Cambodian Development Resource Institute
CEL:	Commune Election Law
CHIR:	Cambodian Institute for Human Rights
COMFREL:	Committee for Free and Fair Election in Cambodia
CSP:	Council for Social Development
DFID:	Department for International Development (British)
DoLa:	Department of Local Administration
GAP:	Governance Action Plan
GTZ:	German?
KID:	Khmer Institute for Democracy
KWVC:	Khmer Women's Voice Centre
KYA:	Khmer Youth Association
MoEF:	Ministry of Economy and Finance
MoI:	Ministry of Interior
MoP:	Ministry of Planning
NCSC:	National Committee for Support to the Communes
NICFEC:	Neutral and Impartial for Free and Fair Elections in Cambodia
PLG:	Partnership for Local Governance
PMA:	Poverty Monitoring Analysis
PRS:	Poverty Reduction Strategy
PoLa:	Provincial of Local Administration
PRDC:	Provincial Rural Development Committee
PRA/RRA:	Participatory Rapid Appraisal
RGC:	Royal Government of Cambodia
SEDP:	Socio - Economic Development Plan
SRP:	Sectoral Readjustment Portfolio
STF:	Seila Task Force
UNDP:	United Nations Development Program
VDC:	Village Development Committee
WFP:	World Food Program

1. Introduction

Ten years into the Cambodian democratisation process, solid progress is tangible and further reform is taking place. Nevertheless, Cambodia remains one of the poorest countries in Southeast Asia and appears to be making limited headway in reducing poverty. The reforms and processes of decentralisation and deconcentration are part of a broad attempt by the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) to redress this situation. A proposal/framework for research, analysis and capacity building, in support of these reforms and processes is presented below.[1] [2]

A decentralisation reform was officially initiated in Cambodia with the signing of the *Commune Administration Law* and the *Commune Election Law* by King Sihanouk on the 3rd of March 2001. Subsequently, the first decentralised commune councils[3] were popularly elected and established following the commune election of February 3, 2002. This introduced a critical new element to Cambodian democratisation, as well as to the Cambodian development situation at large, surpassed in scope in the last decade only by the introduction of multiparty elections and the re-writing of the Cambodian constitution in 1993.

'Decentralisation' became a common reform world-wide during the 1990s.[4] Decentralisation reforms have often been associated with the goals of poverty reduction and democratisation, however, international experience shows that decentralisation cannot be assumed to serve these goals. This proposal is written with this background in mind. The ultimate purpose of the proposed research is to support the RGC to conduct the reform as successfully as possible. The objective of the research conducted in preparation of this report, is to outline a comprehensive research framework, which covers central aspects of the decentralisation process. The framework covers several aspects, from background issues to operationalisation of the research endeavour. Its purpose is to guide the research programme of the CDRI, serve as a proposal to seek donor support and institutional collaboration, and as a basis of collaboration between the CDRI and other stakeholders involved in the reform process in Cambodia.

So far, it is clear that the current decentralisation in Cambodia is commune based, development oriented, democratic in nature, participation seeking, grounded in law, and guaranteed certain financial resources and administrative support. However, the reforms are

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[1] The framework/proposal has been produced by Padrigu Consultants under a consultancy contract issued by CDRI. The Padrigu team consisted of Pia Wallgren, Robin Biddulph, Joakim Öjendal, and Kim Sedara from CDRI. The study was carried out during March and April 2002. In the process, the team interviewed key stakeholders – national, local, Cambodian and non-Cambodian – surveyed CDRI's preferences and comparative advantages for doing decentralisation research, and consulted with consultants and researchers with relevant experience. Second-hand literature has been extensively used for extracting key experiences from other decentralisation processes, for drawing inspiration on the methodological approach, and, to a minor extent, for underpinning our knowledge about the conditions for Cambodian decentralisation. The core of the report was presented at a workshop in Phnom Penh on April 24, where key stakeholders were involved.

[2] This proposal is interested in both political decentralisation (devolution) and deconcentration. However, the former is more in focus because this process is in a more advanced stage and because it is less 'visible' by other means. Deconcentration is likely to appear, in due time, within research theme 1 and 2 (see further below).

[3] In this report the word 'commune' is used to refer to both the rural communes and their urban equivalent, the sangkat.

[4] Although the number of decentralisation reforms in the world accelerated at this time, the history of decentralisation in relation to development efforts can be traced to at least three consecutive 'waves', erupting from different circumstances, since the Second World War. See the literature review (Appendix 2) for a more nuanced review; also (Cohen & Paterson 1999).

not complete and it is not possible at this stage to predict the form that decentralisation in Cambodia will take eventually. Furthermore, given the wide-ranging potential social, economic and political effects of the reform it is also difficult to predict exactly where priorities for research will lie over the coming years. Decentralisation in Cambodia is largely un-researched, offering few reliable points of departure. Furthermore, evaluation methods of governance and democracy interventions are not yet well developed in the international research community, and although 'democracy research' is well established, Cambodia far from fits the standard models of democracy. Accepting this as a point of departure, the research suggested will to a large extent be exploratory, problem-oriented, holistic, and flexible, combining qualitative and quantitative methods.

As a development-knowledge organisation, the CDRI has a unique role in Cambodia. In a society marked by development interventions, monitoring and evaluation is an industry; so is knowledge-based capacity building. However, no domestic agency – neither the government, the university, think tanks or NGOs – carry out research on social change in relation to all these development initiatives. Having said that, it is acknowledged that CDRI is not an academic institution accumulating research at large, and at will. Thus, the framework/proposal is tailor-made to constitute *research* – in contrast to monitoring and capacity building – but at the same time striving to be maximum policy relevant. It is also designed to give CDRI sufficient resources and the capacity to *first* conduct research and *then* engage in policy debate on the basis of its findings, rather than carrying out 'research on demand', and adapted to other actors' demands. The research framework will take a long-term perspective, and a review is suggested two years into the research process, in order to assess both which themes are (most) relevant, and whether it is desirable to move towards a more hypothesis-testing mode of research.[5]

The proposal has five major sets of inputs: the *first* is the intent of the reform as articulated in various policy forum by the MoI, the key architect of the reform, and other government bodies. The *second* is the Cambodian experience of experiments with local democratic governance as well as with local poverty alleviation. This will draw on the limited but important research that has been carried out and the experiences of NGO work, but more importantly on the explicit experimentation with these issues by Seila/PLG. The *third* is the theoretical and empirical experiences – successes and failures, opportunities and hazards – drawn from other decentralising countries. They are highlighted here in order to illuminate the risks and potential of the Cambodian reform.[6] *Fourthly,* the research framework draws on the stakeholder interviews and a subsequent stakeholder workshop that were carried out in the process of compiling this proposal (cf. Appendix 4). *Fifthly*, and finally, it draws on CDRI's competence for, experiences of, and interest in relation to governance research, as well as on its portfolio of related research activities and adherent networks. These five primary inputs will be elaborated below, resulting in the selection, formulation and justification of the four broad research themes which make up the core of the suggested research framework.

The proposal includes the background and pre-conditions for decentralisation reform in Cambodia, the major input to the proposal, the selected research themes, the overall design, the research and field methodologies, and recommendations for dissemination and linking the

[5] What is envisaged here is not an evaluation of CDRI's activities in relation to decentralisation research – which is far too early – but rather an internal, thorough, reflection of direction and focus of research themes and methods.

[6] This comprises a part of the academic literature which also could be seen as the initial base of CDRI in-house decentralisation knowledge generation. A fuller list of relevant works can be found in the reference section.

research results to policy-making. We have chosen, however, to stop before reaching the detailed planning level, due to the fact that a decentralisation process has its own dynamic; there needs to be space for adjustment as the process evolves. Reasonably, CDRI also needs to fine-tune such an endeavour in due time. It concludes with a suggested administrative structure of the research venture and a tentative budget.

2. Background and Pre-conditions for Decentralisation Reform in Cambodia[7]

One of the many challenges facing Cambodia today is a legacy of violence and authoritarian governance systems. Concepts of *local development*, *popular legitimacy*, *political participation* and *service delivery* have only recently figured in Cambodian political discourse. Historically, very few, if any, bottom-up processes have been identified in the political field (cf. Thion 1993; Vickery 1986; Chandler 1983). In Khmer history, power traditionally emanates from above. In this light, the decentralisation reform and the adherent Commune Council elections are important and pioneering, but also fragile.

Local elections figured as a missing factor in Cambodia's democratisation already at the time of the 1993 national elections. They were delayed and were later planned to be held around the same time as the national election in 1998. However, the political turmoil that preceded the 1998 elections made necessary preparations of commune elections unfeasible. Following the 1998 election, the situation was ripe for 'local elections', although by that time the idea had grown to include a major overhaul of the entire governance system at local level. This resulted in the formulation of a comprehensive decentralisation reform which included the election of Commune Councils, as well as a wide political and development mandate for these new government bodies. A 'second layer of government' was constructed.

This reform has been widely seen as a panacea for deepened democratisation and poverty alleviation, and carries some very strong commitments to these ends. It faces, however, some major challenges, such as: changing the working methods and overall mandate of the commune leaders; the requirement of high quality work by commune officials not (yet) prepared for the task; the lack of supervisors and guiding policies on higher levels; lack of investment resources; uneasy political party struggles; a fairly unprepared and politically inactive civil society; and a lack of previous models to build on.[8]

While new and difficult, the reform is also a part of a much larger effort at both poverty alleviation and public sector reform. The second Socio-Economic Development Plan (SEDP2) – the key long-term government policy document – puts decentralisation into the context of social and political change. More specifically, the RGC Governance Action Plan (GAP) recognises decentralisation as a cornerstone, such that the decentralisation reform is the most advanced in relation to other reforms outlined in the plan. Finally, the Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS), and the adherent PMA, outline a process by which synergy can be

[7] This proposal does not describe the decentralisation reform as such. This is done in eg. MoI 2001. See also the two key laws: The *Commune Administration Law* and the *Commune Election Law*, which are highly informative and, besides Khmer, also available in English. Particularly pertinent issues of the Cambodian decentralisation as compared to the theoretical insights are reviewed in Chapter 4. For a more general review that puts Cambodian decentralisation into perspective, see Ayres 2000.

[8] The current reform allegedly draws on the previous commune reform in 1959, but the current reform is much more ambitious and contains many elements which the 1959 reform did not. For instance, both development and democracy ambitions are far higher this time (Roome 1999; cf. Eastmond & Öjendal 1999).

drawn from decentralisation reform.[9] Thus, decentralisation, and its study, should be approached in an integrated manner.

3. Major Inputs to the Proposal

The key sources of knowledge for Cambodian decentralisation – which also provide the key inputs to this proposal, are reviewed below. We wish to acknowledge that what is outlined below is, by necessity, only a very brief summary of a much more substantial body of thought and experience which the actual research would eventually have to address more thoroughly.

3.1. The Intent of Decentralisation Reform

In the context of Cambodia's political history, decentralisation reform may be viewed as a gargantuan undertaking however, in spite of the enormous challenges ahead, it would appear well justified as reflected in the following Ministry of Interior statement:

> 'There is a growing recognition that people must take a greater part in decisions affecting their affairs. There is also a growing recognition that government and administration must be more sensitive and more responsible to its citizens.'
>
> MoI 2000

The intent behind decentralisation reform is further reflected in the RGC's 'Governance Action Plan' (GAP).

> 'The Government views decentralisation, deconcentration, and local governance as means to further democratise the country and to improve service delivery in the regions.'
>
> RGC/CAR 2001:12

The formal objectives of the decentralisation reform are threefold, namely to:

- promote democracy, good governance and quality of life;
- give ordinary people greater opportunities to determine their future;
- ensure sustainable development, including the delivery of basic services.

MoI 2000:2

These objectives indicate a potential focus for a national research programme.

Of particular relevance for decentralisation reform is the deconcentration process.[10] In the word of RGC/CAR: 'The decentralisation of the government will only work if supporting functions are also de-concentrated to the Province and Districts' (RGC/CAR 2001:5). Thus

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[9] CDRI has been, and remains, closely involved in both the GAP and the PRS. Policy research under the guidance of CDRI is already linked to the PRS, under the heading of PMA, which is owned by MoP. This proposal addresses and suggests a way to link policy research to decentralisation reform, under the full ownership of CDRI (see further section 3.5.).

[10] Other components of the GAP are: the establishment of 'priority groups'; to accelerate and co-ordinate reforms of the state; to accelerate legal and judicial reform programs; to develop the first GAP; and, to establish partnership arrangements (RGC/CAR 2001:6).

far (April 2002), the two processes of decentralisation and deconcentration have not progressed at the same pace, with the former being at a more concrete and advanced stage.

Decentralisation may also be desirable for dealing with issues such as reconciliation and conflict resolution. For instance, at a multilateral donor meeting in Paris in May 2000, Prime Minister Hun Sen commiserated that he personally had to deal with resource conflicts emanating from local governance inefficiency. He stated that his interventions were not a 'long-term solution to this problem', but that other permanent solutions to this accelerating problem needed to be found (Hun Sen 2000). Moreover, Seila has been working successfully in the nexus of decentralisation and reconciliation in the northwest of the country. Finally, resource conflicts of various sorts are some of the most pressing issues in rural areas of Cambodia today. Central level officials, as well as many ordinary people, increasingly expect these to be resolved at the commune level.

Two opposing views of decentralisation are discernible in the discourse on decentralisation (see Appendix 2). On the one hand it is viewed by some as a means of reducing the state's role and apparatus, while others view decentralisation as a means to strengthen the state. It may be stating the obvious, but in the case of Cambodia, strengthening the state – although not necessarily an expansion of the state – is both called for and a part of the government's indirect reform objectives (Öjendal 2002). Thus, what is hoped for is a stronger local state with a higher degree of legitimacy but also. stronger links between central and local level, thus also eventually strengthening the central level.

Finally, interviews conducted with government sources after the February 2002 commune election, indicated that there was a need and desire for research to focus on the overall design of the decentralisation process, including laws and the regulatory framework. Such research would serve to inform and contribute to improving the framework and its instruments on a regular basis. Government circles often stressed that this reform is designed for Cambodian circumstances and that there are no ready-made models to build on. They acknowledge that there are many uncertainties in the process, and that a research programme focusing on policy development would be helpful.

3.2. Previous Cambodian Experience of Decentralised Local Governance[11]

The most relevant findings of the previous experiences of working with decentralised governance in Cambodia are summarised below.

3.2.1. Seila – 'An Experiment in Decentralised Planning'

The Seila experience is important to decentralisation reform in two different ways: firstly, as an experiment from which lessons can be drawn regarding where the strong and weak points of the current decentralisation process may lay. Secondly, as Seila does not yet have national coverage, while the decentralisation reform does, the dichotomy of 'Seila and non-Seila' communes could be utilised as a methodological tool. Let us start with the former.

[11] For space reasons only the most relevant experiences are listed under this heading. There is much more to be dug out from these experiences. and perhaps a more thorough investigation into this could be a first task for the future research programme (see further below).

The first phase of Seila (1996-2001) proved a crucial experiment in decentralised planning; a large body of experience was derived, giving credibility to and demonstrating the efficiency of working through decentralised method. This subsequently created an impetus and space for the nation-wide decentralisation reform. The most pertinent lessons to be drawn from Seila may be:

- The crucial role of the 'newly established' institutions and their high performance (VDC, CDC, PRDC, STF etc);
- The dynamics of working with participatory approaches, involving and engaging the civil society;
- The relatively successful and bold strategy of giving resources and responsibility to civil servants even if they do not, beforehand, have the appropriate education;
- The potential, as well as the limitations, to achieve a tangible poverty reduction in the short run through enhanced governance performance;
- The value of working at 'both ends' of the administrative spectrum; i.e. to combine centralised and deconcentrated practices;
- The need to assess outcomes and adapt to realities.[12]

Thus, the key experience of five years of Seila implementation induces that decentralisation is not only possible, but carries a large potential, while simultaneously calling for active nurturing of the process, guided by a reflective approach.

The second phase of the Seila programme (2001-2005) is thus far the RGC's primary response to the challenge of giving commune and provincial government the capacities and mechanism for implementing decentralised development through local government bodies. The goal of the Seila programme is to institute effective governance in order to reduce rural poverty. It aims to strengthen decentralised and deconcentrated development administration systems, structures and concepts. It comprises a set of institutions (some of which will change under the new arrangements after the commune election) and supporting systems (planning, finance and monitoring) for managing local development in response to the needs defined by the communities. The programme is responsible for strengthening institutions, supporting the implementation of the decentralisation and deconcentration reforms, and contributing to the strengthening of policy and regulations for these reforms and for poverty alleviation more broadly. It aims at continuing to promote and refine the participatory planning and management principles and institutions developed in the last five years. The Seila programme will also continue to strengthen the capacity of provincial administrations to support and supervise commune authorities. It is likely that 'Seila and non-Seila' communes will produce rather different outcomes for a variety of reasons. As such, Seila is crucial for the evolution of decentralisation. The contrast between 'old', 'new' and 'non-Seila' communes and provinces could be utilised as a key methodological difference to distinguish functional and less functional aspects – and the root to this - of the decentralisation reform.

3.2.2. *NGO experiences*

The NGO experiences in part confirm, and in part contradict the Seila experience. For the most part, NGOs would support the aim of working in a participatory

[12] What the key lessons from Seila 1996-2001 are, is both a complex and controversial issue (cf. Rudengren & Öjendal 2002). The most thorough evaluations can inter alia be found among: the studies on the impact of the LPP projects (Biddulph 1997; 1998; 1999), the series of monitoring reports carried out by SPM (SPM 1-8, 1997-2001), the 'mid-term review' led by UNDP (1998), the 'Strategic Assessment' (Evans et al, 2000), and a recent series of World Bank sponsored studies (eg. Holloway 2002).

manner, thus underlining the need for improved state-civil society relations (cf. Daubert 1996). At the same time many NGOs would argue that the public participation stimulated under the Seila programme would not be sufficient to produce sustainable grassroots development. In addition to strengthening State- civil society relations, expanding education and awareness raising activities on a much larger scale, would also contribute to increase local empowerment.

Another issue sometimes raised by the NGO community is the present electoral system, which allows only registered parties (in contrast to individuals) to run for office. At issue in this criticism is whether this form of decentralisation allows/encourages sufficient participation and whether this in turn manages to produce accountability from local political bodies (eg. commune councils). It is a relevant question because it has been well established as a weak point in democratic decentralisation reforms elsewhere (see 3.3. below; cf. Blair 2000).

A third observation under this heading relates to the pace and scope of decentralisation reform. The haste with which the reform is moving forward raises concern regarding appropriate preparation, given the low level of education and limited political awareness in the rural areas. This concern warrants special attention to the thoroughness of the local processes, both in terms of the quality of government institutional performance and of popular participation.

Finally, there is a certain scepticism as to whether commune councils will be able to defend their independence and integrity vis-à-vis upper levels and vis-à-vis the vested political party interests (cf. Siddique & Hulme 1999; Arghiros 2001). In other words, will the relatively uneducated commune councils be able, in their own right, to establish efficient working methods, and will they get the right kind of support from the upper levels to do this?

3.2.3. Findings of Social Science Research in Cambodia

Much of the little research that exists on rural development, social organisation and local governance in Cambodia, tends to stress the importance of *prevalent patronage systems* as well as the historical tradition of top-down rule (eg. Ledgerwood 1998; Thion 1993). With the relaxation of state authority in the late 1980s, such deep-lying structures have arguably surfaced and come to dominate social dynamics in the rural areas. The concern that emerges from this observation is how civil society will be able to assert itself in relation to the local state – or, in other words, how the people will be able to hold the Commune Councils accountable, assuming they are predominantly staffed by the local elite. Many have, moreover, pointed out a prevailing docility or 'fatigue' of the civil society in the rural areas (Hasselskog 2001; Curtis 1999). It is well known that decentralisation reform works best when there is a strong civil society demanding good governance, and accountability from local government. For instance, the vibrant civil society in the Philippines is sometimes given the credit for the relatively successful decentralisation reform.[13] Another point in Hasselskog is, that decentralised development resources introduce, and even trigger, some traits and processes that challenge some of the previously dominating patron client arrangements.

[13] For instance, the NGO community is guaranteed 25% of the seats in the local government (corresponding to the Commune Councils).

Another stream of analysis of rural Cambodia tends to stress the *fragmented society*, emanating from the traditional non-collectivism and recent experience with war and violence (Martin 1994; Hughes 1998; van de Put 1997; cf. Vickery 1986). Far-driven non-voluntary individualism, combined with very little mutual trust and self-help mechanisms, both exacerbate prevailing poverty and prevent a break with the vicious circle of poverty (Ovesen et al 1996). The general *lack of trust* – a prevalent feature of contemporary rural Cambodia (cf. Charny 1999; van de Put 1997; Martin 1994) – also often extends to local authorities, which must first prove themselves in order to get any local support/legitimacy. To 'prove oneself' is, furthermore, extremely difficult without access to financial resources; in many instances, it in fact *equals* having access to financial resources. In 2002, perhaps two-thirds of the communes, which are popularly elected but have no financial resources available for development interventions, face this dilemma. The legacy of large-scale violence (in combination with prevailing poverty) is often a constraint in implementing successful development projects, hence combating poverty (Öjendal 2000). Thus, it is critical and a significant challenge to introduce and work through processes which will further contribute to trust building between people at large, and between the people and the local government.

There are also more positive research findings, which acknowledge a certain viability of introducing change in governance practices (eg. Hasselskog 2001; Charya 2000; Eastmond & Öjendal 1999; Öjendal 2000; Blench 2002), as well as successful participatory processes (Öjendal 2000; Hasselskog 2001).

3.3. Stakeholder Input Review

The stakeholder interviews conducted by the team canvassed the opinions of newly elected commune councillors, district chiefs, provincial governors, senior officials from key ministries and representatives from donors, international organisations and internationally funded Cambodian NGOs. A sampling of only about 40 people in a three-week period cannot claim to be comprehensive or representative, nevertheless the consultations yielded rich and valuable information. (See Appendix 4 for a selection of quotes from the interviews).

Interviewees in the provinces, especially at commune level, were less able to imagine how a four-year research programme might be designed. Most of their comments, therefore, were in the form of current concerns regarding the reforms rather than recommendations regarding the shape of the research programme. Foremost amongst these concerns was a wish for more clarification of their roles and responsibilities, and a concern that they might not receive sufficient resources to be able to respond to the expectations which the elections and the promise of reform have created. These comments particularly related to the lack of implementing sub-decrees, prakas and instructions to support the Commune Administration and Commune Electoral laws.

National level officials stressed that there were many key issues that need to be addressed. They talked about the capacity and the resources that will be needed in order to implement the reforms, and also of the need for a system of fiscal transfers that would achieve horizontal equity. All were enthusiastic about a research programme that would help to assess the performance of the reforms and that would offer suggestions on how to adjust policies to suit the national situation. A metaphor frequently used by interviewees was that it is necessary to cut the hat (the reforms) to fit the head (Cambodia) and not the opposite. National level officials also stressed that the decentralisation reform process would take time. Many pointed

to the value of lessons that had been learned from the Seila programme (which some said had proved that the decentralisation seed would grow in Cambodian soil). On the other hand, some persons cautioned that not all of the government's efforts should be directed at commune or provincial level. Reasons mentioned were firstly, the need for national programmes run by line ministries. Secondly, some felt that directing too many resources at commune councils before they had adequate experience and training could kill the reform.

Most of the international voices, especially those with long association with the decentralisation reforms, expressed support for the research and for the general thrust of the reforms. Interesting comments were made comparing progress in Cambodia with other countries, and suggesting that thus far the reforms in Cambodia are relatively well-designed and coherent and more advanced than some longer standing programmes in the region. There were differences between some who hoped that CDRI's research would be primarily focused on programme monitoring and others who hoped that it would achieve more distance from programme and be more academically oriented. It is clear from interviews that there is a need for greater consultation and cooperation between agencies in order to avoid duplication and to benefit from the synergies between programmes.

Some Cambodians voiced concern about the political commitment to reform and fears that the reform may be used to further political interests and power, and they questioned whether genuine local empowerment would be allowed in practice. These persons recommended that the CDRI research programme monitors implementation and compliance with the legislation that has been passed. Interestingly, this was rather similar to the main recommendation coming from supporters of the reform within the government who also would like to see CDRI focus on monitoring implementation in the early stages, in order to provide feedback on whether the programme design was appropriate.

3.4. Theoretically and Empirically Based Approaches to Previous Experiences of Decentralisation[14]

Decentralisation has become the 'silent' development dogma of the 1990s, with most developing countries having launched some sort of decentralisation reform (cf. Manor 1999). And although both project evaluation reports and academic research are burgeoning, systematic, methodologically sound and rigorously researched reviews are relatively few. Two bodies of literature have hitherto dominated the debate. The first is the research/evaluations that have been carried out in close relation to development projects, conducted or commissioned by various multilateral donor agencies. The second consists of more social science-oriented academic research. The former includes the UNDP, World Bank, USAID, UNCDF, and GTZ (eg. Rondinelli 1981; Litvack et al 1998; Burki et al 1999; Fukasaku & Hausman 1998; Prud'homme 1994; World Bank 2000; Yusuf 2000; Blair 2000; Kullenberg et al 1997; Porter & Martin Onyach-Olaa 2001). The latter is more diverse and overlaps the former to some extent, including writers such as Crook & Manor (1994; 1998), Manor (1999), Blair (1995; 2000), Turner & Hulme (1999), Cohen & Peterson (1999), Crook & Sverrisson (1999), and Tendler (1997). Some are particularly interesting due to the geographical/cultural proximity (eg. Arghiros 2001; Turner 1999), or because they study processes resembling the one in Cambodia (eg. Horvath 2000, studying local government reforms in formerly socialist countries, or Golola 2001, studying similar processes in Uganda, whose history in part resembles Cambodia's).

[14] This is a summary of the Literature Review in Appendix 2.

The reasons that decentralisation reform has becoming more common are to be found in the combination of *expanding democratic political systems*, the need for *more efficient state machineries*, and the need to manage *increasingly complex societies* (with increasingly complex problems). Decentralisation has been analysed as the response to demands for increasing local democracy (Diamond 1999; cf. Blair 2000; cf. Azfar 1999), as a possible way to alleviate poverty (Crook & Sverrison 1999; Bossuyt & Gould 2000), and as a way to make state administration more efficient (Putnam 1993; Cohen & Peterson 1999; cf. Ostrom et al 1993; Uphoff 1999; Azfar et al 1999; Faguet 1997). Decentralisation is typically perceived as *desirable* and *necessary*; what makes it *possible* is that it is, as both Manor (1999) and Arghiros (2001) point out, acceptable to the right as well as to the left, to the ones wanting to reduce the state machinery as well as to the ones wanting to enhance it, it does not necessarily require additional resources, and a lot of development problems could be evaded, as seen from the central level (cf. Schurman 1996).

There is no overall consensus in the literature on what 'decentralisation' means; one writer even suggests that due to this confusion, the term should be given up altogether (Conyers 1990). However, the most important and obvious terminology distinction is between upward and downward accountability. Or:

- *Deconcentration* (or administrative decentralisation) is when agents of higher levels of government move into lower level arenas but remain accountable to upper levels of government.
- *Devolution* (or democratic decentralisation) is the transfer of resources, authority, and tasks to lower levels of government, which are largely or wholly independent on central (upper level) authorities and are basically downwardly accountable, determined by popular elections.

The term 'decentralisation' covers both deconcentration and devolution. This terminology was originally invented by Rondinelli (1981) and developed by Parker (1995), and is generally practised in the literature. It is fully compatible with the one that has evolved in Cambodia too.

The historical approach to decentralisation has discursively been overwhelmingly positive; so positive that almost every writer now feels compelled to start his/her endeavour by noting that decentralisation is problematic. Indeed, historic evidence supports such a reservation.

Box 2: Possible advantages of democratic decentralisation

- Political education; the population is broadly educated in terms of democratic and participatory practices.
- Training in political leadership; the cadre of political leaders is greatly enhanced.
- Political stability; if the 'masses' are allowed to take part in the political agenda-setting, there is less risk for violent or otherwise destabilising outbreaks of discontent.
- Economic equality; if the poor are allowed to veto the leaders, there is increased chance of establishing pro-poor policies.
- Accountability; local leaders cannot hide behind distance and inaccessibility, rendering the chances of accountability higher.
- Responsiveness; local authorities possess local knowledge allowing them to act more distinctly.

(Freely elaborated from Turner & Hulme 1997:157)

The most obvious critique of decentralisation processes is perhaps that they do not automatically change the content of politics; good governance does not appear as soon as decentralised authorities are established, neither does broad-based participation. Another alarming fact is that evidence of local development and poverty alleviation as a result of decentralisation is relatively difficult to come across in the literature. Crook & Sverrisson (1999) is an interesting study which outlines a number of cases and a number of different outcomes in terms of poverty alleviation, and analyses why outcomes differ. Bossuyt & Gould (2000) perform a similar study, but with a more limited sample. What these studies have in common (also with Blair 2000, and Crook & Manor 1998) is a belief that with a more educated approach under a disciplined regime (central and local), decentralisation possesses a great potential, but also that this is intrinsically complex and difficult to achieve. This turns the searchlight – in order to monitor local governance and poverty alleviation – on central political will (to pursue and oversee) and the overall framework of the reform, but also on the *local level technical/institutional capacity* to perform properly (Putnam 1993; Fiszbein 1997; Blair 2000; Azfar et al 1999; Faguet 1997; Uphoff 1999; Crook & Manor 1998).

Juxtaposing the theoretical findings with the design of the actual Cambodian reform, we can tentatively conclude that the reform is quite well-designed, seemingly avoiding typical traps such as decentralising responsibility without resources, aiming at decentralisation but ending with deconcentration, or failing to establish systems for downward accountability. The drawback is, of course, that decentralisation processes commonly look better on paper than in practice, and it is obvious that the Cambodian reform is still in very early stages of implementation. Moreover, both local democracy and poverty alleviation are explicit goals of the reform, and as suggested above, these are not easily achieved. Rural Cambodia may, furthermore, contain a number of features which may make decentralisation more difficult to achieve than might be the case in other places. Perhaps the most critical aspect of the entire reform is how the newly established state agencies will perform. Particularly in the short term, the performance of the commune councils will be key to the success of the reform.

3.5. CDRI's Experience with Governance Research

The Research Programme at CDRI has undertaken six years of research since its establishment in 1996. These efforts have laid the foundation for CDRI's current recognition as a leader in conducting independent, non-partisan policy research in Cambodia.

CDRI's research priorities are the result of broad consultation among Cambodian stakeholders and members of the international community working to support Cambodia in its development. These priorities are set down in a three-year research framework. The overall theme of CDRI's research framework for 1998-2000 was: "*Cambodia's transformation in a regional context – getting the incentives right.*" This emphasised the role of "incentives" for political, economic and social transformation in Cambodia. The theme of the second research framework the period 2001-2003 is, "*Cambodia's Reforms and Strategies towards Poverty Reduction*". Both frameworks reflect the importance attached to reform and good governance and recognise its importance for rebuilding a post-conflict society and institutional infrastructure, for optimising development reforms, and for attracting investment.

In 1999 CDRI, undertook a study to better understand governance in Cambodia, which was commissioned by the Asian Development Bank. Titled, *Cambodia: Enhancing Governance*

for Sustainable Development, this project was carried out from September 1999 to March 2000, in close collaboration with the Council of Ministers and the Ministry of Economy and Finance. The study examined issues for the reform of governance, and selected five areas as special case studies of reform: (1) public finance; (2) public administration; (3) decentralisation; (4) judicial and legal reform. Recommendations from this study have been integrated into the Royal Government of Cambodia's Governance Action Plan.

Other governance related research includes a number of studies on land tenure and land conflict issues. Among these, a study, entitled: *"Social Assessment of land in Cambodia"*, was commissioned by the Ministry of Land Management, Urban Planning and Construction (MLUPC) in 2001, with the aim to contribute to a better understanding of land issues in Cambodia and to provide input for new land policy.

Other CDRI Governance related studies include:

- Technical Assistance and Capacity Development in an Aid Dependent Economy: The Experience of Cambodia, August 2000.
- An Investigation of Conflict Management in Cambodian Villages, A Literature Review, October 2001.
- The Nature and Causes of Conflict Escalation in the 1998 National Election, January 2000.

CDRI is currently working on two research projects with broad governance implications. The first is commissioned by the Canada-Cambodia Legislative Support Project and involves establishing a baseline of Current Parliamentary Practice. The second is a long-term programme for Poverty Monitoring and Analysis, under the umbrella of the Ministry of Planning and the Council for Social Development.

CDRI research is broadly disseminated in and outside Cambodia, and serves as the basis of numerous seminars and policy dialogues organised by the Institute and involving a broad range of stakeholders and policy makers in Cambodia.

4. Four Potential Research Themes

The above inputs warrant a large number of issues and themes to be researched. However, in order to be rigorous as well as to remain realistic in terms of scope, priorities have to be identified. It must also be remembered that what is suggested here is not the *monitoring* of a process, but rather an attempt to carry out *research* with high policy relevance. Below, *four key research themes* are outlined, which in combination cover most of the issues raised above. They will be further developed and focused in the sub-sections that follow. These also constitute a dynamic part of the proposal. Under the proposed themes, more research is called for than can be carried out by this immediate undertaking. This dilemma is partially addressed by defining the research themes content-wise, attaching the respective key research questions. Questions under Theme 3 and 4, have been divided[15] into 'Category A', which contains

[15] (CDRI Note) - Although questions are presented in categories A, B, and C, it is evident that there is considerable overlap between them, and that isolating them in the manner proposed could leave some significant gaps in the research. It will be a priority of the Programme Manager, once recruited, to review and fine tune the research framework to ensure that priority issues are adequately addressed and that synergies between themes are fully exploited.

questions of immediate concern covered by this plan and its proposed funding, and 'Category B', which constitutes questions that need to be looked into further. Category B funding has to be sought from other sources or may be done by other parties. A 'Category C' has also been defined which constitutes key in-depth studies, which could be carried out on request, possibly in collaboration with other actors, and preferably by academic research. Theme 1 requires a realistic and comprehensive approach whereas Theme 2 could be addressed, given the suggested research approach, through a broad range of questions to be explored.

The first theme is the scrutiny of the *overall decentralisation design*. This is largely a desk study, which assesses the content and context of the decentralisation reform as far as it has been determined. The second is the *institutional performance* of all institutions and on all levels involved in the reform, as well as their interaction, although the commune level, including vertical and horizontal flows, is expected to attract the major interest. This constitutes policy analysis concerned with 'output'[16]. The third theme, researches 'outcome', i.e. economic and political consequences of decentralisation, here labelled *poverty reduction and local development*. Fourthly, the nature and quality of *political participation and local governance* will be assessed (see fig. 1).

The first theme is the obvious point of departure for the entire process and the key for the long-term consequences of the reform as well as for the medium-term input to the anticipated revision of the current regulatory framework. Theme three and four are the key justifications for this (and most other) decentralisation reform. Theme two is the intermediary between the reform goals and actual outcomes. Thus combined, the four themes cover the key steps of the process. This will be further complemented by a process of *overall analysis*, resting on the diverse findings from the various themes and interpreting what this implies in a comprehensive sense.

Given the conditions of the research field and the nature of what is to be studied, the research will be:

- *exploratory*; i.e. it will be hypothesis-generating (rather than hypothesis-testing) and it will seek to produce new and more exact fields of generating knowledge.

- *problem-oriented*; i.e. it will identify the key problems for research in the Cambodian context (as opposed to being theory-steered, arriving with a fixed theory), although it will seek guidance in theoretical and experience-based processes elsewhere.

- *Gender* sensitive; i.e. gender disaggregation of data and analysis shall be possible, and both genders will be represented in the research teams. (particularly important when researching gender-sensitive issues).

- *holistic*; i.e. it will eventually view the entire arena and put the findings of the individual themes and cases back into the big picture (in order to be useful for policy makers).

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[16] In line with the terminology used by Robert Putnam in his pioneering study of the development of democracy in Italy, 'output' is used as a measure of policy performance, whereas 'outcome' is seen as a measure of societal change (equivalent to 'impact' in the development discourse) assessing empirical consequences of the changing local government (Putnam 1993, Ch. 3).

- *flexible*; this follows from the above, and although initial research plans will conclude their cycles, frequent instances of reflection, consultation, revision, and adaptation will take place.

A further development of the themes, which *justifies*, *describes*, *outlines* the respective *research approach*, lists *other activities of similar nature* that are on-going and which need to be inter-linked, follows here below. The field methodology to be applied is elaborated in Chapter 5.

4.1.Theme 1: Decentralisation Design – Analysing Regulatory Issues and Internal Coherence of the Reform

Justification: Theme 1 is justified by the combination of the weight given in literature to the design of a reform of this nature (eg. World Bank 2000; Manor 1999), the explicit need for this as articulated by inter alia various government sources, and the obvious lack of theories/models/previous experiences under which the reform has been constructed. Another very concrete reason for choosing this theme is that substantial parts of the reform have not yet been determined. It is likely that this process will take several years to conclude – a process in which research of the type suggested here, could provide valuable input. The implementation of the reform programme is a process that will be exceedingly complex and in need of external reflection, which individual legislators cannot be expected to provide on their own. Finally, it is also likely that Theme 1 will generate important questions and insights for the three other themes.

Content: It will contain the issues stated below:

- The analysis of the standards of the Cambodian decentralisation/deconcentration reform in an international comparison, seeking to identify vulnerable aspects in the short and long term.

- The fit between of the decentralisation process and the overarching regulatory policy documents (GAP, PRS, SEDP2, etc).[17]

- The internal fit (adequacy/complementarity/compatibility/interaction) between various regulatory frameworks in the decentralisation process (Laws, Prakas, Instructions, Guidelines, etc.).

- The function and quality of central level institutions/ministries (Prakas and guidelines in existence? Supervision on demand? Release of financial resources and information?).

- The relation between decentralisation and other macro reforms, such as the reform of deconcentration, the judicial reform, and the revision of various laws related to the management of natural resource (eg. water, forest, fisheries, land).

[17] While recognising that the legitimacy of some of these documents as definers of government policy cannot be assumed. Links between strategic planning and budgeting and between budgeting and expenditure in Cambodia are notoriously weak, and the processes for developing SEDP and PRS have experienced weaknesses as well.

- The activities of the donor community in relation to the reform, in particular regarding whether there is coordinated support for national institutions, or balkanisation caused by donor competition and in-fighting.

- The compatibility between the above-mentioned frameworks and the Cambodian situation (including political culture, patronage politics, and 'extra-formal' regulation).

- A long-term strategic vision focusing on the degree to which Cambodia should decentralise (or not), and which and how government agencies should be included in this vision.

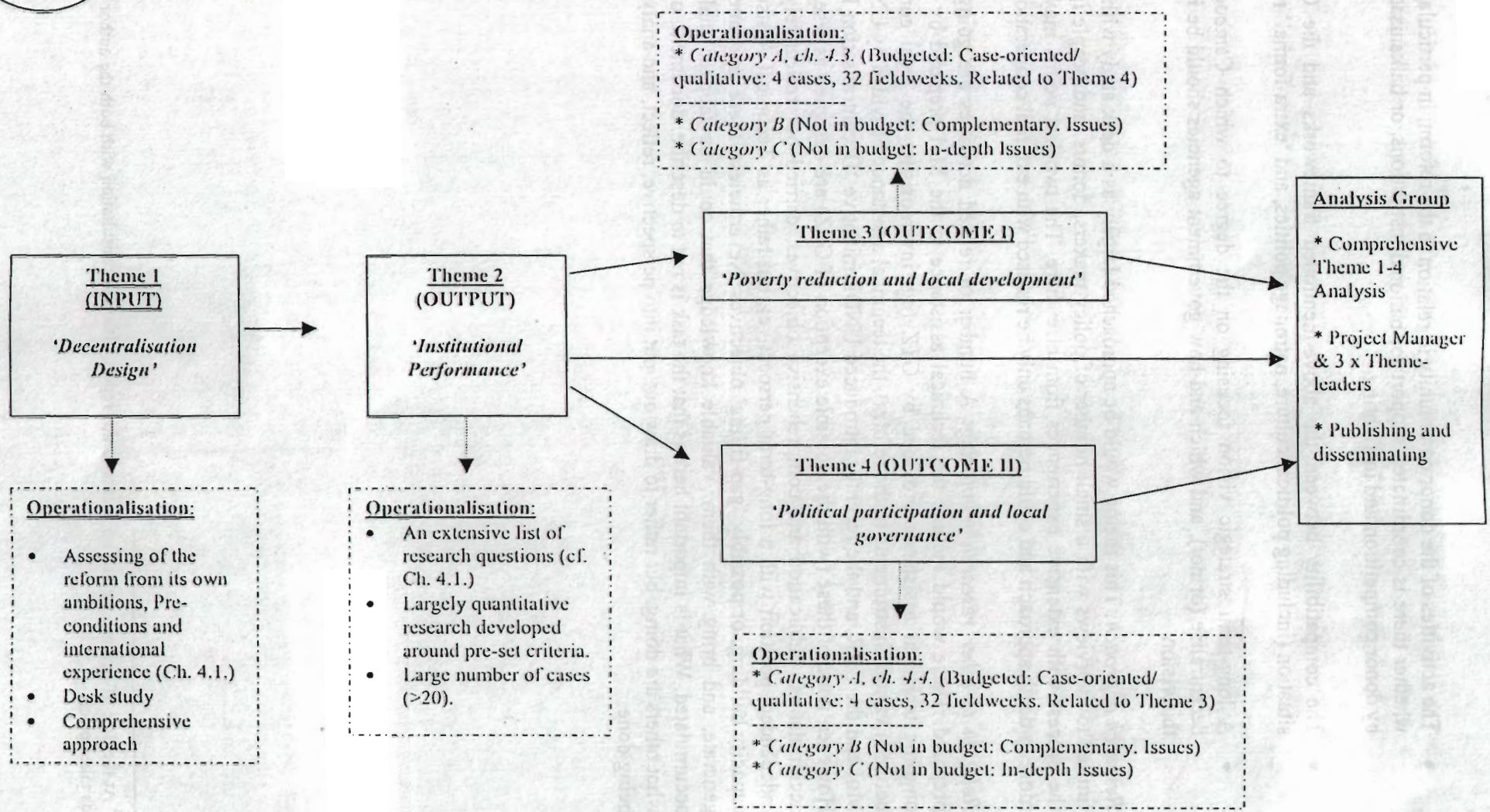
Research approach: This theme would be approached largely as a desk study with fieldwork limited to interviews with a small number of policy makers, donors, and people involved in the process with extensive experiences from elsewhere. The two last points may require a more in-depth approach and could perhaps only be realised with external cooperation/support.

Relation to other research/monitoring: A number of related activities are going on/being prepared. These would include the technical assistance to the MoI prepared by ADB, the ongoing technical assistance provided by GTZ (eg. inventorising the legal compatibility between various instruments in the reform), the technical assistance provided by UNDP to the MoI and the CAR, and the recently introduced UNDP initiative 'Decentralisation Review'.[18] However, none of these (with the possible exception of GTZ) are designed as research (with accumulation, publication and comprehensive objectives, carried out reflectively from an independent position with a long-term perspective), but rather as Technical Assistance with capacity building, or possibly 'gap-filling' objectives. Nevertheless, these assistance projects generate, and bring with them, valuable knowledge that could be tapped, analysed, and accumulated. What is important here is that the task is not to describe, document, or replicate what others are doing, but rather to draw out, put into perspective, reflect, and analyse what is being done.

[18] At the time of writing, we had no access to this report, although consultation with both the author and UNDP has taken place.

Fig. 1

SUGGESTED RESEARCH THEMES OF THE DECENTRALISATION PROCESS



4.2. Theme 2: Institutional Performance – Output of Decentralisation Reform

Justification: In the literature on decentralisation, the issue of institutional performance and general lack of technical capacity is constantly reiterated (Blair 2000; Uphoff 1999; cf. Azfar et al 1999). More importantly, however, the most common concern in our series of interviews, from all kinds of stakeholders, is a broad uncertainty regarding the level of education of the civil servants, the technical capacity of the newly established institutions, and the efficiency/viability of their vertical relations. The new Commune Councillors interviewed in the course of this consultancy articulated a similar concern, although they see the other side of the coin; they worry that sufficient support and adequate financial resources will not arrive, disallowing them to do a good job. Finally, one of the keys to the success of Seila is the set-up of functional institutions on all levels (District excepted). The key institutions here are of course the Commune Councils and their vertical relations with other administrative levels. Other institutional performance should, however, also be assessed.

Content: This theme will focus on the output (what institutions *do*, in contrast to outcome, which *effects* do the activities of the CCs have) of the newly formed institutions, primarily (but not exclusively) the Commune Councils; the performance of the VDCs, the District Authorities as well as PoLAs should also be included.[19] Distinct criteria could be developed under the following overall questions:

- Is constituency *representation* upheld in the commune councils (particularly regarding, gender, wealth, ethnic and geographical (within commune) representation)?

- Are the Commune councils *accountable* to the electorate (focus on instances of CC-civil society interaction, CC responding to popular demand, and routines of consultations with VDCs)?

- Are *fiscal issues* being successfully managed (focus on capability to manage finances, corruption, budgetary work, local resource mobilisation, and timely arrival of resources)?

- Are arrangements for *internal institutional organisation* well-developed (Number of meetings? Internal regulations? Women participating? Bye-laws passed? Participatory methods applied?)?

- Are there internal political conflicts in the commune council impeding its functioning? (Are all elected members taking part of the Commune Council work? Are there CC members from different parties?)

- Are PoLAs established? (Number of meetings? Under which framework? Activities?)

[19] This research task is more oriented towards gathering quantitative data over a limited set of criteria (as compared to Theme 3 and Theme 4. Therefore, a larger number of questions can be pursued under this theme as compared to the others. For instance, in relation to each question, three-four vital criteria could be developed that would give a rough overview of the performance (cf. Table 1). Under this heading, there is no division into 'Category A', 'Category B', and 'Category C' as in the other themes. It is recommended instead that if additional resources are made available, the sample should be increased (see chapter 5) and each question should be complemented with additional criteria in order to increase validity. Having said that, additional resources are likely to be more efficiently used in the other three themes (for the funding of Category B and C in those themes).

- Are VDCs functional (Number of meetings? Working under which framework? Activities?)

- How do the *vertical relations* function between various government agencies (vis-à-vis villages and vis-à-vis the district/province/central level?)?

Research approach: The approach is mainly, but not exclusively, quantitative, purposely selecting a number of cases which are measured through a limited number of pre-set criteria developed from the questions listed above. These criteria would be quantifiable and comparative over time and between institutions. Data could be collected through a guided questionnaire, complemented by i) a standardised semi-structured interview, ii) the tracking of a limited number of development interventions from idea to implementation and, the role of the Commune councils in that process, and iii) attending various meetings.[20]

Relation to other research/monitoring: Interestingly, we have not come across any activity which would considerably overlap with this one. Possibly, the emerging (but yet not defined) M&E system of PLG/Seila (and in due time, DoLA) will contain elements of what is described above. If so, fieldwork should be coordinated and data exchanged. The second possible, but still not existent activity of relevance for this theme would be the 'Decentralisation Review', pioneered by UNDP, which is likely to contain province level capacity building at PoLA. Finally, training packages at commune level will soon emerge, which may deal with some of the topics mentioned above (but not for the purpose of research). Finally, CCSP is in the process of conducting a training identification exercise at commune level, which is likely to be of relevance for this research theme.

4.3. Theme 3: Decentralisation, Poverty Alleviation, and Local Development – Outcome of Decentralisation Reform

Justification: Theme 4.3. (and 4.4.) is ultimately justified by the RGC-stated objective of the reform (see above) and the explicit goaql to work with these issues as outlined in SEDP II, GAP, and SRP. It is, moreover, made all the more worthwhile due to, first, the urgency of the issue of local development and poverty reduction in rural areas,[21] and second, the recorded difficulties of transforming even well-intended and well-managed decentralisation reforms into tangible development outcome (cf. literature review, Appendix 2). Obviously, judging from previous attempts of poverty reduction, this is not an easy task to accomplish. To be successful, decentralisation has, eventually, to have a positive impact on development/poverty levels. If it does not, it is important to know why.

Content: It focuses on how local development is fostered (or not) and how/whether poverty is reduced (or not) by decentralisation, as well as on the social dynamics it unleashes.[22] It specifically focuses on:

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[20] These sites should coincide with the ones chosen under Theme 3 & 4, also giving Theme 2 in some places, a solid qualitative ground to base its analysis on.

[21] Where approximately 40% of the rural population live beneath the poverty line.

[22] In both Theme 4.3. and 4.4., a gender sensitive approach should be applied, allowing disaggregation of gender as well as explicitly researching if participation, benefits etc. are gender equitable.

Category A – Primary questions:

- Are VDCs conducting development work (Number of meetings? Working under which framework? Activities? Gender issues?)?
- Which development initiatives (if any) have been launched, how, and with what results (Where? Benefiting whom? Benefiting women equally? Sustainability?)? What is the relation to the activities of the decentralised authorities?
- Has the local private sector (including NGOs and small-scale companies) been supported/stimulated, and if so, how? What is the relation to decentralised authorities' activities?
- Has the quality of local development interventions improved? (How? Why? (as understood by local communities))?
- How (if at all) is the level of poverty affected? Relation to decentralised authorities' activities?

Category B – Secondary questions:

- Which kind of self-help processes and activities (if any) have been instigated and to what degree? Relation to decentralised authorities' activities?
- Have social services been delivered to the benefit of people at large? (Which services? To Whom? Benefiting women equally? Under which conditions?) What is the relation to the activities of the decentralised authorities?

Category C – In-depth issues:

- Has the introduction of decentralisation in general and Commune Councils in particular caused any changes in livelihood systems (more/less efficient, more/less diverse, more/less intense, people changing coping strategies?)?
- Has decentralisation in general, and Commune Councils in particular, had any tangible effects on reconciliation/conflict prevention in local communities/villages.[23]

Research approach: The approach here is mainly qualitative, based on lengthy stays and repeated visits in villages/communes, and with a longitudinal (over time) research design. It will derive data from qualitative interviews with focus groups and key persons, participatory observation, as well as through selected PRA/RRA methods. The particular methods could be to select individual households and follow how they fare over time, but also to track particular processes over time (such as, eg., the introduction of a minor water management scheme or a particular road construction). If deemed necessary, it could be complemented with minor surveys of a quantitative nature and the criteria utilised by UNDP in its Human Development

[23] For instance, in Öjendal (2000) it is found that in a village in Prey Veng there was a strong correlation between increased food availability and decreasing domestic violence.

Index could be utilised (although this has to be done in close cooperation with methods developed under SRP/PMA).

Relation to other research/monitoring: This theme has to pay careful attention to already existing activities; of particular importance and significance is the relation to the Poverty Monitoring Analaysis (PMA) (cf. CDRI 2001; UNDP 2002), which is setting up a major mechanism to monitor poverty reduction. The PMA does not, however, have the explicit goal to relate this to the decentralisation process as such. In fact, the two – decentralisation and PMA – could complement each other nicely. The PMA is strong on data collection and the quantitative aspects of poverty measuring, whereas it appears weaker on the qualitative aspects of understanding poverty and the assessment of particular cases[24]. It is actually designed to receive additional support from actors outside the project proper (UNDP 2001:18). For CDRI, major quantitative poverty monitoring is beyond the means of the institute, although a minor number of case studies with a qualitative approach could very well be conducted. Thus, with good coordination and mutual sharing of data and insights, a CDRI-led decentralisation research and the PMA process could complement each other excellently. The case for successful coordination is further enhanced by the fact that both projects are to a large degree under a CDRI umbrella.

4.4. Theme 4: Decentralisation and Local Governance – Outcome of Decentralisation Reform

Justification: This theme is, as 4.3. above, primarily justified by the stated objectives of the decentralisation reform and the explicit goal to work with these issues as outlined in SEDP II, GAP, and SRP. This theme is also the most highly profiled issue in the entire reform package, initially taking off with the much publicised, and thoroughly observed, commune elections. It is, however, also one of the themes in the interviews where the positive outcome of decentralisation was most frequently questioned. It is a key theme also from the point of view that 'good' local governance may eventually deliver efficient poverty reduction, thus being both an end in itself, and a means to an end, as well as the key to the local aspects of local development.

Content: The theme Decentralisation and Local Governance focuses on:

Category A – Primary questions:

- What is the quality and nature (are women participating in decision-making?) of various forms of political participation? What is the relation to the decentralised authorities?
- In what sense have political and development oriented decisions been influenced by local activities and initiatives and what have the strategies been for achieving this from the side of the civil society? What is the relation to the decentralised authorities?
- Have there been identifiable processes of local conflict resolution and reconciliation, both in relation to civil war-related conflicts and in terms of social conflicts? What is the relation to the decentralised authorities?

[24] (CDRI note) There is insufficient evidence to support this statement.

Category B – Secondary questions:

- Quality of elections, not in terms of election day observation, but in terms of scrutinising local perceptions, understanding and strategies on election-related issues.
- Degree and nature of political awareness in day-to-day village and commune politics.
- Degree and nature of general perceptions on inclusion as regards decision-making.
- Degree and nature of legitimacy enjoyed by the local government emanating from the decentralisation reform.

Category C – In-depth issues:

- Are decentralisation policies and politics affecting prevailing patron-client structures in rural areas, and if so, how?
- How have the different political parties acted locally (both vis-à-vis people at large and vis-à-vis each other)?

Research approach: The approach here is mainly qualitative, based on lengthy stays, repeated visits in villages/communes, and a longitudinal (over time) research design. It will derive data from qualitative interviews with focus groups and key persons, participatory observation, as well as through selected PRA/RRA methods. Particular methods could include repeated in-depth interviews, the 'sitting-in' on meetings, 'probing', as well as source triangulation.[25] If deemed necessary, it could be complemented with minor, local surveys of a quantitative nature.

Relation to other research/monitoring: Asia Foundation plans to carry out a major survey on local-private relations at commune level.[26] The election watchdog organisations (COMFREL and NICFEC) possess knowledge and conduct certain investigating processes. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, PLG/Seila is developing an M&E system which may be interested in similar issues as the ones mentioned above – in due time, this is also likely to be a part of DoLA's regular monitoring of the decentralisation process.

4.5. Cross-Theme Analysis

Finally, a *Cross-Theme Analysis* needs to be performed subsequent to the fieldwork and initial analysis, where various relations between the themes in focus are scrutinised. For instance, causal relations between various themes such as the impact – changes in levels of poverty as a result of improved local governance - are difficult to detect within any single theme, but would be revealed within a cross-theme analysis. This is particularly the case if the analytical framework (Matrix 1) is utilised.

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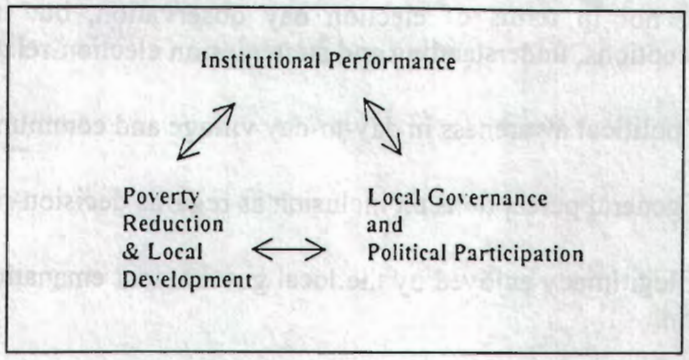
[25] Research into politically sensitive issues adds another dimension of difficulties and increases the demand for methodological awareness. The methods mentioned above may be suitable for researching such topics (cf. Bernard 1994).

[26] It is likely to be concluded before the proposed research will start, but could nevertheless be tapped into, particularly in terms of establishing a baseline.

Figure 2: Cross-theme Analysis



There are possible, or even likely, connections between the three themes, such as the significance of institutional performance for the quality of local governance, the importance of the quality of local governance for successful poverty reduction, or political participation as a key for enhancing institutional performance. This can be generally compared across the board from theme to theme, constituting in total six possible relations. In due time, this could be refined so as to include finer points such as, eg., identifying those aspects of political participation that are more important than others for improving local governance. Possibly, the results from Theme 1 should also be included – or used as an explanatory factor for the findings from above.[27]

This is a task to be carried out after initial analysis of the individual themes, and to be done in concert between Theme leaders and Project Manager.

5. Operationalisation

Decentralisation can be studied in a variety of ways, depending on knowledge, interest, themes, access to financial resources, research staff and the nature of the research fields etc. Two broad approaches are juxtaposed. The *first* approach ('inductive-qualitative') would be a largely inductive (empirically guided) process where individual case studies are empirically followed over time and where the key issues are defined and explored along the way (cf. Arghiros 2001; Tendler 1997). This approach could in turn be studied either comprehensively through long-term participatory methods (anthropological style), or over particular themes with a more targeted approach but also with a more limited range of findings (problem oriented). Either way, this approach is historically interesting and contextually defined. It is most suitable when we have 'few cases and many variables', relatively little initial knowledge, and few established theories.

The second approach ('deductive-quantitative') outlines a deductive (theory guided) approach where theoretical insights determine beforehand, what is important and which methods can be

[27] It has been suggested that CDRI would take on a capacity-building role here, much in the same way as it has done under the PMA in relation to MoP. Because PLG/Seila is looking to play that role in relation to DoLA, and they also have TA resources for achieving this, CDRI should ensure that their support is complementary and does not duplicate.

applied. This often results in an approach where a relatively large number of cases are selected and then confronted with pre-constructed and identical questions (multiple-choice questionnaires) in survey fashion (eg. Holloway 2002). Answers are often statistically treated and the value is derived by assessing frequency and comparing similar cases. The particular history in each case plays a limited role here, and depth of knowledge is questionable. It is most suitable if there are 'few variables and many cases', relatively high pre-research knowledge, and preferably an established theory that can be applied.

Both approaches can obviously produce high-quality, high-value research. The nature of the findings may however differ: the former is likely to produce more distinct findings on isolated issues, whereas the latter is likely to yield a result more open to interpretation (and debate), but also one with a more thorough and overall understanding of the process. Ideally, in different parts of the project, both approaches should be applied and combined and the analysis of the overall situation drawn from the findings of both (cf. Crook & Manor 1998; Blair 2000). Themes and approaches are contrasted here below.

Theme 1 is a desk-study, which largely focuses on the framework of the decentralisation process. As such, it applies elite interviews and analysis of first-hand written material (laws, guidelines, recorded resource flows etc.), with a source critical approach. This material is compared internally as well as to 'best practice' in the international arena (which then also requires a systematic study of other cases in the region and elsewhere). Although complex and theoretically sophisticated, this theme offers few methodological challenges (but perhaps pedagogical at the end of the process). This entire theme is in a sense a baseline study, so no particular baseline is called for here.

Theme 2 – being technical in nature and occupied with phenomena that could be readily measured, it may be most appropriately dealt with under the latter (deductive-quantitative) approach. At large, we know how we want the institutions to work and can therefore produce precise questions which could be extended to a relatively large number of cases. Moreover, the institutions are similar and readily comparable (CC-CC; VDC-VDC; PoLA-PoLA), so questions can be identical over a large sample without losing relevance. The risk of shallowness can be partially prevented by complementing with standardised, follow-up, semi-structured interviews and occasional process–tracing exercises (cf. Young 1995). It is important to establish a baseline for theme two, and advisable that a first round of fieldwork begin as early as possible.

Theme 3 and 4, on the other hand, study the empirical realities of a much greater social complexity over which we neither possess sufficient knowledge nor have established theories from which to develop credible criteria and detailed questions. These realities, and changes that may occur within them are bound to be different from area to area, and even different over time. This will require a more adaptable and reflective approach, as in the inductive-qualitative approach outlined above. Nevertheless, a baseline of sorts should be established in the first round of fieldwork.

All themes reviewed above should produce their own analysis, as well as an overall comprehensive assessment (cf. 'cross-theme analysis' above). For the latter, a special (CDRI-internal) group needs to be formed ('analysis group', see fig. 2 and below). A suggestion in overall timing and output is presented in Table 2.

5.1 Field Methods

Theme 1: This is a desk-study, analysing first-hand sources and conducting qualitative interviews with key policy makers and experts, and assessing other decentralisation processes through second-hand sources. This study runs at low-intensiveness for two years, after which an assessment is made as to whether it should be continued. This is likely to be a 'one-off' study of decentralisation in its current form. However, a similar need may emerge in relation to the next round of deconcentration or to additional decentralisation legislation.

Table 1 – Possible Criteria for Institutional Performance[28]

Examples of possible criteria for assessing 'institutional performance' (for CC)				
Democratic governance	*Fiscal issues*	*Internal institutional organisation*	*Conflict resolution*	*Inter-level relations*
* Representation in local bodies (gender, ethnic group, class, age); * Instances of public access to decision-making; * Instances of public consultation * Measures taken for enhancing service delivery	* Ability to conduct budget discipline; * Financial transfer carried out in time and with integrity; * Accounting transparent and audited; * Local resource mobilisation activities; * Corruption problems	* Full structure of the Commune council set-up; * Frequencies of meetings; * Sub-committees established; * Number of parties involved * Development committees (etc.) established	* CCs split over party lines; * Co-operation over party lines on specific issues; * Incidents of conflicts within CC? * Stalled issues? * Embargoes or walk-outs?	* Inter-level consultation; * Are resources flowing according to Prakas & Guidelines * Is training received and supervision extended? * Are VDCs established?

Theme 2: Policy analysis of institutional performance is largely, but not exclusively, covered by quantitative research. Due to the relatively well-known field and the large number of institutions of the same character (VDCs, Commune Councils, PoLAs), a questionnaire with a set of predetermined criteria can be used across the board, followed-up with a standardised semi-structured interview (cf. chapter 4.2.). Suggestions of criteria for institutional performance could be as in Table 1.

Under this approach to institutional performance, 20-25 different cases (for CCs and VDCs; 4-6 for PoLAs) per year could be covered in approximately 30 field weeks. These cases should be purposely sampled over the country. It should have a cycle of one year, after which it is adapted and repeated throughout the life of the research project. It should be carried out under the responsibility of the Theme-leader, but could subsequently progressively be carried out by field assistants and government staff.[29]

[28] This table is developed from the questions suggested in 4.2. For further inspiration, see Putnam (1993), Blair (2000), or Azfar et al (1999).

[29] The UNDP-led 'Decentralisation Review' may include a component of participatory training of PoLA staff, which could be made to fit with secondment of province level government staff for field work on this theme.

Theme 3: This theme (and the next) provides more serious methodological challenges. The most tricky may be the key difficulty of social science to distinguish different causal connections from each other and to assess their relative weight; i.e. to analyse which of all changes is related to decentralisation and to what degree. In a fundamental sense, this is not possible. However, it can be dealt with in different ways – either with sophisticated statistical methods or through qualitative research; PMA is doing the former, the decentralisation research proposed here would do the latter.

In order to assess the degree and nature of local development and poverty reduction, and the relation that this may have to decentralised governance, a combination of quantitative and qualitative data will be consulted. Under the PMA, quantitative data will be gathered which CDRI should be able to access. Given this assumption, this research would primarily seek to initially *explore* key issues, and subsequently to *explain* the outcome of the evolving results from PMA in relation to the decentralisation reform. CDRI's field research effort should then be predominantly, but not exclusively, qualitative. It is suggested that four different local case studies be selected and prepared for a long-term presence with several repeated visits. These should be purposely selected so as to represent parts of the country with different livelihood systems and ethnic composition, such as one highland, one remote, one lowland community, and one semi-urban community. The distinction between 'Seila', 'new Seila', and 'non-Seila' could also be utilised. For operational purposes, the research question presented in Chapter 4.3 could be developed into distinct interview questions.

Research methods such as social mapping, focus group interviews, and semi-structured interviews with key persons could be applied. However, the bulk of the knowledge is expected to be derived from participatory observation and in causal conversations inspired by anthropological research methods.

Initially, *behavioural* changes are assessed. However, given the evolution and increasing knowledge of the local cases, changes in *attitudes* should subsequently be included. This should be prepared for by including attitudes in the baseline study.

With this approach, one suggestion would be that fieldwork consists of 4x2 weeks/year/case, distributed over the agricultural/climatic cycle and with a special sensitivity to particular occasions (eg. elections, festivals etc.), and that it be adapted to the fieldwork under Theme 4. Due to the rather sophisticated nature of the field research under this theme, it is expected that the theme leader should spend at least half of the anticipated time in the field. The Theme leaders of Theme 3 and 4 would also spend time as field workers in each other's theme, so as to be able to make cross-analysis and provide mutual back up. Field assistants should carry out the remaining fieldwork with oversight from the Theme leaders. The possibilities of seconding government (province) staff for fieldwork could be explored. It should have a cycle of one year, after which it is adapted and repeated throughout the life of the research project.

Theme 4: Unlike the former, this theme does not have a massive PMA to draw on and is therefore likely to require a slightly larger research effort from CDRI. This is also reflected in the Budget (see Chapter 8).

In order to assess the degree and nature of political participation and local democracy, and the relation it may have to decentralised governance, a combination of quantitative and

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This would, in addition to being an 'on-the-job-training' for these staff, constitute a cost-effective way of carrying out research, and could serve to integrate government interests in the decentralisation research process.

qualitative data will be consulted. It is suggested that four sites be selected (preferably the same sites as in Theme 3) and prepared for a long-term presence with several repeated visits. The qualitative methods could be complemented by minor surveys over a limited number of issues, including a limited number of questions, carried out through a 'guided questionnaire'. The cases should be intentionally selected so as to represent parts of the country with different livelihood systems and ethnic composition, for instance one highland, one remote, one lowland, and one semi-urban community. The distinction between 'Seila', 'new Seila', and 'non-Seila' could also be utilised. For operational purposes, the research question presented in Chapter 4.3 could be developed into distinct interview questions.

Initially, *behavioural* changes are assessed. However, given the evolution of the local cases, changes in *attitudes* should subsequently be included. This should be prepared for by including attitudes in the baseline study.

With this approach, we suggest that the fieldwork should consist of 4x2 weeks/year/case, distributed over the agricultural/climatic cycle and with a special sensitivity to special occasions (eg. elections, festivals etc.), and adapted to the fieldwork under Theme 3. Thus, as above, due to the rather sophisticated nature of the field research under this theme, it is expected that the theme leader should spend at least half of the anticipated time in the field. The theme leaders of Theme 3 and 4 would also take time and serve as field workers in each other's theme, so as to be able to make cross-analysis and provide mutual back-up. Field assistants should carry out most of the remaining fieldwork, with oversight from theme leaders. The possibilities of seconding government (province) staff for fieldwork should also be explored. The work here should have a cycle of one year, after which it is adapted and repeated throughout the life of the research project.

5.2. Baseline Studies

Baseline studies should be carried out under Theme 2-4. For Theme 2, a baseline study should be carried out as soon as possible and on a somewhat reduced scale (in terms of communes covered and as compared to full-scale subsequent research). A baseline study could be developed from the criteria above. It is suggested that the Project Manager takes active part in this phase of the field research in addition to the theme leader in order to gather experience for future supervision and analysis (in this sense, it would also serve as a pilot study). For Theme 3 and 4, it is more difficult to establish a straightforward 'baseline'. In relation to Theme 3, a baseline on poverty will be established by PMA. In addition to this, a more qualitative assessment of the current situation needs to be performed. In Theme 4, a qualitative assessment of the current situation of local governance and political participation also needs to be established. Baseline studies for Theme 3 and 4 should be developed based on both the primary and secondary questions suggested in Chapter 4.3. and 4.4.

5.3. Analytical framework

The cases outlined above should both be independent and feed into a larger analytical frame, which will ultimately assess the overall decentralisation reform, illuminating its strengths and weaknesses.

In order to assess the value of the cases, they could be compared within each theme (relevant for theme 2-4) through the logical system of 'similarities and differences': i.e. *similar cases* can show either the *same* or a *different* outcome. If they show the same outcome, the conclusion can be drawn that cases of this sort tend to give this particular outcome and we can explain why. If they indicate a different outcome, one could conclude that it is not the pre-conditions that determine outcome and thus continue to elaborate the results. *Different cases* can likewise show either the *same* or a *different* outcome. If they display the same outcome, one can conclude that it is not the pre-conditions that determine outcome and thus continue to elaborate why. If they, on the other hand display a different outcome, the pre-conditions need to be given a certain weight and one should start to scrutinise which conditions are crucial.(see Matrix 1).[30]

[30] This is a generic logical system which was developed by John Stuart Mill in the 19th century. It can be applied to virtually all comparative case studies. It is particularly well suited for research processes which are exploratory and qualitative. If preferred, the categories 'same' and 'different' could be made more nuanced by adding categories such as 'largely same' or 'certain differences'.

Table 2: Timeline for overall research programme

	Year 1 - Month 1-2	Year 1 Month 3-6	Year 1 – Month 6-12	*Report Year 1*	Year 2 - Month 1-2	Year 2 – Month 3-12	*Report Year 2*	Year 3 Month 1-2	Year 3 Month 3-12	*Report Year 3*	Year 4	*Report Year 4*
Theme 1	Planning/ Reading/ prepara-tion	Initiating research	Research/ analysis	*Draft report*	Dissemina tion/ consulta-tion	Moving towards conclusio n of 1st phase / Theme 1	*Working paper series (concluding first cycle of Theme1)* Intern. Publ.	Redefining Theme 1, possibly as reflection on deconc. reforms	Research/ analysis	*Draft report*	Research/ analysis Dissemina-tion/ consultation	*Working paper 2 CDRI series (concluding second cycle of Theme 1) Intern. Publ.*
Theme 2	Planning/ Reading/ prepara-tion	FW 1; Establish baseline	FW 2 1 week / commune (20-25 commune s)	*Draft report by Theme leader*	Planning/ revision	FW 3 1 week/ commune (20-25 commune s)	*Working paper CDRI series*	Planning/ revision	FW 4 1 week /commune (20-25 commune s)	*Draft report 2 Internat. Publ. Based on year 1-2*	FW 5 1 week/ commune (20-25 communes) Dissemina-tion/ Draft Report	*Working paper 2 CDRI series (concluding Theme 2) Intern. Publ.*
Theme 3	Planning/ Reading/ prepara-tion	FW 1. (1x2 weeks, all sites); Est. baseline	FW2 (3x2 weeks, all sites);	*Draft report by Theme leader*	Planning/ revision	FW3 (4x2 weeks, all sites)	*Working paper CDRI series*	Planning/ revision	FW4 (4x2 weeks, all sites)	*Draft report 2 Internat. Publ. Based on year 1-2*	FW5 (4x2 weeks, all sites) Dissemina-tion/ consultation Draft Report	*Working paper 2 CDRI series (concluding Theme 3) Intern. Publ.*
Theme 4	Planning/ Reading/ prepara-tion	FW 1; (1x2 weeks, all sites); Est. baseline	FW2 (1x2 weeks, all sites);	*Draft report by Theme leader*	Planning/ revision	FW3 (4x2 weeks, all sites)	*Working paper CDRI series*	Planning/ Revision/	FW4 (4x2 weeks, all sites)	*Draft report 2 Internat. Publ. Based on year 1-2*	FW5 (4x2 weeks, all sites) Dissemina-tion/ consultation Draft Report	*Working paper 2 CDRI series (concluding Theme 4) Intern. Publ*

Analysis Team Theme 1-4		Baselines in print	----------	*Working paper CDRI series – Theme leaders + Project Manager*	---------	Ongoing exchange of data/ internal seminar series	*International publication*	Ongoing exchange of data/internal seminar series/dissemination of findings	Ongoing exchange of data/ internal seminar series/dissemination of findings	*International publication* Dissemination of findings	Ongoing exchange of data/internal seminar series/dissemination of findings	*CDRI Working paper Series – overall analysis of Cambodian decentralisation process*
Dissemination /capacity building (All)	Grounding/ Consulting with stakeholders	Discuss baseline issues with relevant actors	Involve government staff in field work; preparation Newsletter	---------	Present reports/ wrkshops	Involve government staff in field work; preparation Newsletter	----------	Presenting reports/ workshops	Involve government staff in field work; preparation Newsletter	----------	Involve government staff in field work; preparation Newsletter	*Summarise report*

FW = Field weeks

Having reached the conclusions that are attainable under this framework, we can proceed to (see also Table 2):

i) Aggregate findings to a national level;
ii) Formulate strengths and weaknesses of the process;
iii) Suggest revisions with likely impact on performance and outcome;
iv) Publish general insights of decentralisation reforms;
v) Design a new round of fieldwork based on the findings.

Thereafter, the cycles will be repeated, generating in-depth and more sophisticated knowledge.

6. Dissemination and Capacity Building

6.1. Dissemination of Findings

The proposal is designed in order to be maximum policy relevant. How this will be achieved depends partly on the findings. However, already at this stage, a number of general channels between research and stakeholders can be envisioned. The first and most obvious measure for dissemination is to arrange a number of workshops on timely issues. These could be complemented or extended into more informal and close policy discussions with the MoI, Seila, CSD and others. CCSP is another obvious forum for policy discussions. In relation to field research that has been carried out, minor workshops might be held at province level, including also people from District and Commune level; these should bear the hallmark of being dynamic, interactive, and mutually benefiting. For the benefit of the general public, as well as the research community at large, a newsletter rotating between the themes could be produced and distributed. To sum up the findings and activities during each year, an annual report could be produced, covering all four themes as well as presenting the overall analysis (cf. Table 2).

In terms of dissemination of research findings, the following may be considered:

i) Four minor open workshops/year – one per theme.
ii) One major open seminar/year – overall analysis.
iii) Two policy discussion seminars with invited government staff.
iv) A series of province based workshops in relation to completed fieldwork.
v) One annual report – all themes.
vi) One newsletter – one issue/theme/year.
vii) An attempt to publish the results internationally, as well as taking part in, and arranging, international workshops.

There is also scope for an organic dissemination of the findings through cooperation in and with numerous other activities. The most obvious suggestions are the UNDP/CDRI/MoP-led PMA process with its relation to the CSD, and the UNDP/MoI-led Decentralisation Review. Government staff will be involved in both processes and could perhaps be encouraged to participate in the activities associated with this research programme. Interaction with PLG/Seila M&E-activities is also expected. In addition,

decentralisation research staff could take advantage of workshops organised by others in order disseminate their findings.

Matrix 1 – Comparison of similar and different cases with same and different outcome

Conditions:		*Case X2* (eg. rural areas, lowland)	*Case Y2*(eg. rural areas, highland)
X1 similar to X2 **Y1 similar to Y2** **X different from Y**	*Case X1* (eg. rural areas, lowland)	1) Same outcome from similar cases	2) Same outcome from different cases
	Case Y1 (eg. rural areas, highland)	3) Different outcome from different cases	4) Different outcome from similar cases

1) 'Same outcome from similar cases' serves to add validity to the claim that the specific conditions of this case deliver the particular outcome seen here.
Example: decentralised governance has delivered increased political participation in lowland rural communities.
Conclusion: the design and mechanisms of the reform seem to work well for the lowland rural communities in Cambodia on this account.
Consequences: Are there other lowland rural communities where it does not work? If not found, the decentralisation reform could be seen as working successfully in this regard for lowland rural communities. If found, contrast with more successful cases and explain differences in outcome. Discuss policy implications.

2) 'Same outcome from different cases' suggests that external logic rules over the particular circumstances in our cases.
Example: decentralised governance has delivered increased political participation in lowland rural communities in Cambodia and in highland communities in Ratanakiri.
Conclusion: the design and mechanisms of the reform seem to work well in a variety of different communities in Cambodia on this account.
Consequences: Are there other communities where it does not work? If not found, the decentralisation reform could be seen as working successfully on this theme. Discuss policy implications.

3) 'Different outcome from different cases' indicates that local conditions may determine outcome.
Example: decentralised governance has delivered increased political participation in lowland rural communities in Cambodia but not in highland communities in Ratanakiri.
Conclusion: the design and mechanisms of the reform seem to work well for some communities but not others on this account.
Consequences: What differences in the communities create the divergence? How can the decentralisation reform be revised in order to improve performance? Discuss policy implications.

4) 'Different outcome from similar cases' indicates that uniformity of cases and/or reform cannot be taken for granted.
Example: lowland rural communities provide different results.
Conclusion: the design and mechanisms of the reform seem to work well for some communities but not others, but we do not know why. Decentralisation reform shaky on this account.
Consequences: Break down 'similar cases' into finer categories in search for why they display a different outcome. Discuss policy implications.

6.2. Capacity Building

Although this is primarily a research-oriented project, it will also have a mandate to build capacity for research, and particularly for analysis, in key partner institutions. It will play a major role in offering policy advice and in strengthening the analytical capabilities of government staff involved in the reform process. This may be achieved through various ways:

- Involve provincial staff in actual field research.
- Work closely with Provincial DoLA in planning field research as well as accounting for initial findings.
- Liase/inform government stakeholders in both planning and dissemination phases.
- Assist/supervise the research/monitoring of related government monitoring.
- On request, share data as well as research methodologies with government projects.[31]
- Mentoring of public sector counterparts
- Forum for debate

A more detailed capacity building plan will be developed by the Programme Team in the early stages of the project.

7. Administrative Structure and Budget

7.1. Overall structure

The research is planned to be both independent *and* a natural part of an ongoing policy dialogue. Besides the input into policy formulation through the direct relation to government bodies like Seila, CSD and MoI, forum like CCSP would also be a natural 'partner' where insights and arguments could be exchanged.

It is would also be advantageous to establish an 'Advisory Committee', which might suggest priorities and direction as well as provide feedback on research output. The Committee would interact with CDRI Management and the programme leaders. The Project Manager would assume overall operational responsibility for the programme on a day-to-day basis and provide guidance and oversight to theme leaders. Three core theme leaders working as a team, are envisaged at this stage.. This group, consisting of Project manager and the three Theme leaders would also be responsible for disseminating the results in various forms (see Fig. 3).

In addition, it seems likely that the CDRI management group would need some additional support, given that this project will extend the overall portfolio of CDRI considerably. This could be fulfilled by engaging the Project Manager in selected management tasks as well.

7.2. Staffing[32]

It is envisaged that the project will be led and managed by a *'Project Manager'* with overall responsibility for planning, oversight, analysis, dissemination, and consultation with various groups of stakeholders, which together with related duties would amount to a full position. The Manager would also have primary responsibility vis-à-vis the CDRI leadership for the content and quality of the research, for suitable

[31] In these cases, measures should be taken so that individuals disclosing sensitive data should not be able to be identified. The overall integrity of the research must also be protected.

[32] We recommend that as far as possible staff should be a balanced mix of men and women.

management tasks, and for planning and implementing an internal capacity building plan.

Moreover, each theme might be led by a *'Theme-leader'*. Working under the supervision of the project manager, theme leaders would be responsible for contributing to the research design, planning the field research associated with each theme, including coordination of different fieldwork, participation in fieldwork, compilation of data, performing the initial analysis, as well as taking part in the overall analysis and writing up of the research results for publication. The Theme leader should also participate actively in dissemination activities and prevalent capacity building measures. Since we suggest qualitative fieldwork of a rather sophisticated nature, the Theme leader would also take part in the actual fieldwork (less important for Theme 2). Finally, in order to build a substantial capacity in CDRI, Theme leaders would be given some time for professional development. In addition, there would be a need for additional input by *Field assistants*, the coordination of which would be under the responsibility of the Theme leader. (See Table 3 and 4 for figures). The involvement and potential secondment of *government staff*, primarily provincial staff, in appropriate activities, such as field research for example, should also be explored. This would, in addition to being a cost-effective work force, serve as an interesting organic learning process within the government structures as well as an inroad for additional dissemination and capacity building.

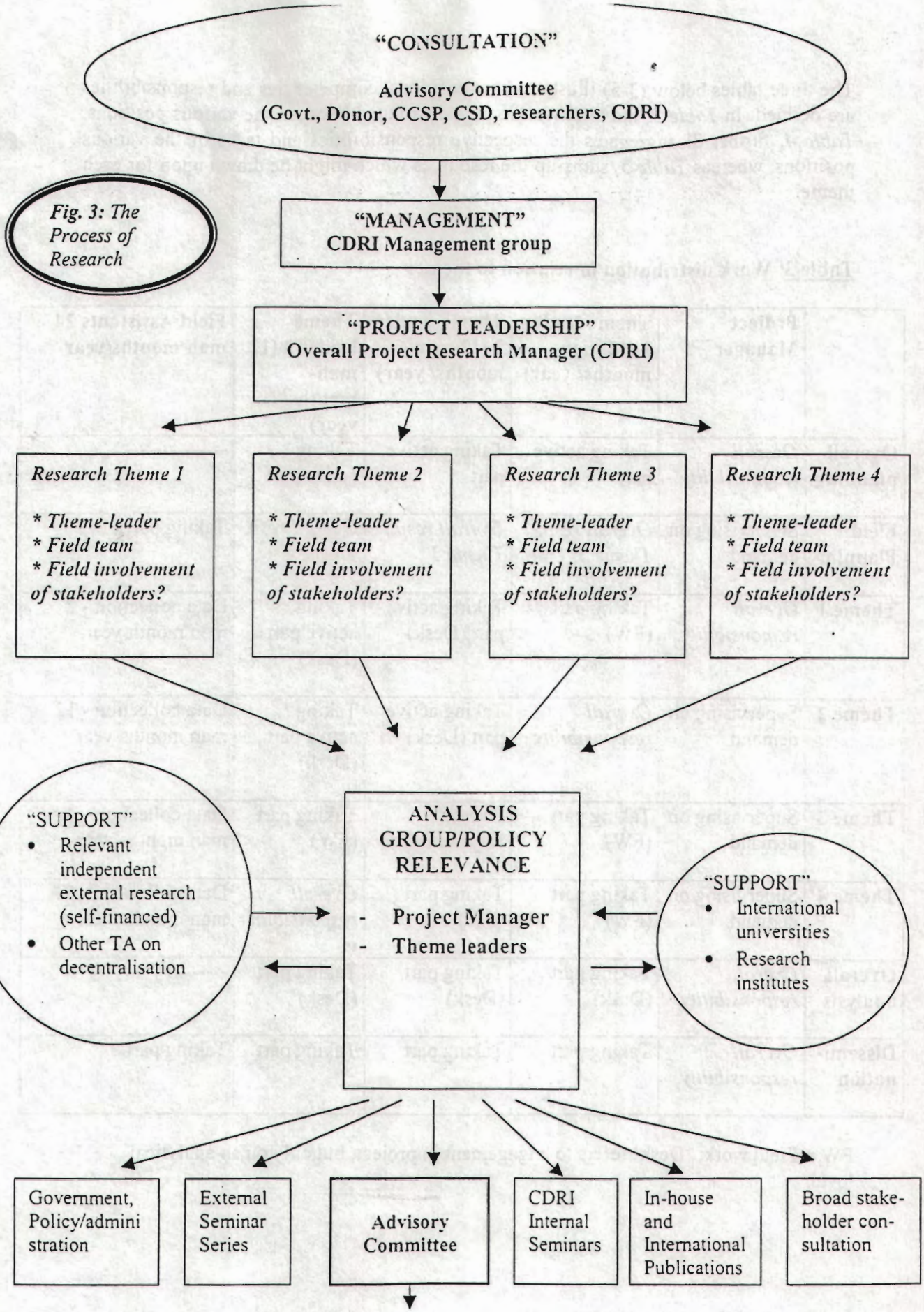

Fig. 3: The Process of Research

The three tables below (3-5) illustrate how positions, competencies and responsibilities are defined. In *Table 3*, the total workload is distributed between the various positions. *Table 4*, further disaggregates the respective responsibilities and tasks of the various positions, whereas *Table 5*, sums-up the resources which might be drawn upon for each theme.

Table 3: Work distribution in relation to themes

	Project Manager	**Theme-leader 1 (12 man-months/ year)**	**Theme-leader 2 (12 man-months/ year)**	**Theme-leader 3 (12 man-months/ year)**	**Field Assistants 24 man months/year**
Overall planning	*Overall responsibility*	Taking active part	Taking active part	Taking active part	----------
Field Planning	Supervising on demand	*Overall resp. Theme 2*	*Overall resp. Theme 3*	*Overall resp. Theme 4*	Taking part
Theme 1	*Overall responsibility*	Taking part (FW)	Taking active part (Desk)	Taking active part (Desk)	Data collection - 2 man month/year
Theme 2	Supervising on demand	*Overall responsibility*	Taking active part (Desk)	Taking active part (Desk)	Data collection - 12 man months/year
Theme 3	Supervising on demand	Taking part (FW)	*Overall responsibility*	Taking part (FW)	Data collection - 4 man months/year
Theme 4	Supervising on demand	Taking part (FW)	Taking part (FW)	*Overall responsibility*	Data collection - 6 man months/year[33]
Overall analysis	*Overall responsibility*	Taking part (Desk)	Taking part (Desk)	Taking part (Desk)	----------
Dissemination	*Overall responsibility*	Taking part	Taking part	Taking part	Taking part

FW = Field work; 'Desk' refers to engagement in project, but only on an analytical level.

[33] Theme 4 is assigned more time for field assistance, because Theme 3 will probably get assistance in data collection by the PMA.

Table 4 – Division of responsibilities and content of positions

	Key Responsibility	Other Responsibilities	Assisting with	Professional development	Level of qualifications
Project Manager 12 man-months/ year	* Overall planning (10%) * Supervision (10%) * Overall analysis (30%) of full position	* Theme 1 (20%) * Theme leader cap. building 10%) * Dissemination (10%)	* Assigned CDRI Management tasks (10%)	----------	* Intern. Ph.D * Exp. Third World/Asia * Exp. Dec. * Large network
Theme-leader 1 12 man-months/ year	Lead Theme 2 (50%) (case study planning, FW design and supervision, data compilation, initial analysis)	Take part in overall planning, overall analysis, fieldwork in other themes (20%)	*Dissemination of findings * Active participation in int'l workshops (10%)	Generate capacity for assuming project leader responsibilities within 4 yrs (20%)	Masters Degree, quantitatively oriented
Theme-leader 2 12 man-months/ year	Lead Theme 3 (50%) (case study planning, FW design and supervision, data compilation, initial analysis)	Take part in overall planning, overall analysis, field work in theme 4 (20%)	*Dissemination of findings * Active participation in int'l workshops (10%)	Generate capacity for assuming project leader responsibilities in 4 years (20%)	Masters Degree, qualitatively oriented
Theme-leader 3 12 man-months/ year	Lead Theme 4 (50%) (case study planning, FW design and supervision, data compilation, initial analysis)	Take part in overall planning, overall analysis, fieldwork in Theme 3 (20%)	*Dissemination of findings * Active participation in international workshops (10%)	Generate capacity for assuming project leader responsibilities within four years (20%)	Masters Degree, qualitatively oriented
Field Assistants 24 man-months/year	Carry out fieldwork	* Assist in dissemination of results * Assist in workshop organisation	Secretarial tasks	Participate in seminars and workshops	Extensive field experience in Cambodia
Government Staff 12 man-months/year	Carry out fieldwork	* Assist in dissemination of results	* Field logistics	Fieldwork as 'on-the-job-training'	Involved in local governance/ Seia experience

FW = fieldwork; '%' within brackets indicates parts of full position assigned to this particular task/responsibility.

7.3. External Support

It is likely that CDRI will need some external support, particularly in:

- the starting-up phase;
- preparing publications (which aim to reach beyond the CDRI internal publications);
- dissemination of findings to, and dialogue with, stakeholders.
- feedback on findings, processes, and methods.
- in-house capacity building (theme-leaders and field assistants).

Various types and sources of back-up support could further enhance CDRI capacity:

- Institutional or individual-based relations of a long-term, low-intensive nature with external universities/research institutes;
- 'Gap-filling' and sound-board function by consultants/academics hired on a short-term basis;
- Tapping into ongoing research/monitoring by other researchers/institutions;
- Liaison with other Technical Assistance projects in Cambodia and their contracted expertise.

The means for this are reserved in the budget. In the longer term, this should not be necessary, although the long-term relationships with external universities/research institutes will be beneficial even beyond the initial capacity crunch. The preferred solution would of course be one where the research institute/university has an own interest in the topic and in Cambodia.

One way of initiating this cooperation would be to invite half a dozen scholars/research institutes to an international workshop hosted by CDRI in early 2003. The invited guests could be headhunted in relation to their previous experience both from Cambodia and other relevant cases, and be encouraged to present relevant papers. This would provide both a range of interesting comparisons to draw lessons from (in the papers), as well as a chance to get in contact with research institutes/universities before committing.

7.4. Internal Capacity Building

Beyond the research findings, a project of this size and importance should also contribute to building the capacity of CDRI itself, and the key to that is human resources development. While it is likely that the Project Manager will have to be recruited externally, the obvious contenders for picking up that role (and others emerging in CDRI) for the next phase are the 'Theme-leaders'. The vision is that within four years CDRI would, partly as a result of this endeavour, possess:

- Three professionals capable of assuming full project leadership roles, including the capability to produce independent/individual writings of international standard;
- A well-developed network among international universities/research institutes;
- The capability to be active – 'sending' and 'receiving' – on, and for, the international scene;

- The capacity and credibility to be a regular policy advisor on national and local levels;
- A library on issues discussed in this research plan;
- A list of own, or together with associates, published pieces of international standard.

Table 5: Resources allocation for each Theme, Planning and Overall Analysis

Overall planning	Theme 1	Theme 2	Theme 3	Theme 4	Overall analysis
1) Project Manager (10%) 2) Theme leader 3 (3 x 5-10%)	1) Project Manager (20%) 2) Theme leader 1 (10%) 3) Theme leader 2 & 3 (2 x 5%) 4) Field assistants (2 man-months/ year)	1) Theme leader 1, Theme 2 (50%) 2) Project Manager super-vision (< 5%) 3) Field assistants (12 man-months/year) 4) Seconded government staff (6 man-months/year)[34]	1) Theme leader 2, Theme 3 (50%) 2) Project Manager super-vision (< 5%) 3) Field assist-ants (4 man-months/year) 4) Fieldwork support by Theme leader 3 (5%) 5) Seconded government staff (3 man-months/year)	1) Theme leader 3, Theme 4 (50%) 2) Project Manager super-vision (< 5%) 3) Field assistants (6 man-months/year) 4) Fieldwork support by Theme leader 2 (5%) 5) Seconded government staff (3 man-months/year)	1) Project Manager (30%)[35] 2) Theme leaders (3 x 10%)

However, to translate this into a realistic goal, measures have to be taken and resources reserved. The Theme-leaders have to be given time, supervision, additional (qualified) training, and responsibility. They also need to be handpicked and explicitly told that they are contemplated for higher positions. This could be accomplished by:

- Reserving 20% part of their duty for personal skill acquirement and professional development;
- Allocating a budget post for training courses in and outside Cambodia;
- Giving the Project Manager (as in this plan) the explicit mandate to provide supervision and on-the-job training to this group;
- Developing an explicit strategy to acquire tailor-made literature for this project.

[34] The viability of this has to be further elaborated.

[35] The assigned part of respective position does not necessarily add up to 100% due to the fact that responsibilities are also assigned outside planning, themes and analysis. See Table 4.

- Facilitating an internal forum (e.g. a two-hour meeting, once a month over a prepared text/topic) where free intellectual debate on the various topics of decentralisation is aired (driven by the sub-project team leader and the Project Manager, and open for all interested CDRI-staff. This could of course also include 'guest-lecturers' and other relevant visitors).
- Active participation in international workshops and seminars.

The addition of this project to the already existing CDRI portfolio, would amount to a critical mass, where intellectual debates could flourish even on topics beyond the immediate objectives of this particular research project. This could also be linked or integrated within the existing intellectual forum organised by the CDRI for researchers from within and outside CDRI, every two months. As such, various projects would cross-fertilize each other.

8. Budget

The Budget Table below (Table 6) is somewhat self-explanatory and is largely based on what is described in the text above. However, a few budget lines warrant some comments. One would also expect that the budget would eventually be adjusted based on the first year's experience of the project.

Under 'Salaries': Salary levels include standard benefit package. The increase in salary over time for the theme leader is intentional and based on the goal/plan to nurture the theme leaders into full-fledged project leaders within four years time (i.e. at the end of the project), as well as being justified by the need for continuity in the research project (assuming raising salaries would improve the chances for this). Efforts will be made to engage government staff from national and local levels in the project through short-term secondments and other agreements. This is not an uncommon practice of CDRI, which contributes to strengthen research capacity in partner institutions and also serves to ensure that research findings are channelled to policy makers through various doors. Both under this heading and under 'Fieldwork/Workshop Expenses', salary levels and per diem levels are calculated differently for CDRI-staff and staff seconded from public institutions. Under the latter, 'Transportation' contains part of salary for driver as well as occasional per diem.

Material: The addition of this programme to the CDRI portfolio will put a severe strain on existing physical resources of the Institute. Thus additional equipment, means of transportation, and facilities, as well as other institutional support will be necessary and are provided for in the budget. 'Literature' constitutes a rather high sum, but given the ambition of intellectual leadership and the vast, and good, academic discussion on decentralisation, rather massive literature purchases need to be made.

The heading *'International Support'* is intrinsically difficult to put a price tag on. However, the current level would cater for a total of 3-4 person-months/year of engagement in various forms from a foreign University/Research Institute, Ph. D. level, and even more if the counterpart in question has an own interest in decentralisation and/or Cambodia. Under *'Arrangements'*, the first Conference, mentioned above, aims establish a dialogue and explore areas of partnership with a (or several) University/Research Institute; Other workshops are principally for dissemination

purposes, consultation, debate, and professional interaction with other experts in the field.

'Dissemination of Findings': Publication costs cover both actual costs for editing, printing etc., but also, given that CDRI is moving onto the international scene, a system for refereeing/reviewing, which could serve as both advisor and quality guarantor[36]. To produce a Newsletter has of course its direct costs, but also the possibility of publishing this electronically should be looked into. Workshops at national as well as local level will be organised for the specific purpose of disseminating research results, raising awareness, and generating debate and feedback from stakeholders. Province-based workshops require additional financial support.

Finally, under *'Internal Capacity Building'*, 'Advanced training courses' are envisaged in order to constantly improve skills and capacity of the Cambodian key researchers in the project, preparing for the future.

[36] CDRI already uses a system of review for its publications and a number of experts in various fields have agreed to be listed as a resource for such purposes. This list could be further expanded to include experts in the field of public sector reform etc. .

Table 6: Budget[37]

BUDGET FOR THE DECENTRALISATION RESEARCH PROGRAMME	TOTAL YEAR 1			YEAR 2	YEAR 3	YEAR 4	FOUR YEARS
Budget in US$	Unit Cost	Pers./M Unit	Total Cost	Total Cost	Total Cost	Total Cost	TOTAL
I - PERSONNEL COSTS		Pers./Month					
Recruitment	5,000	1	5,000				
Project Director (12 man-months per y	6,000	12	72,000	72,000	72,000	72,000	288,000
Theme leaders (3 positions, in total 36	1,200	36	43,200	45,360	47,628	50,009	186,197
Field Assistants (24 man-months)	667	24	16,008	16,808	17,649	18,531	68,996
Seconded government staff (12 man-m	500	12	6,000	6,300	6,615	6,946	25,861
Driver	350	12	4,200	4,410	4,631	4,862	18,103
SUB-TOTAL I			146,408	144,878	148,522	152,348	587,157
II - OPERATIONAL COSTS		Pers/day or Unit					
A - FIELDWORK/WORKSHOP EXPENSES			23,750	23,750	23,750	23,750	95,000
Per Diem Fieldwork & Accommodation	35	250	8,750	8,750	8,750	8,750	35,000
Per Diem & Accommodation Field-wo	35	200	7,000	7,000	7,000	7,000	28,000
Transportation	4,000	1	4,000	4,000	4,000	4,000	16,000
International workshop travel (4 perso	2,000	2	4,000	4,000	4,000	4,000	16,000
B - Office - EQUIPMENT - MATERIAL		Unit	78,500	18,869	19,987	20,342	137,698
Office Space	500	12	6,000	6,300	6,615	6,946	25,861
Computers Desktck (4)	1,000	4	4,000	0	0	0	4,000
Computers Laptop for fieldwork (3)	1,500	2	3,000	0	0	0	3,000
Desks	200	4	800	0	0	0	800
Chairs	100	10	1,000	0	0	0	1,000
Filling Cabinet	100	4	400	0	400	0	800
Printer	1,000	1	1,000	0	0	0	1,000
Car (1)	35,000	1	35,000	0	0	0	35,000
Car Insurance	1,500	1	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	6,000
Literature	3,000	1	3,000	3,000	3,000	3,000	12,000
Stationary & Replacement	250	12	3,000	3,103	3,259	3,422	12,784
Telephone, mail, etc.	400	12	4,800	4,966	5,214	5,474	20,454
Photocopier	15,000	1	15,000	0	0	0	15,000
C - INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT		Unit	25,000	25,000	25,000	25,000	100,000
Universities/research institutes	25,000	1	25,000	25,000	25,000	25,000	100,000
	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
D - ARRANGEMENTS		Unit	16,000	8,500	8,500	8,500	34,000
Conf. With Int'l Papers	7,500	1	7,500				
Workshops (expenses for 6 invited g	2,500	1	2,500	2,500	2,500	2,500	10,000
Internal workshops	3,000	1	3,000	3,000	3,000	3,000	12,000
Interpretors	200	10	2,000	2,000	2,000	2,000	8,000
Recorders	100	10	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	4,000
E - DISSEMINATION OF FINDINGS		Unit	26,500	26,500	26,500	26,500	106,000
Publication coordination: Proof reading	250	22	5,500	5,500	5,500	5,500	22,000
Editing & Lay out in English & Khmer	200	35	7,000	7,000	7,000	7,000	28,000
Translation (4 WPs + Policy Briefs)	10	300	3,000	3,000	3,000	3,000	12,000
Publication costs (4 WPs + Policy Brie	1,500	4	6,000	6,000	6,000	6,000	24,000
Newsletter production	1,500	2	3,000	3,000	3,000	3,000	12,000
Dissemination activities	2,000	1	2,000	2,000	2,000	2,000	8,000
F - INTERNAL CAPACITY BUILDING		Unit	5,500	5,500	5,500	5,500	22,000
Advanced training courses (Theme lea	1,500	3	4,500	4,500	4,500	4,500	18,000
internal seminar with invited guests	500	2	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	4,000
G - MISCELLANEOUS	5,000	1	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	20,000
SUB-TOTAL II			180,250	113,119	114,237	114,592	514,698
III - Overhead costs (Approximately 15%)			48,999	38,700	39,414	40,041	165,278
OVERALL TOTAL (I + II + III)			375,657	296,697	302,174	306,981	1,267,134

[37] All sums in USD.

Appendix 1

Planned and Ongoing Development Interventions in Decentralisation[38]

An account of donor initiatives in respect to Devolution and Deconcentration are given below.

- **ADB** has funded a short-term consultant to assist in the formulation of the Road map of NCSC. The Bank will field a PPTA in January 2002 to formulate a loan TA in support of the decentralisation.
- **DFID** has expressed interest to cooperate with ADB on the possible decentralisation project. DFID is together with Sida and UNDP the major funder of the Seila support project Partnership for Local Governance (PLG).
- **EU** had a programming mission in Cambodia in August – September 2001 on Good Governance. The project is likely to be launched in 2003. The programme will include the following components:
    - Support to the function of CC
    - Support to the National Audit function
    - Support to land titling
- **France** has indicated some interest in decentralisation but no concrete plans have surfaced.
- **GTZ** has supported the MoI regarding the decentralisation reform process since mid 2000, with short term consultancy for formulating:
    1. Power and functions of the CC
    2. Function of commune clerk
    3. Support system regarding legality check; nation – province – commune
    4. Planning
    5. Capacity building

    The short-term consultancy referred to in item 1-3 and 5 is completed, but work to prepare the sub-degree and prakas still remains.

    GTZ is planning a long-term engagement in decentralisation, with MoI and CAR starting January 2002, comprising two long term consultants, short term TA resources and training. The project is planned for a period of 6-10 years; the first phase is three years. The project will address the following areas:
    - Policy coordination
    - Further adjustment/development of the legal framework
    - M&E functions and performance
    - Capacity building
    - Provincial supervision and support functions

    GTZ will also have a project on capacity building starting December 2001 in Kampot and Kampong Thom. All communes will be included, not only the ones supported by

[38] This section was initially developed in cooperation with Jan Rudengren, SPM-Consultants. We are grateful for his allowing us to use these findings.

GTZ as part of the Seila programme. The project may be seen as a pilot study, as the purpose is to work through the NCSC subcommittee to build capacity and to train trainers.

- **Sida** is a core funder of the Seila support project PLG, and supports human rights and democratic governance issues through the DESA project portfolio.

- **UNDP**, core funder of the Seila/ PLG support project, a decentralisation project which includes:
  - TA on decentralised financial systems (MoEF working group and NCSC- WG on Financial system).
  - Consultancy support to MoI – one position
  - Support to the commune election

- **WB** has supported or supports the decentralisation process indirectly through their assistance to the public sector reform and structural adjustment.

- **Asia Foundation** is supporting NGOs like CIHR and CCSP for capacity building and governance aiming at the CC and commune clerks,.

- **Forum Syd** supports partner NGOs that are involved in the decentralisation process, such as CHIR, WFP, Amara, KWVC, KYA. It is a member of CCSP and two working groups through NGO Forum.

- **CCSP** is an umbrella organisation for a number of NGOs, generating and disseminating information about the decentralisation process.

- **KAF** supports the decentralisation process indirectly and directly, through support to:
  - Civil society – KID, Buddism for Development, Club of Cambodian Journalists, Centre for legal research and documentation (Parliament) Media Centre at the Royal University
  - MoI since 1994, with the exception of 1997-98, in the area of National election law, law on association (not finished), decentralisation study tour. Since 1999, the MoI is supported in areas of training for law-drafting, strategic work and pilot studies.
  - Current agreement valid to 2004 includes work on: rules and procedures for CC, informal election of village chiefs, cooperation among communes (Commune Association), manual on local administration, training of trainers of commune council candidates.

Matrix 13.1 below summarises the ongoing and recently completed donors' support to the area of Decentralisation and Deconcentration (D&D). Regarding the decentralisation reform, four areas have been indicated: legal (power and functions), financial, planning and capacity building. These four areas correspond with the five sub-committees of the NCSC, with the exception of the one dealing with boundaries.

Matrix 13.1: Donor Initiatives in Decentralisation and Deconcentration

Donors	Decentralisation				Deconcentration
	Legal	Financial	Planning	Capacity	
ADB				NCSC	
DFID		Seila	Seila	Seila	Seila
Sida		Seila	Seila	Seila	Seila
GTZ	NCSC/ DoLA		NCSC/ MoP	NCSC/ DoLA	
KAF	NCSC/ DoLA		NCSC/ MoP		
UNDP	NCSC/ DoLA	NCSC/ MoEF Seila	Seila	Seila	CAR
World Bank				Seila	CAR/Pub.adm
NGOs/Civil Society	Review of commune and election laws			CC & Com. Clerks	

NCSC = National Committee for Support to the Communes
DoLA = Department of Local Administration
MoEF= Ministry of Economy and Finance
CAR = Committee of Administrative Reforms
CC= Commune Council

Appendix 2:

Decentralisation Literature Review

Decentralisation Literature Review

The literature on decentralisation is paradoxical: on the one hand, it is massive and burgeoning, on the other, solid, academic, collaborative studies are extremely rare, boiling down to a few pieces. This leaves us with a selection task. Below, we have cited the most relevant works, however, we have been more generous in the Reference Section.

Decentralisation and Local Governance[39]

Taking a development perspective, decentralisation, in all its various forms, may be characterised as the most common and important general change in state administration in the last decade (Manor 1999). A World Bank report observes, for instance, that 'out of 75 developing and transitional countries with populations greater than 5 million, all but 12 claim to be embarked on some form of transfer of political power to local units of government' (taken from Crook & Manor 1998:1). And in 1998, UNDP spent some 60% of its portfolio on governance issues of various sorts, where decentralisation issues are dominant. Consequently, we are by now able to draw some conclusion from the experiences of other processes. However, although some conclusions from these processes are obvious, we should also keep in mind that each country is different and that there are few insights that could be transferred without qualifications (cf. Bird 1990; Manor 1999; Litvack et al 1998). Nevertheless, we will briefly review a few of the most important dimensions in recent research on decentralisation.

There are predominantly two bodies of literature that have provided the major input into this debate. The first is the research/evaluations that have been carried out in close relation to development projects, conducted or commissioned by various multi-lateral donor agencies. The latter consist of more society oriented academic research. For the former, the UNDP, World Bank, USAID, UNCDF, and GTZ are among those who have dominated the debate (eg. Rondinelli 1981; Litvack et al 1998; Burki et al 1999; Fukasaku & Hausman 1998; Prud'homme 1994; World Bank 2000; Yusuf 2000; Blair 2000; Kullenberg et al 1997; Porter & Martin Onyach-Olaa 2001). The latter is more diverse and overlaps the former to some extent, including writers such as Crook & Manor (1998), Manor (1999), Blair (2000), Turner & Hulme (1997), Cohen & Peterson (1999) and Tendler (1997). Some are particularly interesting due to the geographical/cultural proximity (eg. Arghiros 2001; Turner 1999), or because they study processes resembling the one in Cambodia (eg. Horvath 2000, studying local government reforms in formerly socialist countries, or Golola 2001, studying similar processes in Uganda, whose history in part resembles Cambodia's). Others are interesting because they also specify in some detail the administrative side of the issue (cf. Turner & Hulme 1997; Cohen & Peterson 1999).

Below, we briefly review *why* decentralisation has become prominent since the 1980s, we survey the literature in order to scrutinise how 'decentralisation' has been understood, the *problems* that decentralisation has encountered around the world over the last two decades,

[39] For a lengthier review that discusses decentralisation in the Cambodian context in more general terms, see CCSP 2001.

which *methods* have been applied in the search for effective decentralisation, and, finally, how this relates to the Cambodian decentralisation process.[40]

Why decentralisation?

Decentralisation became an important concept in the 1950s and 1960s in relation to ideal models of how the newly independent post-colonial states should be run, as well as fitting evolving ideas of 'development'. The debate was spearheaded by authors like Hicks (1950; 1961), and Maddock (1963). However, most post-colonial societies were more concerned with national unity and the best use of the limited amount of technical capacity, and in reality preferred, and subsequently exercised, more centralised solutions (cf. Manor 1999:13-25). A second wave of decentralisation enthusiasm occurred during the mid/late 1970s, driven by grassroots and participation concerns, in combination with donor devotion for equity (cf. Korten 1980; Thomas 1985). Finally, in the 1990s, the decentralisation debate surfaced again, largely in relation to the overall role of the state in development given the accelerating globalisation, and in response to the discourse on repeatedly failing central government development policies prevalent in the neo-liberal literature (Burki 1999). In this debate, decentralisation has become pertinent for the pursuing of both *democracy* and *development* (cf. Cohen & Peterson 1999; Turner 1999; Turner & Hulme 1997; Crook & Manor 1998; Manor 1999).

Why, then, has decentralisation currently become such a dominant trend in the world? The answer could be summarised through three different explanations. The *first* is that a 'rights revolution' and a 'wave' of democratisation have swept over the world during the last decade(s) (Huntington 1991; cf. Diamond 1999). This process accelerated, moreover, in the early 1990s due to the end of the cold war and the lessened need to prop up non-democratic 'allies'. Deeply imbedded in these processes is the idea that *people at large have the right to participate in decision-making processes that have an impact on their own life*; as crude authoritarian systems are increasingly dismantled, participatory ones are striving to emerge. This calls not only for national level democracy, but also for good governance on a local level that is downwardly accountable and allows for broad-based political participation (Azfar 1999:28; cf. Blair 2000). *Secondly*, there is, allegedly, also a potential for a *higher administrative efficiency* in government bodies working closer to the people. Previous failures by many centralised state administrations in the development process reinforce this need. The local authorities have, in contrast to the central ones, a chance of possessing knowledge of the nature of local problems and therefore of which solutions might work and may improve the general development situation. Thus, decentralisation is often pursued for reasons of poverty alleviation (Bossuyt & Gould 2000; Crook & Sverrisson 1999). *Thirdly*, in pace with the accelerating globalisation – including *inter alia* technological development, cultural plurality, raising level of education, and sovereign access to information – the world is turning immensely complex and difficult to govern in a central and universal way. To evolve into a sophisticated developmental regime, overly centrally based governance is likely to be impossible to pursue (Robison 1996; Samaratunge 1998). This sharply increases the need to be 'at the right place' and to apply adaptable and flexible governance strategies with 'institutional pluralism' and high-standard institutional performance (Putnam 1993; Cohen & Peterson 1999; cf. Ostrom et al 1993; Uphoff 1999; Azfar, et al, 1999; Faguet 1997). Thus, institutional restructuring is closely connected not only to decentralisation as such, but also to

[40] By necessity, the review here is kept extremely brief, but as we will suggest below, a systematic comparison between the Cambodian case and the theoretical and empirical literature deserves to be a apart of the actual research.

the larger issue of state reformation in light of the ongoing globalisation process (Burki et al 1999:1; Öjendal 2002a; Newell 2002).

These factors are what make decentralisation *desirable* and *necessary*; what makes it *possible* is that it is, as both Manor (1999) and Arghiros (2001) point out, acceptable to the right as well as to the left, to the ones wanting to reduce the state machinery as well as to the ones wanting to enhance it, it does not necessarily require additional resources, and a lot of development problems could be evaded (seen from the central level). Listen to Crook & Manor:

> Economists who had been influenced by neo-liberal ideas saw it as a way of shifting power away from the centralised state which had discredited itself in their eyes through voracious rent-seeking and other abuses. Advocates of pluralist, competitive politics regarded it as a device for prying open closed systems, to give interest groups space in which to organise, compete and otherwise assert themselves. Enthusiasts for efforts by village communities to achieve things through co-operation rather than competition viewed it as a means to that end. The leaders of some autocratic regimes in Asia and Africa saw it as a substitute for democratisation at the national level, as a safe way to acquire much-neded legitimacy and grass roots support. Democratic politicians in less developed countries regarded it as a way to make government more responsive to local needs and preferences. Taken together, these diverse groups represented a potent coalition for change.
>
> Crook & Manor 1998:1

Thus, decentralisation is easily agreed upon, but it is all the more difficult to execute since at some stage of implementation the initial, imaginary consensus is bound to diminish. Moreover, there may be very different, and complex, reasons for pursuing decentralisation, such as national elites seeking to be relieved of service delivery duties, that local conflicts best be kept local, or simply that the taxation potential is so low so there is no major point for the central level to reserve that right for itself (cf. Schurman 1996). In other places, political party-based strategy-cum-manipulation has rid decentralisation of its inherent potential (cf. Arghiros 2001; Hulme & Siddique 1999). The typical failure is to be sought in half-hearted commitments from central level decision-makers and in an awkward mix of decentralisation and deconcentration measures.[41] In addition, it is far too common that decentralisation is decided upon from central level, but then assumed to take care of itself, resulting in a shaky deconcentration that never 'reaches down'. Hence, the history and an inherent feature of decentralisation is the difficulty of implementing it:

> ...more and more governments see decentralisation as a way forward, as a desirable policy. On the other hand, the implementation of that policy has mostly failed to live up to expectations.
>
> Wallis, taken from Cohen & Peterson 1999:1

[41] While, at the same time, a balanced mix of these features may constitute the best of decentralisation reforms (Manor 1999).

So, on the one hand, given the current global political economy, decentralisation is difficult to avoid,[42] on the other, simultaneously, it is difficult to implement successfully. Or in the words of Bahl:

> ...much of the world has come to see that granting some form of local autonomy is better than separatism as a policy direction/.../the greater enemy of progress now is poorly conceived decentralisation polices. Design must match objectives, and implementation must face up to the many dimensions of decentralisation.
>
> Bahl 2000:99

This quote also touches upon the relation between decentralisation, federalisation, and conflict prevention. For instance, in Indonesia, decentralisation has been seen as an explicit way of granting outlying areas certain autonomy and thereby preventing separatism (eg. Booth 2001).[43]

Moreover, the debate sometimes is phrased as if there were an open choice whether to run a state centrally or not, as if decentralisation were a one-dimensional and dichotomised process, and as if decentralisation is simply about moving power from one place to another. These perceptions, quite commonly repeated in the literature (or at least present as an unspoken assumption on the nature of decentralisation), must be seen as over-simplifications. Instead, as Turner & Hulme point out, all states are, and must be, decentralised to a certain degree due to the sheer complexity and size of a state – neither total central autocracy nor ultimate self-ruling local units (households) are feasible in a modern state (1997:151). The issue is rather where the balance should lay (Manor 1998). Furthermore, in the same system, some functions and responsibilities can be decentralised, whereas others remain under central control, obscuring any simple, one-dimensional, definition of decentralisation (cf. 'delegation' below). Likewise, decentralisation is not a zero-sum game where one level 'loses' power when another 'wins'. Instead, a well-performed decentralisation process would serve to strengthen the state administration in general, through enhanced legitimacy and improved service delivery (Öjendal et al 2001; cf. Bossuyt & Gould 2000:10).

Finally, decentralisation could be seen as the prisoner of its own expectations – which are constantly high, or even close to unrealistic. Decentralisation is commonly based on expectations that:

* Local needs will be better satisfied;
* Increased political participation will lead to poverty reduction;
* Service delivery will be enhanced;
* Social change will be facilitated;
* Bureaucratic congestion will be reduced;
* Decentralisation will improve national unity (through less central repression and greater local autonomy);
* Civic consciousness is nurtured and public accountability is enhanced due to greater political participation;
* Resource mobilisation will be more efficient when carried out by local authorities;

[42] Or impossible, as it is argued in the 1999/2000 edition of the World Development Report (World Bank 2000:124).

[43] This relates very concretely to the case of Cambodia in that former Khmer Rouge areas have been de facto given certain autonomy with the explicit aim to avoid conflicts.

* Co-ordination of development activities is better performed under decentralised rule.[44]

While the above list contains features that could very well be achieved through decentralisation, it is unlikely that any single decentralisation process would produce all of these outcomes. This highlights the issue of what 'success' should be measured against, something we will return to at a later stage.

Consequently, the challenge is to 'see it through' and adopt a reflexive attitude to the empirical evolution of the decentralisation process – a task that this research proposal suggests to contribute to. In doing that, there are a number of well-known problems that decentralisation processes tend to run into. We will address them below, but let us first discuss a few 'traditions' of how decentralisation could or should be understood.

Traditions of Decentralisation – What is Decentralisation?

There is no consensus in the literature on what 'decentralisation' means; one writer even suggests that due to this confusion, the term should be given up altogether (Conyers 1990). The key dividing line in the literature on what decentralisation entails is whether the term 'decentralisation' is a comprehensive process, encompassing all kinds of transferring of power to lower levels (thus including both devolution and deconcentration) (eg. Smith 1985), or whether this term should be divided into a more nuanced terminology (as below). Typically, this results in the usage of 'devolution' and 'deconcentration', which describe two different forms of decentralisation.

The former entails the transfer of power to local authorities who derive their power from, and are primarily accountable to, the local level; i.e., they are downwardly accountable and popularly elected. The dogmatic (or ideal) form of *devolution* (also frequently called political, or democratic, decentralisation) includes *a local body that is constitutionally separated from the central level, its own treasury; own staff and a freedom to hire and fire, a majority elected council; and, a restriction of central administrators to purely serve as advisors*. In practice, these conditions are rarely fulfilled in their entirety in decentralisation reforms (Mahwood 1987; Turner 1999). However, the process we brand *devolution*, or *political decentralisation*, should head in this direction, and be primarily accountable downwards.

The latter, *deconcentration*, represents the delegation of power from central level to various other levels which are accountable upwards. Many so-called decentralisation reforms rather resemble deconcentration, because central level governments are often not very keen to let go of their ultimate political control, and if they are, the devolved authorities are rarely vested with sufficient development resources.[45]

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[44] Freely elaborated from Smith (1993) and Turner (1999).

[45] This terminology is, in fact, quite easy to work with in the Cambodian case: there is a *political decentralisation (devolution)* process going on, and a *deconcentration* process is being prepared. What is commonly pointed out in the literature is the necessity of *timing* and *combination*; i.e. it is only when a well thought-out plan on the sharing of who does what that deconcentration and decentralisation are easily compatible (World Bank 2000; Manor 1999). It is far too common that confusion or even competition emerge between various levels of government. Timing is crucial due to the fact that there is always a risk of different levels of government acting at cross-purposes because they act on different legislation. Sometimes, 'delegation' is also used, referring to the delegation of specific tasks, often sector based. Cambodia has not yet reached the stage

To sum up, a terminology conducive with the one used in Cambodia has actually evolved, and is now fairly well-established. This terminology was originally invented by Rondinelli (1981), developed by Parker (1995), and is generally practised in the literature.

- *Deconcentration* (or administrative decentralisation) is when agents of higher levels of government move into lower level arenas but remain accountable to upper levels of government.

- *Devolution* (or democratic decentralisation) is the transfer of resources, authority, and tasks to lower levels of government, which are largely or wholly independent on central (upper level) authorities, but instead are downwardly accountable, determined by popular election.

From the 1980s and onwards, other forms of dividing the political and administrative power, such as *privatisation* and *federalisation*, are also included in the decentralisation concept (cf. Litvack et al 1998). These are, however, of limited interest in this case. But there are more ways of cutting the decentralisation cake, since it has historically been performed – and studied – for different reasons and in different traditions.

One origin of the enthusiasm for decentralisation is its relation to *'grassroots' development* (cf. Kothari 1996; Kaufman & Alonso 1996, cf. IDS 1997). A key problem in the third world, as understood from the point of view of development studies, is that people at large are excluded from resource flows, education, political influence etc, and that a key to break this self-reinforcing viscous circle would be to 'empower' people (Friedman 1992) and allow or encourage 'participation' (Chambers 1983; cf. Cornwall 2000; IDS 1999). Since political decentralisation carries such a potential – in that the state allows/encourages ordinary citizens to actively be a part of decision-making – decentralisation has become a favourite idea in these circles. Thus, political decentralisation would be a start and a cornerstone in breaking with disempowerment and marginalisation, which in turn was seen as the key for addressing underdevelopment (although not necessarily for addressing poverty defined as income) (Ralston et al 1983; Kothari 1996; Kaufman and Alonso 1996; World Bank 2000). While this idea was more forcefully carried in the 1970s and 1980s, contemporary proponents of variations of this tradition, would be eg. UNCDF, which also was visible in the early stages of CARERE2/Seila.[46] In this tradition issues of political power, of inclusion/exclusion, and of local level perceptions of the process would be key processes to study.

Another tradition in which decentralisation is prominent is economics, primarily interested in *fiscal decentralisation* (Smoke 2000; Bahl 2000; Fukasaki & Hausman 1998). In this tradition, issues of taxation rights, money transfers, resource mobilisation, and macroeconomic stability are paramount. Thus, the issue at stake here is more technical and quantitatively oriented. The technical capacity of local authorities is paramount and often a critical passage for a successful fiscal decentralisation (see Box 1). Many writers in this tradition remain sceptical to the advantages of decentralisation, stressing the design and the timing of the reform (cf. Proud'homme 1994), although advantages could also be empirically traced (cf. eg. Smoke 2000). The World Bank has been the leading agency in discussing pros

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where this turns important. However, it is provided for in the Commune Administration Law, and it will emerge when the current phase of the decentralisation process is established and more fine-tuning needs to be done.

[46] UNCDF works with 'decentralised planning', 'local development funds', and with 'financing of rural development' and explicitly acknowledges that power relations are important. Its web site is informative (www.UNCDF.org).

and cons of fiscal decentralisation. Issues to study emanating from this tradition are budget issues, corruption, resource flows, and the impact on the macroeconomic stability.

Box 1: How to design a Solid Fiscal Decentralisation Reform (and what to look out for in already designed decentralisation reforms)

1. Involve all relevant levels of government in a comprehensive reform;
2. Adapt fiscal powers to the capacity of the local authority;
3. Central government must respect its own regulations (transferring money in time, not unexpectedly withdrawing taxation rights, etc.).
4. Central level should maintain a strong ability/capacity to monitor and evaluate decentralisation;
5. Impose hard budget constraints on local authorities (budget must balance, no end-of-year bailout from central government);
6. Assign significant taxation rights to local authorities;
7. Money transfers from central level should be for a purpose that is in line with the general aim of the decentralisation reform;
8. Keep it simple (local authorities can probably not handle too complex systems);
9. In spite of a strive for predictability, a certain degree of flexibility must be maintained (since the world changes). This should be prepared for and carried out as transparently as possible;
10. Approach fiscal decentralisation comprehensively; i.e. imbed fiscal issues in relevant political and institutional issues;
11. There must be a strong domestic champion (eg. MoI of MoE).

(Freely elaborated from Bahl 2000)

A third tradition on how to relate to decentralisation is *political/administrative* and closely related to the debate on liberal democracy and good governance. According to this perspective, decentralisation has the ability to create a better, more genuine democracy and a higher quality local governance, through increased political awareness, greater local authority, accountability, and a higher degree of political stability (World Bank 2000:107; cf. Blair 2000).[47] A key factor in this tradition is local elections (and the quality of these elections) that will put pressure on local governments to perform (cf. USAID). Another key in this tradition is that with a functioning democratic decentralisation, more people are de facto involved in the common nation-state building, whereby the political stability increases. This also resembles the classic argument that local authorities are better at delivering government services, because they know what the problems are and which solutions are preferred locally. This relates to 'grassroots development' as reviewed above, but puts less stress on issues of empowerment and more on democratic procedures.

[47] The current development in the Nepal, following a decade of decentralisation efforts, calls attention to this issue.

Fourthly and finally, a 'sub-discourse' on decentralisation is whether decentralisation weakens or strengthens the state. This is a 'sub-discourse' because neither 'pro-state' nor 'anti-state' advocates are keen to spell out their ideological positions. Schurman (1996) has delivered a forceful criticism against the recent decentralisation wave, arguing that it is largely a 'cul-de-sac' for another aggressive round of neo-liberalism, eventually striving to dismantle the state in favour of the market. Indeed, some anti-state intervention triumphalism can at times be detected (cf. Burki 1999). However, the opposite argument is as common: decentralisation is a means to legitimise the local state and make it more efficient in developmental terms, and thus strengthening the bonds between the state and the people at large (cf. Kothari 1996; cf. Öjendal 2002). And indeed, it is hard, so far, to view the Cambodian decentralisation process as one weakening of the state (Öjendal et al 2001).

These various preferences for decentralisation give rise to various sorts of decentralisation, but also guides how they should be studied (see below).

Problems of Decentralisation

The historical approach to decentralisation has discursively been overwhelmingly positive; so positive that now almost every writer feels compelled to start his/her endeavour by marking that decentralisation is problematic. Indeed, historic evidence supports such a reservation.

The most obvious critique of decentralisation processes is perhaps that they do not automatically change the content of the politics; good governance does not appear as soon as decentralised authorities are established, neither do broad-based participation. Even if these authorities are locally elected, an election every five years may be a too blunt a tool to 'discipline' these authorities. And even though citizens are encouraged to participate, they may not see the use of doing that and choose to abstain (Blair 2000). Even more problematic may be the fact that the crude rules of majority democracy do not provide any incentive for pro-poor policies. An *increase* of corruption and human rights abuses are frequently noted in relation to decentralisation processes (eg. van Beek 1999; cf. Arghiros 2001; cf. Siddique and Hulme 1999). Other checks and balances must, as it seems, be established. This, in turn, constitutes a major paradox since one of the key points of decentralisation is that it should establish *independent* local authorities, and that it is likely to fail if the independence from the central level only is *pro forma*. *How and to what extent good local governance actually emerges*, which it is supposed to do under a decentralisation reform, is thus highly unclear and warrants attention.

An alarming fact is that as a result of decentralisation, local development and poverty alleviation as a direct consequence of decentralisation are relatively difficult to come across in the literature – although very few systematic studies have been carried out. The most thorough ones – Crook & Manor 1998 and Blair 2000 – note small advances, but are still optimistic given that the process is tightly managed. Of course, this may be extra tricky to compare because it is difficult to disregard the *ex ante* situation. Crook & Sverrisson (1999) is an interesting study which outlines a number of cases and a number of different outcomes, and analyses why outcomes differ. Bossuyt & Gould (2000) perform a similar study, but with a more limited sample. What these studies have in common (also with Blair 2000, and Crook & Manor 1998), is a belief that with a more educated approach under a disciplined regime (central and local), decentralisation possesses a great potential, but also that this is intrinsically complex and difficult to achieve. This turns the search light towards the central

political will (to pursue and oversee) and towards the *local level technical/institutional capacity* to perform properly (Putnam 1993; Fiszbein 1997; Blair 2000; Azfar et al 1999; Faguet 1997; Uphoff 1999; Crook & Manor 1998).

In a fiscal decentralisation, macroeconomic stability is the key concern. Taxation rights for local authorities mean lessened room for taxation by central authorities and hence less control over the total revenues. Transfers from central level to local ones cause largely the same effect. In this regard, it should be noted that local authorities have no incentives to guard macroeconomic stability. Budget deficits and central level bailing out may also pose a problem for macro-economic stability. A slow or non-existing resource transfer to local levels could be another killing factor (Smoke 2000; Bahl 2000; Fukasaku & Hausman 1998). Another difficult issue in decentralisation reforms is that, typically, responsibility is devolved but resource flows/taxation rights at large remain at the central level (or is slow or unpredictable). This creates an 'impossible' situation for the local authorities, particularly when local resource mobilisation is low or very low, and experience/technical capacity to collect taxes non-existing. When not being able to deliver what is expected, these authorities might degenerate and pressures for a re-centralisation are likely to emerge (eg. Arnold & Aziz 1996). Devolution reforms have often, in reality, turned into deconcentration reforms because the central level has not been keen, at the end of the day, to relinquish power. For this family of problems, *the design of the overall reform is crucial*. Some have regarded this as the general key issue in decentralisation reforms (World Bank 2000:107).

Finally, in all decentralisation reforms staged from the central level, which most are, there is likely to be an element of 'getting rid of problems' involved; i.e. a major incentive for the central level to decentralise is to put the responsibility for difficult and/or tiresome issues, be it poverty, local conflicts, or resource competition, somewhere else. If recklessly designed, local authorities do not have better chances of solving these conflicts, particularly if there are system-wide conflicts (such as general lawlessness, absolute natural resource scarcity, or a low taxation base) (cf. Schurman 1996; cf. Turner 1997). In other words, decentralisation reforms should be designed so as to have a real chance to address the problems it is supposed to solve, and conflicts of various sorts should not be 'buried' in the reform.

Box 2: Possible advantages of democratic decentralisation

1. Political education; the population is broadly educated in terms of democratic and participatory practices.
2. Training in political leadership; the cadre of political leaders is greatly enhanced.
3. Political stability; if the 'masses' are allowed to take part in the political agenda-setting, there is less risk for violent or otherwise destabilising outbreaks of discontent.
4. Economic equality; if the poor are allowed to veto the leaders, there is increased chance of establishing pro-poor policies.
5. Accountability; local leaders cannot hide behind distance and inaccessibility, rendering chances for accountability higher.
6. Responsiveness; local authorities possess the local knowledge allowing them to be swifter in their activities.

(Freely elaborated from Turner & Hulme 1997:157)

Methods for Studying Decentralisation in the Literature

Decentralisation can be studied in a variety of ways, depending on knowledge, interest, themes, access to financial resources, research staff, the nature of the research fields etc. Two broad approaches are juxtaposed. The first approach ('inductive-qualitative') would be a largely inductive (empirically steered) process, where individual case studies are empirically followed over time and where the key issues are defined and explored along the way (cf. Arghiros 2001; Tendler 1997). This approach could in turn be studied either comprehensively through long-term participatory methods (anthropological style), or over particular themes with a more targeted approach but also with a more limited range of findings (problem oriented). Either way, this approach is historically dependent and contextually defined. It is most suitable when we have 'few cases and many variables', relatively little initial knowledge, and few established theories.

The second approach ('deductive-quantitative') outlines a deductive (theory steered) approach where theoretical insights determine beforehand what is important and which methods can be applied. This often results in an approach where a relatively large number of cases are selected and then confronted with pre-constructed and identical questions (multiple-choice questionnaires) in a survey fashion (eg. Holloway 2002). Answers are often statistically treated and the value is derived by comparing similar cases. Each case's particular history plays a limited role here, and the depth of the knowledge can be questioned. It is most suitable when we have 'few variables and many cases', relatively high pre-research knowledge, and preferably an established theory that can be applied. It gains value if it is aimed for comparative research, and if a large field is to be surveyed.

Both approaches can, obviously, produce high-quality, high-value research. The nature of the findings may, however, differ: the former is likely to produce more distinct findings on isolated issues, whereas the latter is likely to yield a result more open to interpretation (and debate), but also one with a more thorough and general understanding of the process. Ideally, the approaches should be applied and combined in different parts of the research project and the analysis of the overall situation drawn on findings from both approaches (cf. Crook & Manor 1998; Blair 2000).

Without going into too many details, it seems obvious from the review above, that we can neither apply a one-sidedly quantitative approach, nor a one-case in-depth approach. Instead, we have to apply a methodological pluralism. This is also widely recommended by methodological authorities (eg. Bernard 1994; Ragin 1987; 1994).

There is a number of studies of decentralisation processes that are available and that have explicitly accounted for their methodological approach. Even though far too elaborate to review here, a few of these are worth looking into when fine-tuning the suggestions in this proposal. Crook & Manor (1998) is possibly the study with the most thought-out, well-accounted methodological approaches. It is explicitly comparative, making it of less relevance for this proposal. Putnam has dedicated a full chapter to discussing similar issues. It could well be used for inspiration, but both the field and the issue is different from ours. Martinussen (1995) has reviewed their methodological approach commendably and could be assessed for its usefulness in this case too.

Cambodian Forms of Decentralisation

Below, we will juxtapose the findings of the literature review above with some particular aspects of the Cambodian decentralisation as we know it so far. This provides a strong input to our overall research design proposal.

A neglected dimension of the analysis of decentralisation processes is often where the process starts; i.e. in a well-functioning centralised developmental state, with high economic growth and progressing democracy (not unusual during the last decades in East Asia), the need for decentralisation may not be that great. However, in an impoverished and over-centralised state that is seeking ways and means to enhance the democratic processes, while at the same time combating poverty, it may be strong justifications for this kind of reform. There are, thus, no context-free. Cambodia would, we think, rather fit the latter category and justification, because the reform remains strong, even though, as we will show below, major obstacles can be massed.

As was argued above, the *design* of the reform is by many viewed as critical to the overall success. The Cambodian reform has a thin ground to stand on in terms of experience, and the external assistance has been meagre – for good and bad – in the process of designing the reform. Nevertheless, the reform contains both progressive and genuine dimensions, such as: democratic features, locally guaranteed administration and investment resources, certain taxation rights, the balance between the rights and obligations of the local authorities, an established system for checks and balances, and explicit downward accountability. This, however, exists so far only on paper, and it is only a part of the total package. Many of these dimensions have never before existed in practice in Cambodia and could be foreseen to be difficult to realise. Moreover, the design of the decentralisation reform, defined as the passing of the laws on commune administration and commune elections, is only a minor part of the whole. In addition, there will be both complementary sub-decrees (Prakas) and guidelines issued, and additional reforms carried out (such as the deconcentration law, the merging of small communes, and various natural resources legislation etc.). There has also been criticism voiced against the current design on the construction of the party-bound election system and the short-term imbalance between resource allocation to Seila and the decentralisation reform. However, although reasonably designed, major challenges of how to 're-invent' the state administration still lie ahead. The work on this is currently in progress, but it is an extremely complex process which would need feedback and consultation from a research point of view.

A second difficulty in making decentralisation work in Cambodia, judging from the literature, is the limited capacity of the newly established institutions to manage the increased responsibility and complexity that comes with devolution. This could be seen in an economic, political as well as administrative sense (cf. Putnam 1993). Service delivery may falter and good governance never appear if institutions are not up to standard; and being 'up to standard' in terms of performing good local governance is something the commune authorities have never before been in Cambodia. It includes a technical capacity they currently do not have and it implies a change of local 'political culture'. This is a key aspect both in the sense that it is difficult to achieve, and of key importance for the political and economic dynamics (which, in turn, is a key for 'enforcing' accountability, etc. in viscous or virtuous circles). Starting from 'zero', change will be easy to measure/assess.

Although the Cambodian reform is obviously developmental in its character, the commune authorities will remain rather distant in ordinary people's day-to-day lives within the

foreseeable future. To allow decentralisation to make a difference is thus another challenge; i.e. neither local democracy nor poverty alleviation are self-evident outcomes of a decentralisation reform (as we have seen above). In rural Cambodia, the lack of community organisation, the weak standing of the private sector, and the hitherto elusive local state, are obvious development impediments. Poverty alleviation seems to be difficult to achieve in a tangible way through decentralisation alone, and in rural Cambodia it may be difficult to get support from other dynamic processes. Likewise, the achievement of good local governance may require an active civil society to put up citizen pressure – without this, the politically progressive aspects of decentralisation may be difficult to realise. Thus, progress in these fields needs to be monitored.

There is also an intricate relation between decentralisation and conflicts of various sorts: Nepal and Indonesia are, for different reasons, current examples of that. In Cambodia, reconciliation between different sides in the civil war, resource conflicts, as well as social conflicts of various sorts, are all relating to the decentralisation reform, which does not seem to be very prepared for this kind of social dynamic. It is obvious that resource conflicts of various sorts are very important for many rural areas, and the pressure will certainly be high on newly elected Commune Councillors to deal with these. However, there are few provisions in the preparation of the reform for this.

Finally, it seems like 'the politics of it all' is of crucial importance, and in Cambodia's politicized environment this seems to be of extraordinary importance: is the national elite prepared to let power, control and taxation rights rest with local authorities? And are they prepared to invest financial and intellectual resources in making this possible through supervision and the issuing of proper guidelines? And will political party interests – of both national and local character – wreck the good intentions of the reform?

It seems that the worst pitfalls in the design phase of the Cambodian decentralisation reform have avoided, but also that it is up against major challenges in order to reap the full benefits of a reform like this. This can only be done through distinct management and control over the process. As a link in that monitoring role, the government could reasonably utilise research on some of the issues proposed above.

Appendix 3

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Appendix 4

Stakeholder Comments

COMMENTS FROM STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATIONS

During April 2002 the Formulation Team has interviewed a range of stakeholders in the decentralisation process including national officials, provincial, district officials, commune councillors, donor representatives and technical advisers and staff of international organisations and non-governmental organisations. The following is a selection of paraphrased quotes from those conversations.

1. Ideas on method and approach

- The research should look at national and local levels, and local should not just be to commune level but also in the villages. Also look at other institutions (National Official)
- Research should be longitudinal, for instance select a few places/people to revisit and re-interview regularly. The research use cross-visits, exposure visits and workshops (Donor Technical Assistant)
- Do user surveys, survey the citizens and commune council members in order to identify your issues of research. Do comparative research on revenue raising in other countries – bring ordinary people over rather than academics. The people are the ones who will be able to tell you whether or not a law will work (International Organisation Representative).
- Does CDRI have a vision of what decentralisation will have achieved in 10, 15, 20 years time? Have you thought about this? (National Official)

2. Ideas and issues related to the content of the research

1.1.1. Inputs (about how the reform is designed and resourced)

- Legal regulations. Do they both correspond to international standards, and have they been tailored to Cambodian conditions ...There is no point in trying to monitor implementation if rules and standards have not yet been established in law (National Official).
- We need to review all laws within the sectors to see if they are already involved in decentralization and to see where they can delegate to lower levels. This will take a very long time and the five-year research must keep an eye on it. You should also keep an eye on the collaboration between NGOs and provincial departments and district offices (NGO Representative).
- There must be a fair allocation system which acknowledges differences in sizes of commune (from 200 people in a commune on Stung Treng to over 100 000 people in Poipet) and also differences in wealth and economic potential (National official)
- Another important research issue would be the interplay between donors and the government on decentralisation development (Provincial Official).

1.1.2. Outputs (about the delivery of measurable results according to plan)

- Look at technical skills, including: the ability to raise local resources; the ability to make development plans; the cooperation with NGOs (National Official)
- Monitor according to the laws. Look to see if money and equipment and people are managed according to the laws. And also check to see that the laws are democratic (National Official)

- Our commune development goals are: (1) Poverty Alleviation (2) Having participation from villagers and civil society (3) Generate local revenues. The challenges we face are (1) Lack of financial resources (2) capacity building and clear responsibility among all council members (3) the relations ship between comune council and district authorities is not clear (Commune Councillor).
- The main problem of the decentralisation progress is waiting to get the regulations from the MOI (District Chief).

1.1.3. Decentralisation and Democratic Governance (about impact)

- Downward accountability is not yet an established concept, and it will take time before that concept is really established (National Official)
- Our vision is of associations of people, progressive community based organizations (CBO) that are strengthened and active, knowing what they need, having advocacy skills, understanding laws related to local governance. And local government and CBOs collaborating in a constructive way (NGO Representative).
- We do not think that local politics is problematic because even though all of the council members are coming from different political parties, we work for our community and it's also the commune where we were born (Commune Councillor).

1.1.4. Decentralisation and Poverty Reduction (about impact)

- If the local levels implement projects, this can develop their technical capacity, which can enable them to develop new occupations, and therefore new incomes. We often see foreigners coming into Cambodia and doing business, meanwhile the Cambodians are still saying "I'm poor, I'm poor". They need to develop technical skills so that they find new forms of employment. That is key to poverty reduction (National Official).
- There are funds going through the Seila system and we see these as complementary to rural development. If the funding through Seila is effective the local capacity will be strengthened and rural development can go faster (National Official)
- By carrying out decentralisation the local authorities have the opportunity to utilise their own resources in the communities. This is also the best opportunity to promote the local democracy in the country (Provincial Governor).
- Local Government is important to deepen democracy but it does not equal poverty alleviation. Sussex University has documented this well (Donor Technical Assistant)

3. Other research-related activities mentioned

- The World Bank has two Missions planned for May. One concerned with public expenditure, which will help World Bank to decide whether to extend their support for decentralisation beyond Seila. A decentralisation/deconcentration specialist will visit in May and her findings will feed into the Poverty Reduction Strategy and other similar programmes.
- Commune Council Support Project (CCSP) intends to carry out some research looking at the impact of decentralisation on poor people before and after the election. It is collaborating with a Filipino institute.
- The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has collaborated with the Ministry of Interior to produce a 'road map to decentralisation' in Cambodia. ADB is also launching a comparative study of fiscal decentralisation and citizen participation in the East Asia region.
- The UNDP is undertaking a 'Decentralisation Review' with studies focusing on capacity building for decentralisation.

4. Ideas on linking research to policy

- The main audience is the government, not the donors. It should be policy research. (Donor Representative)
- Ask the right questions. Make some policy makers participate in the design, as well as development practitioners. Otherwise, the research will not be useful for the government (Donor Technical Assistant)
- Design of research should take into account all stakeholders and research process should include regular updates (National Official)

Terms of Reference

Project Title: Formulation of a Policy Analysis and Research Programme in Support of the Decentralisation and Deconcentration Reform Processes in Cambodia

Project Background and Context:

Cambodia remains one of the poorest countries in SE Asia and, despite considerable external assistance, is making limited progress in reducing poverty. A key challenge in reducing poverty is the creation of conditions that encourage investments and diversification of livelihood activities. The lack of infrastructure, poor market access, insecure property rights, a dysfunctional legal system and lack of financial capital discourage investment.

Ministries and departments with responsibility for supporting decentralised development lack capacity and funds. They have also largely taken a top-down approach to planning that does not sufficiently take account of local needs. Public investment has remained skewed towards urban areas (65% urban -35% rural) despite a longstanding government policy to reverse this ratio. The government has recognised that existing administrative and political structures cannot increase rural investment, facilitate bottom-up development planning or accountable governance. Therefore, the RGC has embarked on interrelated reform programmes of decentralisation and deconcentration to change this. These reforms are given prominence in the Government's reforms agenda (SEDP2, PRSP, Governance Action Plan).

Government has passed legislation to establish new local government bodies and to replace government-appointed commune authorities. Commune and sangkat (urban) councils were elected nation-wide on February 3, 2002. These bodies have development as well as administrative responsibilities and have five-year mandates. They will receive development grants and will be required to plan and implement development activities to improve residents' livelihoods. Commune councils will have the potential to meet the development needs of their communities.

Provincial departments are hindered from investing to improve services in rural areas by highly centralised financial and decision-making systems. Government is planning to give provincial departments greater authority and funds, though these reforms are not as advanced as the decentralisation reforms. Once implemented, they will also strengthen the capacity of provincial government to support commune councils.

The Seila programme (2001-2005) is the RGC's primary response to the challenge of giving commune and provincial government the capacities and the mechanisms for implementing decentralised development through local government bodies. The goal of the Seila programme is to institute effective governance in order to reduce rural poverty. It aims to strengthen decentralised and deconcentrated development administration systems, structures and concepts. It comprises a set of institutions (some of which will change under the new arrangements after the commune election) and supporting systems (planning, finance and monitoring) for managing local development in response to needs defined by communities.

The programme is responsible for strengthening institutions, implementing the decentralisation and deconcentration reforms and also for contributing to strengthening policy and regulations for these reforms and for poverty alleviation more broadly. It will continue to promote and refine the participatory planning and management principles and institutions developed in the last five years. The Seila programme will also continue to strengthen the capacity of provincial administrations to support and supervise commune authorities.

Seila' s work with provincial authorities has provided a model for more effective provincial development administration. Lessons drawn from regular monitoring and evaluations of SEILA experiences have made a significant contribution towards shaping the decentralisation process. However, evaluations of Seila have also highlighted the need for more strategic knowledge and for more broad ranging research that will inform the process of decentralisation in Cambodia as it evolves, and contribute to the formulation or adjustment of policies, poverty reduction strategies, and human resources development. RGC, donors, and civil society leaders will be informed on how the decentralisation and deconcentration reforms are being implemented and of best practice and key constraints. At the same time research will contribute lessons on how to strengthen transparency, accountability, effectiveness and participation in new local government bodies. Through thematic studies research will also provide insights and an understanding of the changes which are taking place in society as a result of the reforms.

A programme of research that is timely and systematic will enable RGC, donors, and civil society leaders to identify and solve problems as they emerge. The research will significantly improve the prospect for RGC, donors and civil society organisations to establish pro-poor local governance policies and interventions in a cost-effective way and to strengthen impact. The proposed research initiative will also build capacity for analysis and research in key national and local institutions.

Project Objectives: The main purpose of the consultancy is to formulate a fully articulated research proposal for a long term policy analysis and research programme which will inform the process of decentralisation in Cambodia as it evolves, and contribute to the formulation or adjustment of policies, poverty reduction strategies, and human resources development. The principal objectives of the formulation consultancy include:

- Conduct a literature review in order to draw on insights from other experiences of decentralisation; and to inform the choices of approaches and methodologies as well as strategies for impacting policy.

- Conduct a documentation review of the SEDPII, PRSP, PMA system, and the Governance Action Plan (GAP) in order to establish context and relevant linkages;

- Engage all principal stakeholders in the decentralisation / deconcentration in the process of elaborating the research programme; This will be done through interviews and field visits, and through a dissemination/consultation workshop;

- Prepare a report and framework that will include the following:

- Identify key stakeholders and potential partners in a policy analysis and research-cum-capacity building programme, and the nature of links between them;

- Define the content and scope of major issues to be addressed in a policy analysis and research-cum-capacity building programme;

- Propose approaches and methodologies to be used in the research programme, the nature of data collection at different levels, field surveys to be conducted and their periodicity and, the nature of the outputs to be generated;

- Elaborate potential implementation arrangements and sequential work plan with timeframe and outputs;

- Suggest a mechanism for continuous consultation and feedback to ensure that the programme remains relevant and strategic;

- Indicate potential strategies for disseminating results and influencing policies

- Elaborate a budget and resources needed to implement such a programme.

- Organise a workshop with principal stakeholders in order to present the draft policy analysis and research framework, solicit feedback and further input., and promote a broad ownership of the programme.

Project Beneficiaries: This consultancy represents the preparatory/ formulation phase of a longer-term Policy Analysis and Research cum Capacity Building Programme on Decentralisation and Local Governance. Ultimately, once all key stakeholders accept the Programme, and funding is secured, beneficiaries will be many. The RGC, donors, and civil society leaders will be able to identify and solve problems related to local governance and poverty as they emerge. The research will significantly improve the prospect for RGC, donors and civil society organisations to establish pro-poor local governance policies and interventions in a cost-effective way and to strengthen impact. The proposed research initiative will also build capacity for analysis and research in key national and local institutions. Ultimately the Cambodian people as a whole stand to gain from better informed and more timely decision-making, policies and interventions which enhance local governance and improve the quality of life.

Methodology:
The formulation consultancy will include:

- literature and documentation reviews as described above;

- interviews with principal stakeholders including: National Committee for Support of Commune Councils (NCSC), Department of Local Administration (DoLA), Council for Administrative Reform (CAR), Seila Task Force Policy Unit, Commune Council Support Project (CCSP)

- Interviews with other key stakeholders including but not limited to: newly-elected council members, provincial authorities, civil society organisations, parliamentarians,

donor agencies which have promoted decentralisation, and consultants on decentralisation in Cambodia;

- Field visits will be conducted in 2-3 provinces including Seila and non-Seila areas, to interview the stakeholders enumerated above;

- A workshop will be organised with principal stakeholders to present the draft framework and to solicit feedback and further inputs.

Resource persons: A team of three consultants, all with previous and related experience in Cambodia will implement the study under the general oversight of the CDRI Research Director, Dr. Sarthi Acharya. Their curriculum vitae are attached in annex.

- Dr. Joakim Ojendal, Lecturer/ researcher, Department of Peace and Development
- Research, Goteberg University, Sweden
- Ms. Pia Wallgren, MSc. Social Scientist, Associated with Goteberg University
- Mr. Kim Sedara, MSc. Social Scientist/ Researcher CDRI, Phnom Penh

Schedule and Workplan: (dates will be adjusted based on date of contract approval)
The process of preparing the research proposal will be divided into four distinct phases: *preparation*, *input*, *construction* and *dissemination*. a final draft of the research proposal is delivered May 3rd.

6. Preparation 1/3 – 11/3

Joakim Öjendal will:

7. hold initial talks with key persons/organisations (if available);
8. outline the structure of the proposal;
9. produce a list of people/organisations to interview;
10. outline an interview format;
11. consult with team members on key issues.
12. conduct a literature review

The output for this phase will be a key to the subsequent work

13. Input 11/3 – 9/4

Pia Wallgren and Kim Sedara

14. Carry out a series of interviews with key people in Phnom Penh including state agencies (eg. MoI and Seila), various donor organisations (eg. Sida, DFID), various development organisations (PLG, GTZ, UNDP), relevant NGOs, and possibly political parties;
15. collect and review related reports;
16. carry out a series of interviews in two-three provinces ("old" Seila province, "new" Seila province, and a non-Seila province) on province, district and commune level;
17. write up result of interviews;
18. report internally.

The output of this phase provides the core empirical input to the research proposal.

19. Construction of draft report 9 – 21/4

Joakim Öjendal will together with Pia Wallgren and Kim Sedara:

20. liaise with CDRI;
21. re-visit to key-stakeholders;
22. write the first draft of the research proposal.

The output of this phase is a draft report on approximately ten pages.

23. Dissemination and Revision 22/4 – 30/4

Joakim Öjendal will together with Pia Wallgren and Kim Sedara:

24. hold a workshop with key actors invited (eg 22/4);
25. engage with CDRI on budget issues;
26. rewrite draft report according to workshop input.
27. send revised draft proposal to external specialists & CDRI Board Directors
28. finalise proposal by May 10, 2002

The output of this phase is a final proposal of approximately twenty pages, including a budget and a brief bibliography of relevant literature on decentralisation.

IN-COUNTRY PRESENCE
Joakim Öjendal will be in Cambodia:

i) 7-9/2
ii) 10-15/4
iii) 19-23/4

Pia Wallgren will be in Cambodia:
- throughout with the exception of 13/4 – 21/4 (part time employed)

Appendix 6 Persons met

NATIONAL GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS

1. H.E Prum Sokha,	Secretary of State, MoI
2. H.E Sak Setha,	Director, General Administrative Department, MoI
3. H.E Ngy Chanphal,	Under Secretary of State, MRD
4. H.E Leap Van Den,	Deputy Director General, CDC
5. H.E Thou Thun,	Director General, Ministry of Land Management, Urban Planning and Construction.
6. H.E Say Samalen	Under Secretary of State, MoP
7. Mr. Leng Vy,	DoLA director, MoI
8. Mr. Kiv Horn,	Deputy DoLA, MoI
9. Mr. Hok Peng Se,	Project manager, CAR, Council of Ministers

NGOs AND DONORS

1. Anders Frankenberg and Agneta Danielsson.	Sida. Phnom Penh
2. Chea Vannath,	CSD (NGO)
3. Daniel Arghiros,	DFID, Phnom Penh
4. Ernesto Bautista,	UNDP, Phnom Penh
5. Julio Jeldres,	KID, Phnom Penh
6. Luc de Meester,	GTZ, Phnom Penh
7. Peter Koeppinger,	KAF, Phnom Penh
8. Pia Hammar, Luz Baastrup, and Lars Mackhe	ForumSyd, Phnom Penh
9. Puch Sothon and Shelly Slam	CCSP, Phnom Penh
10. Scott Leiper and Joanne Morrison	PLG, Phnom Penh
11. Shyam Bhurtel,	UNDP, Phnom Penh
12. Steven Schonberger,	World Bank, Phnom Penh
13. Tim Meisburger,	The Asia Foundation, Phnom Penh
14. Urooj Malik and Keo Rottanak,	ADB, Phnom Penh

PROVINCIAL AUTHORITIES

I. Kompong Speu Province

1. Mr. Pen Sambo,	Cabinet Director
2. Mr. Seur Soknal,	Director of PoLA
3. Mr. Sok Saphon,	District chief, Chbar Mon
4. Kandol Dom commune,	Council members, Chbar Mon district
5. Deputy Governor,	Phnom Srouch district
6. Rokar Thom commune,	Council members, Chbar Mon district

II. Kampong Cham Province

1. H.E. Chieng Am,	Governor
2. Mr. Kung Munichan,	Senior program Advisor, PLG
3. Mr. Tong Chailip,	Governor of Cheung Prey District
4. Mr. Yin Kimhorn,	Governor of Batheay District
5. Batheay Commune,	Commune council members, Batheay district
6. Cheung Prey commune,	Commune council members, Batheay district
7. Sotip commune,	Commune Council members, Cheung Prey district

III. Battambang Province

1. Sangke district,	Governor
2. Kong Sokuntho and Nhim Hak,	Senior Advisor, PLG
3. Ek Phnom district,	Governor
4. Mr. El Soy,	Director of Rural Development department
5. Anglong Vill commune,	Commune council members, Sangke district
6. Peam Ek commune,	Commune council members, Ek Phnom district
7. Prek Norin commune,	Commune council members, Ek Phnom district