

Study on Disaster Resilience in a village in Cambodia

- A Case Study at Pong village, Ratanakiri Province -

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1. Background and Objectives

Villages located along the Sesan River, which is one of the branches of the Mekon River, in Ratanakiri Province, Cambodia have suffered from flood damages several times caused by inappropriate water releases from the Yali Falls dam constructed in Vietnam. The massive flood damages occurred in 2009 due to the reason mentioned above.

Pong village was chosen as the study area and villagers' livelihoods were investigated through the field survey. The purpose of this study is to clarify the resilience to the flood damages at Pong village. The study focused on how villagers had recovered from the flood damages occurred in September, 2009 and drought in 2010. Furthermore, what villagers and local government had conducted to recover from these damages and cope with future events was clarified.

2. Study area

The study area, Pong village, is located along the Sesan River in Veun Sai district, Ratanakiri Province (Figure 1). Most villagers are farmers having 1 to 2 ha of agricultural land per household in average. Almost all farmlands are utilized by wet-field rice cultivation.

3. Methods

The interviews to Veun Sai government, Pong village chief and villagers were conducted in 2010 and 2011 and the following basic information was collected; population, the number of households, yearly average family income, livelihood of villagers and so on. In addition, information concerning flood in 2009 such as responsiveness of governments, actions of villagers, hydrological condition of Sesan River at the flood time, damages and post-flooding actions were examined. Furthermore, damage situations and countermeasures taken after the drought in 2010 were investigated through the field survey.

4. Results

The highest river water level rose up to 12.3m at the flood time while the normal water level is around 6m. The lands within a distance of 300-400m from the river were inundated and all farmlands in Pong village had been covered with water having 1-2m water depth almost for 3 days. Houses of villagers were also covered with water having about 1m water depth for a few days. Although the flood warning was sounded when the water level was over 8m, some villagers could not be aware of this warning due to flaw of communication system. As a results, the rice was totally damaged having almost no harvest in most households. On the other hands, by purchasing rices at markets, villagers recovered from these damages and villagers and local government started to prepare for the future natural disasters.

Although most villagers lost their rice harvest by drought in 2010, they were accustomed to the frequently occurred droughts and recovered easily by purchasing rices at markets.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

It seems reasonable to conclude that Pong villagers were subject to flood damages because of their less experiences of floods, while they had much more resilience to draught because of their long period of experiences of draughts with a kind of mutual assistance system in Pong village. Countermeasures taken by local government and villagers in Ratanakiri Province could enhance the resilience to flood to reduce a damage by future floods.

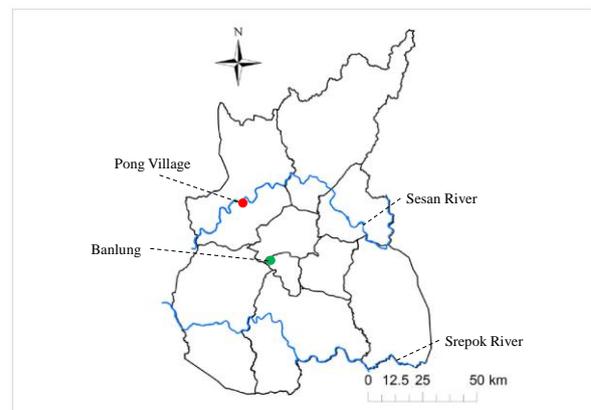


Figure 1 The location of Pong village, Ratanakiri