BETWEEN CHAMKAR AND THE KITCHEN: A LIVELIHOOD APPROACH TO THE IMPLICATION OF LAND GRABS ON FOOD SECURITY IN CAMBODIAN RURAL HOUSEHOLDS

DISSERTATION
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by
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Chamkar is a Khmer (Cambodian) word that literally translates to “field” or “cultivation land.

All pictures in this thesis were taken by the author and remain the author’s property.
Abstract

The thesis devotes special attention to the implications of land grabs practices on food security in Sein Serrey Village in Kraya Commune of Kampong Thom Province. While maintaining food security as its major focus, this thesis incorporate the phenomenon of forced eviction, one of the multi-facets of land grabs that is often sidelined in the vast majority of literatures. The methodology of this thesis comprises both a literature review and qualitative field research, the latter was conducted from January to April 2013 in Cambodia. This thesis has shown that land grabs and forced evictions caused households to lose access to productive agricultural land. The lack of access to productive agricultural land determines, or at least exacerbates, the failure of their post-resettlement livelihood strategies hence makes them more vulnerable to food insecurity. This research should thus be understood as a small but no less meaningful step in the direction of new research on land grabs, forced evictions, food security and rural livelihood in general. The findings of this thesis clearly problematize and put into conversation current debates on the correlations between these different study areas and broadly indicate ways of synergizing them.
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Chapter I

Introduction
“They [the military battalion] arrived at 7 in the morning. I was preparing the ingredients for making cakes. They told me that several trucks would come pick up and transport everybody to the new place [residential land in Sein Serrey] at three pm. Some of them went around my house. They told us to pack our belongings. No one dared to refuse, they were holding electric tasers. They would electrocute anyone who stood up [against the instructions].”

In 2009, more than six hundred families were evicted by Cambodian Government from Bonteay Rongeang, a settlement they had inhabited since 2004. The majority of them were subsistent farmers with at least 1.5ha of *chamkar* (Cambodian word for ‘farm’ or ‘field’) in the demolished Bonteay Rongeang area. As compensation for the loss of land in Bonteay Rongeang, the government granted the affected families residential land plots (20x40m). These land plots, however, do not have the optimal quality or sufficient size for subsistent farming. Consequently the villagers were forced to switch from a subsistent lifestyle to a cash economy. With no farmland, the villagers struggled to secure their livelihood. With no possibility of subsistence farming and no education background, the villagers were faced by a constant uncertainty about whether they would have sufficient money to buy food the next day.

**Land Grab**

Jean Ziegler, former UN special rapporteur on the rights to food, stated in a report that “access to land is one of the key elements necessary for eradicating hunger in the world” and that “many rural people suffer from hunger because either they are landless, they do not hold secure tenure or their properties are so small that they cannot grow enough food to feed themselves” (Ziegler 2002: p.8).

The 2009 eviction was triggered by a 8,100ha Economic Land Concession (ELC) that the government granted to a Vietnamese Rubber Company. These sorts of concessions are commonly referred to as ‘Large Scale Land Acquisition (LSLA)’ or simply ‘land grab’.

The issue of land grabs is strongly intertwined with development economics, land use, land governance, regulatory frameworks, post-colonial practice, and human rights protection (Gironde and Golay 2011). The expansion of trans-boundary LSLA was
triggered by global trends such as rising food prices and growing commitments to alternative energy sources (De Schutter 2011, Cotula et al.). It has also brought forth ongoing debates on whether proliferation of LSLAs represents an opportunity for investment and development or whether it corresponds to an exclusionary process that mainly targets already vulnerable sectors in society. Hall and German et al. argued that LSLA embodies a ‘neo-colonial dynamic’ with government and foreign investors as the main colonizers (2011). In addition to these actors, evidence suggests that state-owned companies and institutions, private individuals (including migrants), have contributed to the surge of land grabbing. Economic land concessions are mostly framed around the discourse of development, particularly improving infrastructure and wage employment. Accordingly, large-scale land acquisitions and leases are often regarded as an outcome of national governments’ desire to render the rural sector more productive (World Bank 2010).

The win-win scenario argument maintains that rural populations benefit from development and investment (FAO, 2009). Motivated by this perspective, Olivier de Schutter released in 2009 the eleven core principles to make large-scale investments in farmland work for the benefit of all stakeholders, including investors, host countries, and local communities (de Schutter 2009). However, the soft-law status of de Schutter’s guidelines has hindered their implementation. Large Scale Land Acquisition (LSLAs) and land grabs in general have therefore often been said to bring more harm than good to large numbers of populations, including to their food security (World Bank 2010).

This thesis focuses particularly on the implication of land grabs on food security in situations where forced evictions and total relocations took place.

The vast majority of land grab literatures tend to treat the Africa continent (Cotula et al 2009). While 70% of LSLAs occur in Africa (Boras and Franco 2010: p. 14), the phenomenon is also taking place at a substantial and alarming level in Southeast Asia. Literatures have been written to show the implication of LSLAs to food security. Nevertheless, there is a gap on the discussion of LSLAs that involves forced eviction and displacement of people. Forced evictions tend to lead to an increased exposure to homelessness and destitution, leaving displaced people with almost no means of sustaining their livelihood and hardly any access to compensations or remedies. Forced evictions take the discussion of LSLA’s implications on livelihood and food security into another arena because it intensifies inequalities, social conflicts, and affects the socially
and economically most vulnerable populations (Special Rapporteur on adequate housing 2007).

This thesis tries to bridge this literature gap by examining the implications of land grabs on food security of a forcefully evicted village in Cambodia through the livelihood perspective. With a GDP of 6.2%, Cambodia is one of the fastest growing countries in Southeast Asia (Global Finance 2013). Simultaneously, Cambodia has been experiencing a dramatic increase of Economic Land Concessions (ELCs), especially in the past two decades. As land becomes scarcer, disputes over it become more intense and frequent. It is estimated that more than 400,000 people have been negatively affected by land disputes since 2003 (Sochua and Wikstrom). According to statistics provided by Sahmakum Teang Tnaut—a local NGO—, 733 poor communities across the country are affected by forced eviction and 606 more communities are projected to share this fate in the future (2010).

I.I. Research Questions and Scope

This thesis is developed through the following research questions:

1. What are the main processes, contexts, and drivers of land grabs at the study area level?
2. What are the immediate consequences of land grabbing and forced eviction on local food (in)security viewed through the prism of the livelihood approach?
3. How do people adapt to the changing circumstances and environments brought by the land grabs and the forced eviction? (‘strategies’ conducted as response to land grabbing)?
4. What are the outcomes of the applied livelihood strategies on food security?

The topic of this thesis is multi-faceted and complex. It thus requires certain boundaries to gain a more nuanced understanding of the case itself. First, this thesis’ level of analysis is the household. Of course, household analyses approaches have been criticised for overlooking intra-household organizations, resource distributions, varying aspirations, as well as the idiosyncrasies of each household and its members. However, due to time and resource constraints, this thesis will not go beyond the household level. Future research endeavours will clearly make use of intra-household issues, as the researcher deems these particularly important.
Furthermore, this thesis is limited to an analysis of food security and LSLA processes in the village mentioned above. Information on national state of food security as well as land policy is provided only to put the study case in context. Food security assessments rooted in nutritional sciences and measurements of food intakes are also beyond this thesis’ scope. Instead, the livelihood approach is employed to assess the severity of food (in)security and people’s ability to feed themselves in the short term (risk to lives). This also includes an analysis of the implications of these dynamics on livelihoods and self-sufficiency in the long term (risk to livelihood) (Young et al 2001: p 4).

The thesis mobilizes a theoretical framework that comprises discussions on the various definitions of food security, Sen’s ‘theory’ of entitlements, and the livelihood approach. Despite briefly engaging the exhaustive debates on the aforementioned concepts, this thesis will not go into great detail of theoretical discussions. Having spent most of the time in the field, the researcher will mainly focus on the concepts, critics, and debates that directly relate to the study case.

The timeframe of this thesis spans from the time when the people first moved to Ou Beung Raong in 2004 to April 2013, i.e. right before the beginning of another relocation plan. Please refer to the timeframe figure in Chapter 2 for more detail.

I.II. Structure of the Thesis

The first chapter introduces the thesis scope, theoretical framework, as well as research methodologies. Subsequently, in order to paint the backdrop for the analysis, general information about food security, land policy, and land conflict at the national level is presented in chapter two. Chapter three leads us to the case study by elaborating the historical timeline of forced eviction in Bonteay Rongeang and resettlement in Sein Serrey. It also gives us general information about key elements of the rural livelihood including demography, level of education, access to housing, water, public facilities, and most importantly the seasonal changes that affected the rural livelihood in Sein Serrey. The fourth chapter offers an analysis of the ‘strategies’ applied by the villagers in response to financial shortages and the loss of farmland. The analysis starts by identifying the internal side of household livelihood and continues with different types of activities.

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1 Although Sen never attempted to construct a new theory, the conclusion of his ‘empirical study’ on famines in the 21st century was placed in opposition to other theories such as ‘food availability decline’ hence lifted to the conceptual level of debate.
conducted by the villagers of Sein Serrey. It is argued that the villagers’ main strategy is to diversify income-generating activities. Chapter four highlights the different types of households based on the combination of activities that they apply to secure their livelihood. Lastly, chapter four outlines the outcomes of the activity combinations on the household food security level.

I.III. Theoretical Framework: The Livelihood Approach to Food (In)Security

Food is one of the most fundamental human needs and has played a crucial role in establishing new forms of politics, economy and social relations. Vice versa, social and economic restructuring has reshaped people’s capacity to fulfill their nutritional requirement (Solberg et al 2008).

When subsistence economies were predominant, food security was ensured even with a very low household cash income. With the rise of modern capitalism, people gradually moved to a cash economy with the prevalence of wage labor (Parrish et al 2008). As people participated more and more in wage labor, the labor invested in subsistence economies was reduced significantly. Hence, there was a growing need to increase the level of cash income since households had to spend the money not only to purchase the means of production (farming, hunting, and fishing tools and equipment) but also food. Food consumption is then closely interconnected with income (ibid). When people failed to generate enough income to acquire food, they tend to suffer hunger or food shortage without a safety net.

I.III.I Definition

The notion of food security became a political mantra in 1970s due to the world food crisis (Maxwell and Smith 1992, p, 4). Since then, literatures have been extensively engaged the topic. International fora have also considerably examined this issue. Subsequently, the definition of food security has evolved and tends to emphasize different elements depending on time and space.

The World Food Summit first coined the concept of food security in 1974, defining it as:

“availability at all times of adequate world food supplies of basic foodstuffs to sustain a steady
expansion of food consumption and to offset fluctuations in production and prices” (UN 1975, p.6)………………………………………………………………………………………………………(1)

In 1983, FAO expanded the definition:

“ensuring that all people at all times have both physical and economic access to the basic food that they need” (FAO Committee on World Food Security 1983)…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………(2)

1986 World Bank report entitled “Poverty and Hunger: Issues and Options for Food Security in Developing Countries” also added another element:

“access of all people at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life” (World Bank 1986, p. V)……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………(3)

A decade later in 1996, The World Summit redefined food security as:

“Food security, at the individual, household, national, regional and global levels [is achieved] when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life” (FAO 1996)……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………(4)

The State of Food Insecurity 2001 then also added a new element to the definition:

“Food security [is] a situation that exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life” (FAO 2002)…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………(5)

Definition (1), which was drafted during the world food crisis in 1970s, puts more emphasize on the volume of ‘food supply’ and ‘food availability’. Starting from definition (2), the notion of ‘access’ gained as much attention as ‘availability’. This developing concern on ‘access’ during the 1980s was also fueled by Amartya Sen’s publications detailing the theory of entitlement. In 1986, the aforementioned World Bank Report
elaborated further the ‘at all time’ of food security. It introduced the notion of chronic and transitory food insecurity. Chronic food insecurity refers to a condition when people are under a continuous high risk of failure to feed themselves. It is related mostly to structural poverty and low income (Maxwell and Smith, Op. Cit., p. 15). Temporary food insecurity, on the other hand, occurs for a limited duration and is mostly caused by unanticipated events including catastrophes (ibid.). Later on, the concept is further expanded with the inclusion of cyclical or seasonal food insecurity that reflects regular or reoccurring patterns in the periodicity (ibid.). As suggested by definition (4) and (5), the definition of food security becomes more about food composition and how it meets the nutritional requirement for an active and healthy life. Personal choices and value judgments regarding food according to social and cultural aspects were also considered. During this period, criticism towards objective measurements of food insecurity were challenged due to their definitional ambiguity of what is considered ‘enough’ for an individual. Scholars and practitioners were consecutively trying to establish a precise measurement of calories requirement for each group of people with different activities in a society. Such standardizations usually fall short of their intend goals, as was the case here. People’s desire and cultural perception about the definition of ‘optimum’ were previously neglected (Pacey and Payne 1985, pp.70-71). Hence, this shift changes the type of data required to address the complex relations between factors affecting food intake and food security. An important shift could also be seen since the mid 1990s when the attention was drawn to not only international and national level of food security but also households and individuals.

This evolving definitions and shifting matters of concerns enrich the food security discourse and are elaborated in the following sections, though not in the same sequence.

I.III.II. Availability of and Access to Food: Entitlements and the Discussion of Risk

As previously mentioned, concerns about food security first occurred during the world food crisis in 1972-1974. Maxwell and Smith, who compiled more than 180 articles on food security between 1986-1991, asserted that the literature written in the 1970s mostly covered such issues as aggregate food supplies at the national and international levels (Op. Cit., p. 6). However, in the 1980s the discussion of access to food
predominated the food security discourse. This shift, it was argued, was influenced by the publications of one of the most acknowledged pioneers of this approach, Amartya Sen, with his works on food entitlement.

While claiming that his work is more empirical than normative, he argued that people control food through entitlements, which are the socially defined rights to resources of food (Sen 1990, p. 374). Entitlements can include ownership of lands used for food production, sociopolitical rights, social system which determines the distribution of food, *inter alia*. In “Poverty and Famine” (1981, p. 2), Sen reduced the types of entitlements into four:

i) ‘Trade-based Entitlement’ which refers to the right to own what one purchases through exchange of commodities with willing parties.

ii) ‘Production-based Entitlement’ which include the right to own what one produces by allocating one’s owned resources, or by hiring resources of willing parties through trade arrangement.

iii) ‘Own-labour Entitlement’ that suggest one’s right to his or her labour power and hence to self-employment (production-based entitlement) and labour force selling (trade-based entitlement)

iv) ‘Inheritance and Transfer Entitlement’, which is the right to own what is willingly given by other parties who legitimately owned it. (source! Plus you are now using British English…)

According to Sen’s perspective, hunger is a manifestation of entitlement failure. The reason can be rooted in access to land, breakdown of state function, etc. and can result in starvation *regardless of availability of food* (Sen 1986, pp. 8-16). This viewpoint provides a useful framework for analyzing the implication of the lost of land caused by LSLAs in Bonteay Rongeang on access to food of the people.

Furthermore, Amartya Sen stated that regarding fundamental rights such as food, the best point of view on how to secure them is to think in terms of capabilities. As reiterated by Nussbaum, Sen believes that the best way to secure the rights of persons in an area is to make them capable to function in that area (Nussbaum 2003, p. 37). He defines capabilities as “a set of vectors of functionings, reflecting the person's freedom to lead one type of life or another to choose from possible living.” (Sen 1992, p. 40.) Capabilities approach makes it clear that affirmative action and institutional support are
required. States need to take action when an individual or group in society, for instance, is marginalized (Nussbaum, Op. Cit., p. 38). “Functionings” itself can be defined as “the various things a person may value doing or being.” (Sen 2009, p. 75.)

Nussbaum also argues that “capabilities” are an essential element of the “entitlement” approach. The discussion of the entitlement approach is based on three conceptual categories, namely the endowment set, the entitlement mapping (e-mapping) and entitlement set (Osmani 1993, p. 3). The endowment set can be understood as the combination of tangible and intangible resources legally owned by a person. Tangible resources comprise assets such as land, animals, equipment, etc. Skill, knowledge, power, etc. can be considered as intangible resources. Meanwhile, the entitlement set can be defined as “the set of all possible combinations of goods and services (not just the one actually being enjoyed) that a person can legally obtain by using the resources of his endowment set. The use of the resources to get final goods and services may be either in the form of production, exchange or transfer.” (Nayak 2000, p. 1). This definition implies that a person will have the freedom to determine the possible combinations. In addition, resources can be utilized in different ways whether in the acts of production, exchange, or transfer. For instance, a farmer can prefer his land and other resources to provide subsistence for his family, a shoemaker may want to use his skill to produce shoes and exchange it with his daily needs, etc. E-mapping is defined as the “relationship between the endowment set on the one hand and the entitlement set on the other. Roughly speaking, it shows the rates at which the resources of the endowment set can be converted into goods and services included in the entitlement set.” (Osmani, Op. Cit., p. 4). This point of view will be utilized later in chapter four while analyzing the endowment set of the households (internal side of household livelihood) and the combination of resources as well as activities they apply to secure their livelihood in Sein Serrey.

Put simply, Sen argues that the poverty, especially famine, is caused by entitlement failure. A person suffers from failure of food entitlement when his/her entitlement set does not allow him/her to obtain enough food to avoid starvation (ibid.). Nayak argues that the failure can be initiated by endowment loss, failure of production, exchange failure, and transfer failure. For people who do not exchange to obtain food and basic needs, entitlement failure will be caused by endowment loss and failure of production. Sen calls this “direct failure”. When failures of exchange are included, it is
called “trade failure”.

Sen argues that food unavailability was not a prerequisite of hunger. He believed that hunger could occur without any change in production as long as there is an entitlement failure (Maxwell and Smith, Op. Cit, pp. 11-12). It was clear that through his study cases of famines in Bengal in 1943, as well as in Sahel and Ethiopia in early 1970s, that he positioned ‘food entitlement decline (FED)’ in opposition to ‘food availability decline (FAD)’ theory (Ibid.). As reiterated by critical scholars, what Sen claimed to be descriptive empirical researches also established a theoretical approach (disagreeing with another theoretical approach, viz. FAD) (Osmani, Op. Cit, p. 9; Devereux 2001, p.247).

Sen himself agreed to that he had underplayed the role of FAD and admitted that FED does not necessarily contradict FAD since the change of production may affect nominal incomes and cause increase in food price. Hence, the issue of food availability remains pertinent in the discussion of food security and considered as one of the sources of risk to food entitlements.

I.III.III. Units of Analysis: Households

Sen’s work on entitlements, as previously mentioned, greatly influenced the food security discourse. The view of food as a basic right that he endorsed contributed to the fact that household and individual levels were then given more attention and acknowledged as fundamental units of analysis.

Analyzing household food security, several assumptions have to be made to define the organization and structure of the household. Households used to be treated as unitary actors where all the members share preferences and interests. It was assumed they have collective resources that they allocate to meet collective purposes. Garry S. Becker calls this the ‘single-person household’ (1991, p. 20). However, this assumption has been severely criticized, and for good reasons. The new ‘consensus’ about household analysis postulates that households are not unitary entities. Each of its members has a different set of preferences when it comes to purposes and resources allocation. Moreover, the household is linked to a larger social system or network including social networks and kinships (Maxwell and Smith, Op. Cit., pp. 11-12).

Sen’s view of entitlements also led him to be criticized for understating the
importance of intra-households entitlement distributions. In his later works, he acknowledges that entitlements are not equally distributed among household members and the distribution often depends on different sets of preferences as well as the bargaining positions in the household decision-making process (1990). During food shortage, households are often forced to make decisions on food distribution amongst its members. ‘Weakest members’, i.e. those who do not contribute to household income and/or are biologically vulnerable (i.e. infants, elderlies, etc.) are not prioritized when it comes to food distribution (Devereux, Op. Cit., p.250). Economically productive adults are seen to deserve a larger share in the household’s food distribution scheme (Ibid.). As much as I believe that this notion should be underlined, this particular research excludes this discussion due to various constraints on the field. Further research should be conducted in order to include this element.

It is vital to note that household ‘boundaries’ change continuously; they are, as it were, fluid. As household compositions change as people join or leave the household, either permanently or temporarily, the food requirements of the household varies accordingly. People contributing to the household’s food pooling might be larger or smaller than the household boundaries (Niehof 2010, p. 25). This is important to note since the mobility of household members is one of the key tactics villagers in Sein Serrey utilize in order to minimize the household’s economic burden.

I.III.IV. Livelihood Approach

Conventional approaches to food (in)security view food as a fundamental need. Food is in fact usually understood as the top priority in the hierarchy of needs. By implication, ‘coping strategies’ are designed to optimize immediate consumption while the end goal is permanent access to food (Maxwell and Smith, Op. Cit.; Davies 1992).

This thesis, as outlined earlier, employs the livelihood approach to analyze food (in)security in Sein Serrey Village, Cambodia. Contrary to the conventional approach that views food as the top priority, the livelihood approach puts forth food security as one dimension of the broader concept of livelihood security. Consequently, food security strategies are then interpreted in the context of complex livelihood strategies (Maxwell and Smith, Ibid.).

In ‘Sustainable Rural Livelihoods: A Key Strategy for People, Environment and
Development’, Robert Chambers defines livelihood as:

“…[A]dequate stocks and flows of food and cash to meet basic needs. Security refers to secure ownership of, or access to, resources and income-earning activities, including reserves and assets to offset risk, ease shocks and meet contingencies. Sustainable refers to the maintenance or enhancement of resource productivity on a Long-term basis.” (ibid., p. 28)

Together with Gordon Cornway, Chambers elaborates this concept further:

“A livelihood comprises people, their capabilities and their means of living, including food, income and assets… … A livelihood is environmentally sustainable when it maintains or enhances the local and global assets on which livelihoods depend, and has net beneficial effects on other livelihoods. A livelihood is socially sustainable which can cope with and recover from stress and shocks, and provide for future generations.” (1991, p.1)

Livelihood thus-understood encompasses a combination of exchange entitlements. Hence, shocks to key entitlements may lead to food insecurity and loss of livelihood. Nevertheless, it should be noted that livelihood security does not automatically translate into food security and that household food security does not guarantee the food security of each of its members (Niehof 2010, p. 22). There are various risk sources for food entitlements including risk in employment and remunerations, health, conflicts, inter alia. Sen defines four types of shocks to entitlements: i) production based shocks, e.g. crops failure; ii) own-labour shocks, e.g. lost of jobs, decreasing wages, etc; iii) trade-based shocks, e.g. hyper-inflation, extreme decrease or increase in prices of goods, etc; iv) inheritance and transfer shocks, e.g. failure of social networks, etc (Young et al., 2001, p.4). Meanwhile, Chambers added a concept of internal side of livelihood vulnerability that affects on the household’ ability to cope with the loss of capabilities and assets (Niehof, Op. Cit., p. 26). Internal livelihood vulnerability is determined by household proportions of dependents, physical resources, as well as the quality of social, cultural, and human capital, among others (ibid.)

According to Maxwell and Smith, a household’s ‘risk profile’ (another phrase for vulnerability) depends on how their assets secure their access to food (Op. Cit., p. 14).
Assets play an important role as buffers of livelihood changes. The less assets a household owns, the more vulnerable they become to entitlement failures. Vulnerability is often caused or aggravated by social and/or political status. Moreover, corrupt and irresponsible governance can also exacerbate the hunger threat (Young et al., Op. Cit., p. 5). The risk profiling step is embodied in chapter three and four when the thesis identifies the background information about assets and different capitals of households in Sein Serrey.

While strategies for facing hunger threats depend on various variables, the livelihood approach argues that the strategies do not necessarily imply a direct effort to meet immediate food needs. Instead, as argued by Corbett, the strategies are designed to preserving assets at least until the point of destitution when all options have been exhausted (Maxwell and Smith, Op. Cit., p. 29; Devereux, Op. Cit., p. 249). If hunger is ‘persistent’, Sen’s avows that:

*People’s actual food consumption may fall below their entitlements for variety of other reasons, such as ignorance, fixed food habits, or apathy… Also, people sometimes choose to starve rather than sell their productive assets, and this can be accommodated in the entitlement approach using a relatively long-run formulation (taking note of future entitlements).* (Sen, 1991, Op. Cit., p. 50)

Along this line, De Waal in his work on Western Sudan also argued that:

*Rural people are not concerned so much to satisfy their physiological hunger as to avoid impoverishment. Only if the physiological hunger has gone well beyond the mere unpleasantness, or there are no competing demands for time and money will people turn wholly to the task of filling their stomachs. (1991, p. 69)*

Quite clearly, there is, therefore, a trade-off between immediate consumption and long-term sustainable livelihood. Ravallion supports Sen’s idea that food insecure people to some extent ‘choose to starve’ by arguing that these people are not choosing to die, which would make the asset protection pointless, but are taking the increased risk of dying (Devereux, Op. Cit., p. 249). When confronted with the choice between buying food with possible destitution afterwards and going hungry to secure future livelihood even with the chance of death, food insecure people often chose the latter strategy (ibid.). This thesis will question this analysis by De Waal and Devereux by pointing at
how villagers in Sein Serrey increased the risk of losing their assets by using it as a collateral to get loans for food.

Delving deeper into the discussion of coping strategies, it will become clear that decisions are not only determined by the potential success of the strategy but also, we should note, by the reversibility and the cost of each action. Strategies that are lower in cost and higher in reversibility will be mobilized at the earlier stage of food shortage.

*Figure I.I. Responses to Household Food Insecurity*

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**Figure adopted from:**


Frankenberger and Goldstein, as cited by Maxwell and Smith (Op. Cit., p. 30)
It needs to be noted that this figure was not designed to correspond to land grabbing or forced eviction situations. Even though ‘farmland sale’ and ‘outmigration’ is positioned at the bottom right of the figure, these means can be mobilized at a relatively early stage. In some cases of forced eviction, like in Sein Serrey, the victims are granted compensation land in a specific area determined by the evictors. When they found out that their land in Sein Serrey was too small and unproductive to farm, numerous households chose to sell their land and out migrated right away without even tried to settle in. In most of eviction cases, the location of the compensation land might not be favorable to most people, hence, selling the compensation land and using the money to move somewhere else is often a real alternative.

Discussions on land grabbing and its implication is positioned within a larger debate of agrarian change. The 2008 World Development Report by the World Bank stated that smallholder agriculture is facing a severe crisis. It argues that the “options” available for smallholders in facing the pressure of agriculture liberalization is to either ‘upgrade’ themselves (including diversification, extensification and intensification) or to ‘deagrarianize’ their livelihood mode. This thesis is hence interested in looking at whether land grabbing and forced eviction processes in Sein Serrey also trigger changes in livelihood modes. This will be assessed further by analyzing the responses and strategies applied by the households.

In summary, the theoretical framework emphasizes the importance of access to capital (human, natural, financial, physical and social) to achieve household food security. Shocks to capital can disrupt the income generating and/or food production activities that might lead to food insecurity. Possession of remaining assets or capital after the shock determine the response or strategy that the household would apply in order to gain resilience as well as the outcomes. This framework of thinking will be applied in the elaboration of chapters three and four where the external shock of LSLA, the aftermath, as well as the current situation and activities in Sein Serrey are explicated.

I.IV. Research Methodology

This thesis is part of a larger project on land grabbing entitled “Large Scale Land Acquisitions (LSLAs) in Southeast Asia: Rural transformations between global agendas
and peoples’ right to food (2011-2013)”. The latter is conducted by the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies (IHEID), the Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights (ADH), and the Centre for Development and Environment of the University of Bern (CDE). The project specifically studies the Cambodian and Lao context, having conducted field research in both countries.

The methodology of this thesis comprises both a literature review and field research, the latter having been conducted from January to April 2013 in Cambodia (45 days spent in Sein Serrey, the rest in Cambodia’s capital Phnom Penh as well as different villages in Santuk District). Kraya Commune, and specifically Sein Serrey, were selected as the study area in agreement with the Project Coordinator, Christoph Gironde, as well as the Executive Director of the Center for Development Oriented Research in Agriculture and Livelihood Systems. In addition, we also consulted with our local NGO partner in Cambodia. Kraya Commune was identified as a commune in Cambodia with a fast growing number of rubber concessions. In January, the researcher began her field research by visiting five villages in Kraya Commune in order to decide a more specific study area. We selected Sein Serrey Village because it represented a unique case of a total settlement relocation consisting of more than 600 families. This resettlement was granted due to an ELC by the government of Cambodia to a Vietnamese rubber company in 2009. Due to the exceptionality of the case as well as time constraints, the researcher decided not to conduct a comparative study and focused exclusively on one village. This also had the benefit of allowing the researcher to deepen the analysis more than initially expected.

Since interviews in the field were conducted in Khmer, it is important to note that a local research partner/interpreter assisted the researcher. Besides translating interviews, the research partner also assisted by translating state or local authorities’ documents (whenever official English translations were not available).

In order to provide a comprehensive understanding of food security, this thesis utilizes a combination of quantitative and qualitative household data; though the data collection methods are mainly qualitative. Quantitative data in this study encompasses quantifiable information related to demographic and economic realities such as household composition, possession of production assets, data on income and food intake, _inter alia_.


Qualitative data consists of customs, usages, traditions, values, knowledges, experiences, etc.; put simply, phenomena which cannot be quantified (Tolossa 2006, p.1). Further, collected qualitative data mostly relates to taste and food preferences, value judgements of what constitutes ‘enough food’, local knowledges about food, productions, collection, etc., social relations and networks, political contexts and participation, among others. However, statistics are not employed as the main analytical framework.

For this thesis, a combination of both primary (collected by the researcher) and secondary data (collected by others) is used. Statistics relating to demographic and economic realities were mostly gathered using secondary data provided by the local government at the district, commune, and village level, as well as through interviews with local NGO officers, heads of local Forest Administration Office, administration officers of the rubber companies in the area, heads of the local military development units, and others. The main method used to collect primary data is semi-structured interviews. For each household, two to three hours were spent interviewing. This was divided into two to three interview sessions. The interview guidelines are outlined in Annex 1. The researcher also collected primary data by conducting participant observations (Bernard 1994). The researcher spent a great deal of time getting to know and establishing personal relations during cooking sessions in the kitchen as well as during dinners. The researcher thus tried to integrate herself as much as possible into the local community and its usages; however, such intentions always only remain intentions with some shortcomings. Such a methodological approach allows for a more profound and nuanced understanding of food preferences, preparation methods, as well as food distribution customs in the family. A significant amount of time was also dedicated to joining and participating in villagers’ income generating activities such as cassava harvesting, scavenging, peeling, chopping, and drying; dessert making and selling; charcoal making and selling; among others. The researcher thus conducted some interviews while being involved in the villagers’ activities. This approach has the benefit of transcending some

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2 Interviews that are conducted with a fairly open structure allow for conversational, two-way communication. They can be used both to give and receive information and develops according to the answers given by the interviewees (FAO 1990).

3 Cassava scavenging is a type of income generating activities in Sein Serrey Village that is usually conducted by villagers with no productive land. They scavenge left over cassavas from harvested field (with or without permission) and sell them to the cassava pool (either fresh or dried). The fields harvested at the end of rainy season are usually abandoned during the dry season, the scavenging season. Therefore, the fields were overgrown into a small forest during the scavenging season making it very difficult to pass by.
of the ‘interview barriers’ one might encounter in “normal” interview settings, mainly because it allows the researcher to avoid the “observer/observed” dichotomy while building personal relationships rooted in some notion of trust. The balancing act, however, was to at the same time ensure a certain professional distance which allowed her to make objective observations.

The researcher also spent time working with local authorities and student volunteers mobilized by the central government to record data for poverty ID card distributions to villagers as well as for land demarcation practices. Moreover, the researcher had an opportunity to observe the early phase of land dispute settlement by following the work of the Social Land Concessions (SLCs) committee. The researcher team along with the SLC committee visited disputed areas in the Kraya commune. The SLC team listed the names of the villagers, the size of their land, as well as gathering evidence of the land use (crops planted and the age of the crops, harvests, attestation from local leader, etc.). The research team also had the chance to stay over in the base camp of the SLC team in the forest where they were responsible for guarding the forest from illegal clearing during dispute settlement.

This thesis makes use of various analytical methods to explain the context, food security and livelihood status of Sein Serrey villagers, including mapping. Different types of maps are used to analyse the locations of concessions, demolished villages, new settlements, proximity to potential sources of livelihoods or shocks (rivers, stream, irrigation system, markets), sizes of the villagers’ lands, and sizes of confiscated or disputed land. The maps are produced by the researcher using the Global Positioning System (GPS) and Geographic Information System (GIS) with the help of experts working for the project (who provided brief training and guidance). In addition, the thesis also uses the maps provided by NGO databases and local authorities.

From the data collected during the fieldwork, this thesis also develops timelines and chronologies that can be useful to describe events prior to, during, and after forced evictions in 2009. Seasonal diagramming is also an important part of this thesis since it provides information about seasonal factors related to food security and livelihood, such as cycles of different crops, fisheries, cyclones, artisan activities, etc. Seasonal diagramming is furthermore very convenient to determine the lean period and particular periods when the overall situation is expected to ameliorate or decline.
Lastly, it ought to be noted that land disputes have been a very sensitive issue for the Cambodian government. Scholars from Cambodian universities are censored from writing or conducting research on this topic. Moreover, the number of journalists and activists who have been killed, jailed and exiled for speaking about this issue has risen dramatically (Lichado 2012). For these obvious reasons, the identity of interviewees is kept anonymous and confidential. Prior each interview, the researcher always communicated the potential risks and benefits, the process, and the possible outcomes of this research. ‘Informed consents’ was thus obtained from all interviewees.

I.IV.I. Limitations and Challenges

Any fieldwork-based project is faced with questions and limitations of time and resources. Working with only one team member (co-researcher/translator) in the village, it was impossible to increase the sample number to more than 30 within the aforementioned 45 effective days in the village.

It should be noted that nutritional population statuses are not analysed in terms of calorie intake calculations, anthropometry, or other measurements employed in the conventional nutritional sciences. This thesis uses dietary suggestions such as the ‘healthy eating pyramid’ published by the Nutrition Department of the Harvard School of Public Health (2011) as well as the ‘food guide pagoda’ promoted by the Chinese Nutrition Society (2013). These approaches classify a balanced diet into various food groups and suggest the amount of serving per person. However, this thesis focuses on ‘entitlement failure’ which is at the core of livelihood crises rather than ‘food crises’, the latter of which tends to assess the roles of under-nutrition and mortality in famine (De Waal, 1991, p. 67).

During the research period, the political context at the local level was largely shaped by the dynamics of Cambodia’s general elections, which were just a few months away. The pre-election period is particularly interesting because political changes and policy implementations take place much more quickly and dynamically. Political parties mobilize their officials from every level of government to manage political campaigns. Arranging appointments with government officials, however, was much more challenging during this time. Political sensitivities to activities related to local

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4 China is considered to have proximity with Cambodia in terms of food ingredients and food consumption pattern including three meals a day with rice as staple food for each meal.
development, including this research, also became more pronounced. The research team were initially suspected of conducting a “secret campaign” or underground political movement to support one party or another. We were also followed several times by local military officers and different party supporters. Approaching local authorities turned out to be a crucial first step when conducting research in a particular area. Of course, the research team always carried a research authorization letter from the Institute that had been stamped by local authorities ranging from the district, commune, and village level. The letter was very useful to gain trust from local competing powers.

I.IV.III. Personal Reflexivity

While it is often argued that researchers have a certain degree of power over the researched (i.e. “subjects”), researchers can often find themselves in situations where they feel ‘powerless’.

It is widely accepted that the power relation between researchers (… researcher, interpreter) and the researched (local authorities, and the villagers participating in the qualitative research) is shaped by, among other things, the labels and identities attached to and exhibited by both of these groups. These positionalities and perceptions, so it is argued, mutually co-shape the outcomes of the research.

As Chaitali demonstrated in his study exploring the experiences of divorce among British-Indian adult children, positionalities form negotiations of power between researchers and researched; these can be rooted in nationality, gender, cultural background, inter alia (2009, pp. 16-17).

The researcher is of Indonesian nationality and shares ethnic roots with most Cambodians. Since her physical appearance is similar to that of the natives, one can argue, and she certainly made the experience, that a deeper degree of ‘insider status’ relative to other non-Cambodian researchers in the project is apparent. However, the fact that the researcher is Indonesian often also creates a certain distance from native social and cultural norms; at any rate a distance that is equal to that of any other non-native. Her status as a student also gave her less advantage compared to other researchers who are backed by more resource rich organizations. In the absence of an interpreter, the language barrier further lowers her status to the level of a young adult. This is because she cannot actively participate in conversations. Additionally, the presence of an interpreter bestows onto her certain legitimacy because she is perceived as ‘resourceful’.
To approach locals, the researcher must rely on the social capital, linguistic skills and more general network provided by the interpreter. This dynamic gives the interpreter an extensive degree of control. Moreover, the researcher should try to understand the emotional, social and cultural contexts of the interviews; e.g. practicing and employing a certain sensitivity to the nuance of conversation; the selection of words, intonations, facial expressions, gestures and, importantly, silences. While the linguistic barrier precludes her from interacting freely in conversations with locals, it also allows her to be present during conversations among locals about all kinds of topics without being perceived as a threat or an intruder. Furthermore, the villagers showed a parental sense by welcoming the researcher as a family member once her presence seemed natural among the locals.

The researcher is aware that her gender shapes power relations, especially when it comes to interviewing local male authorities and male house heads. Even though this is starting to change, Cambodia is essentially a patriarchal society where men are given higher status and women are in an apolitical and indeed subaltern position with regards to men (Ebihara 1971). Sharing information with a younger female student about sensitive issues like land concessions and household income is not something common for these men. The researcher does not see this as an impediment but as an issue where negotiations of power relations between men and women take place. Explaining to locals the significance and context of the study, as well as actively reiterating her international, professional and academic background, helped the researcher to re-establish herself as an equal counterpart. It is important to note that the combination of, on the one hand, being seen as a family member and, on the other hand, as a professional researcher, helped her to assume a unique position that was advantageous, as demonstrated below.

Apart from the fact that the researcher was in Sein Serrey to gain knowledge from the locals, the villagers perceived her as ‘the torch bearer’. The locals studied her as much as she studied them, both in terms of her own person and in terms of a gateway to new knowledge. One of the first questions that villagers asked is whether she could teach them how to maximize their cassava production and if she could share information about how other societies all over the world practiced their agriculture system. The researcher acknowledged that she was playing a role as a purported agent of ‘modernity’, something she was well aware of while inherently remaining unable to escape it. This was not only the case because she carried with her such instruments like a camera, GPS, and
GIS tools (things she required as part of the research), but also from the way she interacted, dressed, ate, inter alia; all of these factors triggered questions and curiosities from the villagers. Overall, both parties learned from and were curious about each other.

In general, the research project demanded the researcher to approach locals proactively and positively as well as to build a cultural sensitivity. The researcher perceived and utilized the different hats attached to her as a tool to observe different spectrums of the researched and their agency. Clearly all of these factors not only affect the knowledge gathered but also the potential knowledge that will be (re- and/or co-) produced. This thesis, hence, is not ‘written’ by a single person, but ‘co-authored’ by many.
Chapter II

Food Security, Agriculture Sector, and Land Policy in Cambodia
II.I. General State of Food Security in Cambodia

II.I.I. The Local Diet

Rice is the main dietary element and the source of 75% of the calorie intake of Cambodians (World Food Programme). Ideally, individuals eat three meals per day with rice as an indispensable part of each meal. As a rule, without rice people feel they have not eaten sufficiently, no matter how much non-rice foods they consumed. Rice puree is a common alternative to steamed rice, the former of which is usually consumed in the morning and during the lean seasons. The higher water content tends to quench the hunger as well as the desire for rice consumption. Rice is also processed and consumed in form of noodles and cakes.

Along with rice, Cambodians consume ‘side dishes’ like meat (e.g. mostly fish and some pork; other meats tend to be too expensive) and vegetables (usually in soups or mostly fresh). Given the geography which features rivers, irrigation systems, and lakes spread all over the country, fresh water fish is the main affordable source of protein. Processed fish (fermented, dried, and salted) is the most common option in rural areas. Despite its affordable price processed fish is also easier to preserve, an important factor in areas where people can neither afford refrigerators nor have access to electricity.

Cattle and buffalo meat are not widely consumed since both are raised for their draught power and/or as capital insurance (Tickner 1996). Among different types of red meats, pork is most commonly consumed due to its affordability. Ducks and chickens are mainly raised for their eggs as well as capital savings. People who live near forests and streams often hunt frogs, water monitors, snakes, squirrels, and wild boar as additional sources of proteins.

Vegetables are nevertheless consumed daily as a side dish to rice. In rural areas with enough access to water, green leaves vegetables are home grown. Besides traditional methods of drying, salting, and fermenting foods, processing foods through canning and freezing is very limited in Cambodia (UNRISD 1996). Most of the modern processed foods are imported from outside the country. However,

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5 Meat is widely perceived to have a higher value than vegetables. Whenever Cambodians can afford meat, they tend to choose to consume meat rather than vegetables. The dominant position of meat is also reflected in the names of Cambodian dishes. Dishes always name first the meat even when other ingredients are also used in equal parts.

6 The most commonly consumed vegetables are tomatoes, mint leaves, bay leaves, eggplant, morning glory (also known as water spinach), green beans, and different types of gourds. Some of the vegetables are consumed raw, often dipped in fish sauce; the most common preparation method is stir-frying or boiling (soup). Mangoes and other fruits are often consumed as salads or dessert; yet they are not a compulsory component of Cambodians’ daily diet.
monosodium glutamate and food additives are heavily used in every dish including in rural areas as flavour enhancer. The lack of knowledge about the harmful effect of food additives contributes to the widespread consumption of them.

In conclusion, the variety of food products available in Cambodia is sufficient for a balanced diet. Household productive capacities and purchasing power severely limit diets to rice and fish. The use of food additives, as mentioned above, is one strategy to overcome such dietary limitations, at least psychologically. Of course, this does nothing to address the nutritional deficiencies; on the contrary, food additives are often very harmful to their health.

II.I.II. Nutritional Status of the Population and Household Food Security

Through its recent growth, Cambodia has managed to reduce the level of poverty and food insecurity. Undernourishment dropped from 38% in 1992 to 25% in 2006 (CDRI and IFPRI 2011). Cambodia has also significantly reduced child malnutrition. However, still 90 out of 1,000 children die from malnutrition, poor health, or other avoidable causes (2008; ibid.). Additionally, it should be noted that 40% of Cambodian children are chronically malnourished and micronutrient-deficient (ibid, WFP 2013).

As reported by CDRI in 2008, more than 300,000 Cambodian households (approximately 1.7 million individuals) were food insecure. High poverty rates and insufficient social protection to vulnerable groups are purportedly the main reason for this. Vulnerable groups include subsistence farmers, fishers, internally displaced persons and landless people, as well as victims of land mines (Rural Poverty Portal 2013). Moreover, food prices increased significantly, as shown in the graph below (Shocheth 2012: p. 6).
The wage for daily labour jobs (transplanting rice, weeding, harvesting clearing forest), which is one of the main sources of income for the landless rural population, increased on average by 50% from 2007-2008, and continues to increase (CDRI 2008). However, the CDRI report also revealed that one fourth of the population is unable to find a job due to low labour demand. This group has been severely hit by the increase of food prices.

For 20% of the Cambodian population, obtaining adequate food and nutritional intake is a daily battle. Their daily salary is usually spent instantaneously to buy rice and other foods within the same day (ibid.). In households with land and rice cultivation, their rice production can only cover their consumption for six months of the year while their income from other sources is mostly too low (UNRISD 1996: p. 12).

According to UNRISD and Cambodian Sub-Decree on Social Land Concessions, several household categories or individual who are relatively more vulnerable and food insecure in Cambodia are: ‘farming household with limited land and /limited productive means’, poor women-led households with high dependency ratio\(^7\), single-earner households with high ratio of dependency, households with ill family members, returned migrants with few assets, landless farming households, amputees and victims of wars as well as landmines with disabilities, elderly couples, internally displaced person, \textit{inter alia} (Ibid.).

\(^7\) The number of care-givers are much less than the number of care-receivers.)
II.II. The Cambodian Agriculture Sector

Cambodia’s agricultural sector, led by rice farming, continues to be its most important economic sector. Including forestry and fishing, agriculture contributed 33.5% of Cambodia’s GDP in 2010 (Trade Policy Review Division 201: p. 65). It also provides jobs for 55.9% of the country’s rural population, which accounts for 85% of Cambodia’s total population (ibid.). It is important to note, however, that the majority of Cambodia’s farmers own less than two hectares per household. Key sub-sectors, which are the source of livelihoods for these smallholders, are crops, fisheries, forestry, and livestock (ibid.)

In addition to rice, secondary crop productions, such as cassava, cashew nuts, maize, sweet potatoes, soybeans, rubber, *inter alia*, started to impact more heavily on the agriculture GDP. In the first ten months of 2011, Cambodia’s cassava\(^8\) export (the third most important crop after rice and maize) increased by 94 per cent from 2010, leading revenues to surge by 267% (Trade Promotion Department 2011). The President of the Cambodian Center for Study and Development in Agriculture (CEDAC) stated in 2011 interview that as the demand for and the price of cassava increase simultaneously, Cambodian people are switching to cassava production (People’s Daily Online 2011). The high demand of cassava was triggered by the increasing number of processing factories in Cambodia as well as in neighbouring countries such as Thailand, Vietnam, and China (Sopheap et al 2011: p. 284).

According to a survey conducted by Sopheap *et al*, there are three major reasons why farmers in Cambodia prefer cassava to other crops. First is the ease of growing the crop (ibid.). Cassava seeds are relatively easy to acquire and plant, and there is no special planting technique apart from transplanting and weeding. The second and third reasons are the good market price and ease of selling the harvest yield. The final popular reason according to the survey is the ability to grow it on poor soils (ibid.). From the observation on the field, cassava can even grow on very dry soil and require only very little water (usually rainfall during rainy season is enough). In addition to the aforementioned results, interviews also disclosed that poorer households preferred cassava because they can already harvest in the first year (as oppose to cashew nuts, mangoes, rubber, and other types of crops which take three to five years before they produce a yield). For these populations, immediate income is likely to be one of the most important factors.

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\(^8\) Cassava production is elaborated in subsequent sections since it is the main crop produced by smallholders in the studied area.
Rubber is also one of Cambodia’s key commodities that significantly accounts for employment and export earnings. Due to the lack of rubber processing factories in Cambodia, most of the rubber is exported to Vietnam, Malaysia, China, Singapore, and South Korea (Trade Policy Review Division 2011: p. 71). Vietnam is currently the largest recipient of Cambodia’s rubber. Most of Cambodia’s rubber plantations are located close to the Vietnam border. From 2008 to 2011, rubber export has nearly tripled from 16 to 45 thousand tons (ANRPC 2012) while the price surged with the global demand (FIDH 2011). In 2007, Cambodia’s Diagnostic Trade Integration Study (DTIS) identified rubber as one of the top five sectors with a medium contribution to human development; estimations suggest approximately 40,000 Cambodians are employed in rubber related activities (p.5). The expansion of rubber plantations has also been credited for developing access and infrastructures, allowing modern infrastructures and influence to reach the ‘used-to-be-remote areas’ as well as changing the aspirations, perceptions, and life style choices of rural people (Gironde 2012). According to Open Development Cambodia, currently there are more than 30 rubber concessions covering almost 125,000ha of land (ODC 2013). Year before, is this an increase or decrease or same?

II.II.I. Cambodian Land Policy

The Cambodian government reintroduced private property rights in 1989 after its abolition in 1975 through Instruction No. 3 and Sub-decree No. 25 by the Khmer Rouge. As stipulated in the 1992 Land Law, people were able to apply for occupancy and private property rights. However, due to the lack of documentation of private land ownership and the bureaucratic complexities of applications for this ownership, high degrees of landlessness and the ‘selling’ of state-owned land to large firms are manifest (FAO 2006; UN Statistic Division 2009). In 2001, the Cambodian government passed a new land law aiming to reinforce land tenure rights and to improve the effectiveness of land administration. A land policy framework was introduced the following year allowing several hundred thousands of land titles to be issued. Nevertheless, in 2004, 20-30% of Cambodia’s landowners possessed 70% of the land, while 40% of the rural households occupied only 10% of Cambodia’s land (UNIFEM, World Bank, ADB, UNDP & DFID/UK 2004). Large scale land acquisitions continue to take place in alarming numbers.
In Cambodia, as published by the Cambodian League for the Promotion and Defense of Human Rights (LICHADO), more than two million hectares of land have been transferred from mostly subsistence farming to agribusiness run by some 225 companies. The so-called ‘land swap’ was facilitated and approved by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries and through the Sub-Decree on Economic Land Concession (ADHOC 2011). More land concessions were granted by the central government through other ministries such as the Ministry of Industry, Mines, and Energy.

Those acquiring the land are usually rich companies or individuals, local or foreign, with links and connections to government and military officials, including senators and oknhas9 (Saracini et al. 2011). Local authorities expropriated land to sell to private companies as the value of land increased due to the expansion of the modern sector (Sithan 2006). Furthermore, the military has expropriated land to use it for headquarters or for personal benefits (Sithan 2006). According to Article 2.1 of the Sub-Decree on Rules and Procedures on Reclassification of State Public Properties and Public Entities, the government of Cambodia has the rights to manage all property as stated below:

“The Royal Government is the one who manages all state properties which are under the possession, use, oversight, business of the ministries, institutions, provincial, municipal, district, commune authorities, and all public entities.”

The central government refuses to admit, however, that a land-grabbing problem exists. Most government officials argue that land appropriation in fact paves the way for ‘development’ (Lichado 2009).

In most cases, the government formally owns much of the land and many of the land users have no property title for the land they cultivate. Put simply, peasants use and cultivate the land without owning the property rights. This situation results in legal uncertainty for peasants when it comes to LSLAs. Without title, the latter tend to have no access to compensation or other legal remedies in case of eviction (de Schutter; Sahmakum Teang Tnaut 2011). This leaves them particularly vulnerable to landlessness.

9 ‘Oknha’ is a title granted by the King based on the request of the Government of Cambodia to a person who donates $100,000 to the State in cash or non-cash.
Economic Land Concessions (ELCs)

The 2001 Land Law defines land concessions as “[...] a legal right established by a legal document issued under the discretion of the competent authority, given to any natural person or legal entity or group of persons to occupy a land and to exercise thereon the rights set forth by this law.” (Royal Government of Cambodia 2001). According to the Sub-decree, Economic Land Concession refers to a mechanism to grant private state land through a specific economic land concession contract to concessionaires to use for agricultural and industrial-agricultural exploitation.” (2005). The size of land granted for each concession should not exceed 10,000ha and the length of concession period is maximum 99 years (ibid.) Nevertheless, numerous actors who registered and applied under different company names obtained more than 10,000ha limit of land resulting in concentration of land.

According to article 4 of the Sub-decree on ELCs, it is mentioned among five criteria that land eligibility for ELCs is

- Land that has solutions for resettlement issues, in accordance with the existing legal framework and procedures. The Contracting Authority shall ensure that there will not be involuntary resettlement by lawful land holders and that access to private land shall be respected.

- Land for which there have been public consultations, with regard to economic land concession projects or proposals, with territorial authorities and residents of the locality.

However, the reality shows that ELCs have often amplified land conflict and human rights violations in Cambodia. In a 2007 report on economic land concessions the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) submitted that “a large number of economic land concessions have been granted in favor of foreign business interests and prominent Cambodian political and business figures.” More importantly, the report also criticized that the benefits for rural communities were not evident and that not even the purported positive effects on state revenue stemming from these concessions were apparent (ibid). The failure of Cambodian public policy was not only evident to human rights institutions. In August 2011, the World Bank decided to suspend new loan provisions to the Cambodian government directed at the implementation of the land titling policy as concerns corruption, forced evictions and unfair compensation (Human Rights Watch 2012). From evidence presented in the report the decision making process
for economic land concessions by the Cambodian government at both the district and national level often failed to take into account the needs of the affected villagers.

In addition, ELCs fail to provide a participatory process for stakeholders. More often than not, “evictions are [...] carried out without any court order or verification of the claim of ownership” of the land (Amnesty International 2009)

On 7 May 2012, one year before the parliament election of 2012, Prime Minister Hun Sen announced the moratorium on new ELCs through the Directive 001 (Latt and Agostini 2012). This moratorium exempted concessions that were under consideration. In its report, ADHOC discovered that as of December 2012, 33 new ELCS were granted since the Directive was announced (ibid.). ADHOC interprets this as proof that the government’s commitment to the private sector was paramount to the commitment to the Cambodian people as well as the rule of law.

**Social Land Concession**

In 2003, the Cambodian government passed a sub-decree on Social Land Concessions (SLCs), defined as “a legal mechanism to transfer private state land for social purposes to the poor who lack land for residential and/or family farming purposes.” The target group of SLCs, as stated in Article 3 of the Sub-decree, are ‘poor homeless families’ (for residential and/or farming purposes), ‘families who have been displaced resulting from public infrastructure development’, ‘families suffering from natural disaster’, ‘repatriated families’, ‘demobilized soldiers and families of soldiers who were disabled or died in the line of duty’.

Up until 2012, however, very few SLCs were granted. Since Directive 001, 100,790ha land divided into 38 SLCs were granted under the SLC scheme, more than twice the size of SLC in 2011 (ADHOC 2012).

**2012 Land Titling Project**

On 14 June 2012, Hun Sen announced a new controversial land titling initiative which aimed to recruit approximately 1,600 unpaid youth volunteers to demarcate people’s land (Latt and Agostini). The volunteers are mostly students and recent graduates who come from different education background. According to interviews with such volunteers, after registration they are trained for only one to three days on how to use the Global Positioning System (GPS) devices as well as on the basic knowledge of Geographical Information System (GIS). They are given military fatigues and each group
(consisting of on average 20 people) is led by a senior supervisor. The results of demarcations are later used to issue land titles to individuals. In the first six months of its implementation, 71,220 land titles were issued and 333,227 plots (433,987 ha) were demarcated (ibid.)

It should be noted that the initiative has received strong criticisms from civil society organizations. One of the main criticisms was directed at the fact that students are vastly under-experienced in land demarcation. Moreover, demarcations are mostly limited to uncontested land since they are officially instructed to avoid demarcating disputed areas (Agostini 2012; Alison 2013). As a result, the people who need land titles the most usually continue to struggle without much success (Australian Network News 2012). Another criticism accused the Prime Minister of using this policy for the personal benefit of winning votes of the rural people for the 2013 election.

**Land Dispute Settlements and Channels for Mitigation**

In principle, there are several options for land conflict dispute settlements in Cambodia, largely depending on whether the disputed land is registered or not. (BABC; Licadho 2009; Sithan). When the land is registered, disputes will be settled in court. If not, complaints over land issues must be submitted to the Administrative Commission whose main tasks are to give notification to all parties concerned by the objections, to consult parties, and to try to reach settlement. When the Administrative Commission fails to reach agreement, the cases must be brought to the Cadastral Commission (CC).

The establishment of the CC was enacted by Anukret (Sub-decree) No. 47 ANK/BK on the organization and functioning of the Cadastral Commission (CC). The CC consists of two main structures, which are the District/Khan Cadastral Commission (DKCC) and the Provincial/Municipal Cadastral Commission (PMCC) (Licadho 2009).

In December 2002, the CC accepted its first cases. According to BABC, as of 2009, 1,653 cases have been resolved; 1,211 have been rejected; 220 have been withdrawn; and 1,975 are still pending. From these figures we can see that the CC received an enormous amount of cases. The high number of unsolved cases, as Licadho stated in 2009, are most likely related to the CC’s problems of inefficiency rooted in the limited budget available to monitor reported land disputes.
Another formal institution whose mandate is to resolve land disputes is the National Authority for the Resolution of Land Disputes (NARLD) (FAO database; Sithan). More specifically, NARLD bears the responsibility to cope with complaints that are beyond the mandate of the CC (FAO database). The Royal Decree established the NARLD on 26 February 2006. The latter consists of representatives of relevant government institutions, political parties and NGOs. Importantly, however, the NGO representatives are not involved in the decision making process (Sithan).

Whenever land conflicts are resolved, resolutions often benefit the rich (companies and businessmen) (ADHOC; Licadho; Samhakung Teang Tnaut). Legal proceedings, unfortunately, have been mobilized to suppress the poorer people. In 2011, ADHOC recorded 427 cases in which representatives of the communities were charged. It is an almost 30% increase from the previous year where 319 similar cases occurred. Among these charged representatives are human rights activists, chiefs of commune, journalists.

Economic Land Concessions granted by the government are rarely executed in accordance with the 2001 Land Law and Anukret 146 on Economic Land Concessions (Samhakum Teang Tnaut). The majority of the people living in the concession areas were not informed about the concessions taking place including where exactly the concession area is, how large it is, the names of the companies involved, what the lands are going to be turned into, and so on. Samhakum Teang Tnaut stated that this lack of information dissemination is one of the stakeholders’ strategies to hide it from the people for as long as possible.
Chapter III


Post-war Cambodia witnessed staggering levels of destitution. Its turbulent modern history dominated by the Khmer Rouge Regime and followed by the Vietnamese occupation left Cambodia in a precarious situation, reflected in, among other things, high numbers of individuals with disabilities as well as high incidents of poverty.

Infrastructures and supra-structures were systematically destroyed rendering an effective reconstruction and rehabilitation process beyond the means of the state. This came in addition to the prodigious needs of survivors. This broader context pushed a large part of the population, many of whom were survivors who were directly affected by the prior conflict, to undertake long journeys in search of land—a principal and critical dimension of rural livelihood. As a response to this situation, AHADA began its operations in 2004 with the aim of increasing the well-being of landless handicapped veterans (AHADA Articles of Association 2005). The provincial government of Kampong Thom recognized AHADA in 2005 as an association. However, it had yet to gain recognition from the central government. Though it initially started out by handicapped veterans, it quickly enlarged its target groups to include widow-led households and landless poor households in general. With a medium term vision to submit an application for a Social Land Concession (SLC) once they successfully created a village or a settlement. The association facilitated the registered households to migrate to the Ou Beoung Raong area and established Bonteay Rongeang village. The association gave possession rights (as oppose to property rights) of land plots to households to clear and cultivate. The news about AHADA and their project spread widely and quickly to different provinces by word of mouth; the quickest and most effective channel seems to have been “kinship”.

In 2004, AHADA brought 375 families to Bonteay Rongeang village. This year also marked the beginning of the settlement in Bonteay Rongeang. Simultaneously, each registered family received land of 20X200m to 90x200m for free. According to the village chief during interview, the size of the land depended on the labour force they had; the higher the labour force, the larger the area they could clear. The village spanned

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10 According to the interviews conducted in different villages we visited in the first week, this type of organization sprung throughout Cambodia especially after the enactment of Land Law 2001 that allows the citizens to apply for Social Concessions.
along 16.61 km main road, the land plots of the villagers were located in the North and South side of the road.

![Diagram of Bonteay Rongeang Village]

Initially, the area allocated was state forest that was illegally cleared. The association had no authority to provide settlements in the area, let alone grant permission for other people to clear and cultivate the land.

In 2006, the Provincial Government of Kampong Thom issued a governor decree 82 (Deka 082) stating that the area of settlement in Bonteay Rongeang would be confiscated and reclaimed as state forest. The unofficial translation of the Deka is attached as Annex 2.

Afraid of being arrested, several families chose to move out from Bonteay Rongeang, either to other ‘illegal’ settlements\(^\text{11}\) or back to their homeland. However, a large portion of people decided to stay and ignored deka 082. Later on, some people who had moved away came back to resettle in Bonteay Rongeang. Parallel to these events, there appeared an internal problem within the Association. Kum Khien, the

\(^{11}\) We visited a hamlet named Trapeang Russey, also in Kraya Commune, where we found households that used to live in Bonteay Rongeang before the Deka 082. I acknowledge that it was a potentially interesting research path to compare the livelihood of households that decided to go and stay after the Deka 082 was issued. It was unfortunate that we did not have enough resource to conduct intensive research on this hamlet.
Association’s founder, was replaced by Kun Sok Ki\textsuperscript{12} as the leader of the Association. The leadership shift brought about several changes in the policy of the association.\textsuperscript{13}

Firstly, as a means of ‘defence’ from the local government, the AHADA under Sok Ki built a checkpoint at the entrance of the village. Everyone wanting to enter the village had to report to the Association officers. According to the Kraya Commune Chief,\textsuperscript{14} communal officers who wanted to conduct administrative activities in the village were prevented from passing the checkpoint unless they were able to show a mission statement or a letter signed by the commune chief. This policy added to the existing tension between the local government and the AHADA.

Secondly, since more people wanted to move to the Bonteay Rongeang, AHADA started to sell the land for USD 500 for each plot. The fact that AHADA sold state-owned land exacerbated the resentment felt and expressed by local authorities.

In early 2006, the Association eventually sent out a letter applying for a social land concession that was turned down by the central government. AHADA was dismissed as an association by late 2009.

Despite the growing tension between the local government and AHADA, many people who chose to stay in Bonteay Rongeang attested that they were able to normally conduct their activities, that is to say without disturbances. They chose to ignore the Deka and kept cultivating plots as well as clearing more land when necessary. They also managed to keep conducting non-farming activities such as charcoal making and trading, hunting, fishing, and collecting non-timber forest product (NTFP).

It was not until 2008, when an economic land concession covering the Bonteay Rongeang area was granted to Tan Bien, that the livelihoods of the farmers were affected by the tensions.

III.II. 2007-2009: Large Scale Land Acquisition and the Forced Eviction

Santuk district, where Bonteay Rongeang was located, witnessed high volumes of ELC granting starting in 2007. The 2007-2015 medium term plan of the district listed that the total size of the concession granted in this period mounts to 40,000ha (interview with District Chief, 5 April 2013). Until today, there are 11 rubber companies in the area that have been granted ELCs.

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{12} According to Sarat, the ADHOC Coordinator for Kampong Thom, Sok Ki was arrested in 2012 for conducting illegal logging.
\textsuperscript{13} Hun Dy Mo and Men Cham Roeun, Personal Communication, January 2013.
\textsuperscript{14} Keo Chhen, Personal Communication, March 2013.
\end{footnotesize}
Tan Bien, one of the aforementioned companies, was granted 8100ha of ELC in the area covering Bonteay Rongeang settlements in 2008.

The green line on the map represented the main road of Bonteay Rongeang. The empty pentagon inside is now an empty space. According to the Forest Administration Officer, the said land is going to be used for tree nursery. The research discovered that on the East and West of the concessions, there are also illegal settlements that remain up until the thesis is written. The concession granted only covers Bonteay Rongeang, an area under the management of an Association that had villainaized the government while other villages around them were left untouched.

Since the former's arrival, the conflict between AHADA and the local authority escalated rapidly. Several villagers’ houses were bulldozed to give the land to the rubber plantation. In response, villagers set ablaze the bulldozers and heavy equipment owned by Tan Bien. The local authorities arrested seven villagers in this respect. The Cambodian Human Rights and Development Association (ADHOC) was involved in the advocacy measures related this case. It became the third party in the negotiations between the local authorities and the villagers fighting for a fair solution, namely

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15 Sarat, ADHOC Coordinator for Kampong Thom, Personal Communication, April 2013.
compensation for residential as well as cultivation land outside the concession area. The villagers appointed ten representatives for the negotiations while the government was represented by high-level officials such as the District Chief and the Deputy Governor of Kampong Thom. At this point, AHADA was forced to withdraw from the negotiations and the larger context more generally.

The outcomes of the negotiations took the shape of the release of the arrested villagers and a commitment of the central government that there would be compensations in forms of residential (40x20m) and cultivation (1-2ha) land for all evicted households. Nevertheless, most of the people refused to move away from Banteay Rongeang since they had invested capitals in growing their crops (some of them like cashew nuts, mangoes, and jackfruit, had not even been productive).

In late 2008, the central government intensified its efforts to empty the area by introducing stricter punishments (imprisonment and further obliteration of assets) for those who refused to leave. The intimidation of villagers by the central and local governments split the village into two camps, those who reluctantly agreed to move away and those who determined to stay. The internal conflict escalated when the group determined to stay burnt down the assets (house and left behind belongings) of the migrating group. According some interviewees, it was an expression of disappointment regarding the purported ‘betrayal’ by the migrating group. “We were scared, we just did not want to be arrested. We knew that our land in Banteay Rongeang was illegal. We would rather move [to the new residential land in Sein Serrey] that is recognized by the government,” said Long Mon, a villager who decided to move to Sein Serrey in early 2009.

Throughout 2009, the Government of Cambodia mobilized military troops to push forward the eviction processes. The two first military battalions (early and mid 2009) were sent from the capital city Phnom Penh. They were equipped with firearms and other heavier weapons to intimidate the villagers. The latter ‘welcomed’ the former with sickles, swords and other traditional sharp tools they regularly use to clear the forest. While the troops fired guns into the air and open space, the villagers also merely slashed the air. No contact was made, either through weapons or body. Both battalions proved rather ineffective, for the villagers were not much intimidated by their actions. “The troops from Phnom Penh were weak, we were not afraid,” said Ouk Runn, an eyewitness.

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16 Ibid.
In late 2009, the Government of Cambodia mobilized a military battalion from Preah Vihear, a province in North Cambodia that has been at the centre of border conflict with Thailand for years. Needless to say, the troops stationed in Preah Vihear were the best equipped and best trained ones. According to the interviewees, the Preah Vihear battalion exhibited a very aggressive and threatening attitude. This thus stands in stark contrast to the troops from Phnom Penh, which were perceived as weak.

“They [the battalion] arrived at 7 in the morning. I was preparing the ingredients for the cakes [I usually sell]. They told me that several trucks would come pick up and transport everybody to the new place [residential land in Sein Serrey] at 3 pm. Some of them went around my house. They told us to pack our belongings. No one dared to refuse, they were holding electric tasers. They would electrocute anyone who stood up [against the instructions].”

Six hundred seventy-three families19 were transferred that afternoon to the new village location carrying whatever belongings they could and leaving the rest behind. On the map, the new location is located 7 km away from the Tan Bien Border, however, to avoid the rubber plantation, people must take a 12 km detour.

Map III.II. Sein Serrey from Tan Bien (Bonteay Rongeang)

19 Roth Sok Hey, former local journalist and AHADA representative, personal Communication, January 2013.
In order to manage the movement of people from Bonteay Rongeang to Phum Thmay\textsuperscript{20}, a special committee was formed by the provincial government. The committee consisted of officers from the district, commune offices, forest administration, military officers, and representatives of Sein Serrey villagers. Once the villagers arrived at Phum Thmay, they registered their names at the committee office. Contrary to what the government had promised, no cultivation land was granted.

There were two types of residential land granting processes for different arrival times due to land availability. The latecomers, approximately 30 households, experienced different steps compared to the early comers, approximately 643 households, as shown in the figure below.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{residential_land_granting_processes.png}
\caption{Residential Land Granting Processes}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{20}literally translates as “the new village”, an area that was prepared to accommodate the villagers from Bonteay Rongeang. Phum Thmay was considered too big for a village with population of more than 700 families. In 2011, Pum Thmay was divided into two villages, Serrey Monkul and Sein Serrey.
For the early comers, after registration each villager drew a number that represented the location of his or her new residential land. Although roads around and inside the village had been built, no housing was available for the villagers. When they arrived at their respective land, they needed to clear the area before building the house from scratch. No assistance was provided by any government organ. Hence, for the first two to three months, the villagers had to live in the tarp tents.

The latecomers experienced a longer process before they could settle in Phum Thmay. When they first arrived, there was no more residential land left for them. They were required to stay in a school compound around the village for three months before relocated to Thmor Samlieng, a neighbouring village. However, new conflict arose since the land granted to the latecomers had been cultivated by the local villagers of Thmor Samlieng. After living in Thmor Samlieng for two years, the committee eventually managed to provide land plots in Phum Thmay for the latecomers and relocated them back.

During residential land granting processes, both early- and latecomers were occupied with clearing and house building; they could therefore not engage in income generating activities. By and large, their lives depended on aid given by organizations (e.g. Licadho) and individuals. Within the first three months of their settlement in Sein Serrey, they received three food aid packages. Each package contained 17 kg of rice, one water container, one scarf, and a bottle of soy sauce, and KHR 10,000 (USD 2.5). Additionally, they also received aid in form of matrasses and mosquito nets.

During the past four years, they received three further food aid packages, sponsored by the government and wealthy individuals. The first package was provided by the Advisor of the Prime Minister and the Provincial Government. It contained 20kg of rice, one sarong, four bottles of fish sauce, six bottle of soy sauce, 20 packs of instant noodle, one bottle of cooking oil, and two cans of sardines. The second one was provided by the District Government. It included 10kg of rice, 25 packs of noodles, five bottles of fish sauce, 12 sachets of shampoo. The last package arrived in late 2012 and was provided by a wealthy individual from Phnom Penh. It contained 4.5kg of rice, one pack of Mono Sodium Glutamate (MSG) and one bottle of soy sauce. If one person consume half kilogram of rice a day (divided into three meals), these food aids can only supply their food demand for few days.
According to the villagers, the flow of aid was not enough to cover their needs, most time they had no proper food to satisfy their needs especially during the transition period.\(^{21}\)

### III.III. 2009-2013: Complaining vs ‘Waiting in Vain’

As mentioned earlier, the villagers of the new village had not received the cultivation land the government had promised them. On several occasions throughout this period, provincial and district officials reasserted their commitment to providing the villagers with cultivation land; however always without tangible realization. Hence, the farmers were left uncertain for years.

In 2011, the local government decided that the population of Phum Thmay is too large to be considered as one administrative village. The Provincial government then divided Phum Thmay into two smaller administrative village namely Sein Serrey (the studied area) and Serrey Mongkul. In the same year, the local government granted cultivation land to several households (less than 15% of the total number of evicted households from Bonteay Rongeang). Only one household from Sein Serrey received cultivation land, other households resided in the neighbouring village of Serrey Mongkul. The granting was divided into two phases (two locations). 27 households were granted cultivation land, 1ha each in the first phase. Albeit being located in a relatively more productive (quality of the soil is still very poor but can still produce yield) area, some farmers admitted that some of them faced land disputes with the villagers of Thmor Samlieng who have been cultivating the land.

The second phase represented a different problem. More than half\(^{22}\) of the land granted to the 70 families was poor quality, largely unproductive land. Its location was very close to the irrigation system and thus flooded easily during the rainy season. Meanwhile, when the soil is not flooded, it is very dry. Additionally, the land was covered by large trees and bamboo forests. According to several the villagers, they had to spend at least 1 million riel to clear each hectare. Because they could not afford the necessary investment to clear the land, they were left with no choice but to abandon it.

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\(^{21}\) Transition period here starts when they first arrive at Sein Serrey to the beginning of the period when they have settled (land plots are cleared, houses are built) and when the villagers started to earn income again.

\(^{22}\) The team visited the site and walked along the area of granted land with GPS devises. Half of the length of the area was flooded during rainy season.
When I asked them about their response to the problematic land granting processes, most of the villagers admitted that they did not know whom to contact. Initially, there was an *ad hoc* committee tasked to assist with the granting processes, but as soon as the land granting process was completed, the committee was dissolved. Most villagers also admitted that their lack of legal know-how has been a constraint for them, especially when it comes to filling complaints to authorities.

**Figure III.II. Types of Cultivation Land Granted in 2011**

- Disputed land
- Cultivable land
- Unproductive land
- Uncleared forest

Picture III.I. Left: most of the area is flooded and very humid. Right: The part that is untouched by water is very dry.
One of my findings is that different approaches are suggested by different political parties when it comes to the cultivation land granting processes. The village chief, who associates with and endorses the Cambodian People’s Party CPP, advises the villagers to avoid any type of complaint or protest directed towards the government. He explained that this was not an abnormality in Cambodia. Many people from all over Cambodia were sharing the same fate. He suggested to the villagers to learn from the experiences of victims of forced evictions in Beoung Kak Lake (Beoung Kak 13) and other areas in the country. As widely covered in the media, protesters and human rights defenders have been frequently arrested and/or assaulted by the government (BBC 2013; Lichado 2012; Sovath 2012). The village chief and several other interviewees maintained they were afraid to file complaints for this particular reason. They relied on statements by provincial and district officers that one day they would be granted productive cultivation land. So far, this promise has not materialized.

The Sam Rainsy Party, the main opposition party and the second largest party in Cambodia, showed a different approach towards the problem. A representative of the party and former representative of AHADA, reiterated his disappointment with the village authorities that refused to strongly demand cultivation land. He independently prepared a petition demanding the cultivation land and collected villagers’ signatures. More than six hundred villagers from Sein Serrey and Serrey Mongkul have so far signed the petition. The signatories, most notably, are not limited to the opposition party. When asked to whom he would send the petition, he admitted that he was not sure, although he had the idea to send it directly to the Prime Minister. During interviews, several signatories asserted that although they agreed to sign, they were pessimistic about the measures taken by the opposition party. They believe that without legal advocacy and assistance from NGOs (they specifically mentioned ADHOC) this measure would remain largely ineffective.

Further interviews with people from surrounding villages revealed that there was ‘available’ land to be granted. The land was suitable to be considered as new cultivation land for the people of Sein Serrey since it is located only 3 km away from the centre of the village. Furthermore, the land was neither evergreen nor semi-evergreen forest which are types of forest excluded by law from cultivation. The only constraint was the control of military units and officers over the aforementioned land.
In this context, there are two types of control by the military over land. The first type is through Military Development Unit. In 2004, the Military Development Unit in Kampong Thom requested 70 hectares of land for cultivation. The government granted the land in 2005. The purpose of this request was to increase the living condition of the poor members of the Unit. However, according to the head of the unit, from the 70ha of the land, 42ha were cultivated for the benefit of 21 high-ranking military officers from the provincial level who are entitled for 2ha per person. A military journalist who resided in the area reported that the unit planted cassava and rubber in the area. In 2010, at least 10ha have been planted with rubber trees. Fourteen low ranking officers work for the unit and are tasked to supervise the plantation. They are responsible for recruiting and supervising plantation labourers. Only these 14 low-ranking officers can be considered a poor. Nevertheless, they only received minimum salary from the land that was supposed to be used to increase their welfare.

According to the head of the forest administration office for Santuk district, the Military Development Unit was obliged to return the land when the local government decided that there were other people who need the land more (landless people with disability, widow-led households, and poor households in general). In 2010, the local government asked a share of the unit’s land to be granted to the villagers of Sein Serrey (phase 2). The unit then spared 20ha of land for the phase 2. However, as mentioned earlier, when our research team went to the site to study the area and its farmers, we witnessed that the land the unit had given away was unproductive. It was very dry during the dry season, and flooded during the rainy season. When inquired about the quality of the soil, the head of the Military Development Unit claimed that the land granted for the SLC was fertile and suitable for farming. This claim, however, proved to be erroneous, as indicated above. The second type of ownership is individual. High-ranking military officers are the most common owners in this type. In 2007, around 14 military officers came to clear a large part of state forest in the area designated for individual cultivation purposes. Each of the officers occupied 20ha to 30ha of land without any documentation. They planted the land with rubber trees; most of these will be ready to

24 Tet Chyan, Head of the Military Development Unit, Personal Communication, March 2013.
26 Hint Kamech, Head of the Forest Administrative Office for Santuk District, Personal Communication, March 2013.
27 Ibid.
29 Ibid.
be tapped at the end of (give year). One of the owners of this land is also the head of the Military Development Unit. He admitted that he never had a problem with land documentation since no one dared to question his ‘possession’ of the land.\textsuperscript{30} He also told the researcher that he was convinced that the students mobilized by the Directive 001 will demarcate his land and issue land title for him. It thus emerged very clearly that Cambodian land policy was and is not engendered through principles of equality and the rule of law. Discrimination on the basis of social class seems to be part and parcel of Cambodia’s land policy politics.

**III.IV. 2013: Small Scale Land Acquisition and a New Hope**

Geographically, the southern part of Sein Serrey borders with one of the main *stueng* (irrigation systems) as well as with a stream. As mentioned, the villagers of Sein Serrey, whose main source of income was agricultural activities, lost their *chamkar* in 2009. Fortunately for 18 households in the southern part of the village, they could clear some land near the *stueng* (around 1-2 ha each) for *chamkar*. The *chamkar* they cultivate had been supporting their livelihood for the past two to three years.

\textsuperscript{30} Ibid.
However, in late February 2013, a person from Kampong Cham (a neighbouring province) claimed ownership of the land near the *stueng* that had been cultivated by the villagers of Sein Serrey, as shown in the Figure 3. This map is not intended to show the exact scale nor coordinate points; rather, it shows approximately the locations of important landmarks. He claimed that he bought 8ha of land from the former village chief of Thmor Samlieng in 2005. Prior to the establishment of Phum Thmay in 2009, the disputed area belonged to the neighbouring village Thmor Samlieng. He had, however, marked an area he believed belonged to him by colour-spraying the trees that purportedly represent the border. Finally, he remarked that he intended to sell the land and cautioned villagers to stop cultivating his land.

When asked to show the proof of ownership, he showed a piece of land document signed by the former village chief of Thmor Samlieng and several members of the Commune Council. However, the document
stated that the village chief only sold 3ha of land, as oppose to the 8ha he had claimed. Additionally, when measured the demarcated area using a GPS tool, the size of the claimed land actually amounted to 15ha. 

Unclear information about the size of the land claimed fuelled a great deal of resentment emanating from the villagers of Sein Serrey. The 18 affected households (5% of the total population of Sein Serrey) signed a petition demanding clarity of status of the land that had been supporting their lives. The village chief planned to submit the petition to the commune level since the land document used as the evidence was signed also by the members of the Commune Council. It was apparent that village authority reacted differently towards the petition initiated by the villagers. Regarding land disputes, the village chief who strongly advised villagers to avoid any kind of protest against the government, was very supportive of the petition directed towards individuals. Although until the end of the research period, the villagers have not received any explanation regarding the status of the land, this finding is very important since it shows that land grabbing is not only conducted in large scale by companies, but also by individuals.

However, on 15 March 2013, the village authority received a letter that revealed the location of the long awaited cultivation land. The aforementioned land is a state forest located 12km away from the village and surrounded by 3 rubber companies, namely Gold Foison, Baria (H.M.H.) and Tan Bien. Although there is no specific size and the date of land transfer, the villagers of Sein Serrey welcomed the letter with excitement. The letter instructed the village authority to form a village committee to conduct a survey on the new land. Some people from a different location in Cambodia had already started to cultivate the mentioned state forest, as we learnt in hindsight. The main role of the committee was to stop further forest clearing by any party. Additionally, the committee was tasked to support the work of the district and commune officers in recording households that have cultivated the state forest area and the sizes of their  

chamkar. In accordance with the Order 001 of the Prime Minister Hun Sen issued in May 2012, state land will be granted to landless Cambodian people who have cleared and cultivated it prior to the issuance of the order. Hence, the people form Sein Serrey would only received the total size of the state forest in the area minus the size of state forest in the area that they have been cultivated before May 2012.

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31 This measurement was done by the researcher using GPS devices and Google Earth polygon calculation.
This latest development will not be included in the main analysis of food security and livelihood of the farmers. However, this thesis provides an additional section on the analysis of ‘potential’ and peoples’ aspirations regarding the new cultivation land.

In summary, the villagers of Bonteay Rongeang have experienced turbulent past of forced eviction from their residential and cultivation land due to illegal clearing of State forest. The time line process can be further seen in Figure 4.

The central and the local government were the main evicting actors. However, it is important to note that the decision to take strict sanctions against the villagers were only taken after the presence of Tan Bien Rubber Company as the recipient of ELC in the area. Up until this thesis was written, the government had not made full materialization of their commitment in 2009 to grant compensation for residential and cultivation lands. It was further worsen by the presence of the Military Development Unit who occupy large amount of land that complicated the cultivation land granting process as well as the presence of small scale land grabbing by individuals. For almost four years, the villagers had lived in limbo. The next chapter is dedicated to analyse the
capitals they possess and the combination of strategies they apply based on the capitals they have.

**III.III. Sein Serrey: Background Information**

The information elaborated in this section aims to elucidate the context at the village level which is very important to comprehend the types of vulnerability and strategies applied by the villagers. This section hence gives special attention to some of the key components of Sein Serrey rural living namely demography, level education, housing, as well as access to public facilities, services, and (concrete) food markets\(^{32}\) in addition to grocery shops. Furthermore, seasonal changes related to different activities and events will also be discussed. This particular set of information is also pertinent in the analysis of food availability, physical access to food, and food utilization.

The government of Cambodia established a new village called Phum Thmay in Kraya Commune to host 673 evicted families from Bonteay Rongeang. Two years after its establishment, the local authorities decided that Phum Thmay had grown too big as a village. Hence, to maintain effective and efficient village administration, Phum Thmay was divided into 2 villages namely Sein Serrey and Serrey Mongkul in 2011 by the District and Commune authorities. Up until this thesis is written, both Sein Serrey and Serrey Mongkul have not been recognized by the central government.

According to the village survey 2012, the total population of Sein Serrey is 1,338 persons, divided into 365 households. Generally, each household consist of three to six members. The following is a population pyramid generated from the 2012 census.

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\(^{32}\) As oppose to ‘abstract market’, e.g. stock market, where the flows of money are mostly hidden and where the ‘market’ itself is located in the network of people. (Braudel 1982)
The constrictive shape of the pyramid suggested that most of the population is older in average. While it is often argued that this type of demography reflects low mortality rate as well as decreasing fertility and birth rate, the findings of this research suggested that interviewees have averagely 3 to 5 children which cannot be considered as ‘low fertility’ nor ‘low birth rate’ by universal standard. However, based on the qualitative interviews with the villagers, outmigration of younger people (from age 3 to 14) is very common in the area. This fact must be taken into account while interpreting the pyramid since the migrated people were omitted by the referred census.

The census result also shows high numbers working-age population (15 to 60 years old). Although this figure seems promising, when we have a closer look at Table 1, this age group also shows a high percentage of illiteracy. This fact limits significantly the types of jobs they could possibly get, lowers their values, and puts them in a vulnerable position vis-à-vis the dynamic job market. Overall, 58% of the Sein Serrey population is illiterate and only 2.6% of the population experienced secondary and higher education. Intuitively, the villagers have gained more confidence in education to secure and sustain their livelihood. This is reflected in the increasing school participation of the younger generation. However, apart from the question about the quality of education they could in the village, there is also a question about how long they can enjoy school before they

33 The issue on migration will be elaborated in sub-chapter IV.III.
need to quit and start helping their parents in generating income for the households. Given this situation, agriculture skill and physical strength become their main ‘capital’ in searching for jobs. Most of the jobs that they can get around the village is paid daily, hence the household expenditure planning is design for daily consumption. They mostly spend what they earn in one day for consumption of the same day.
Table III.I. Number of Population and School Participation Based on Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Groups</th>
<th>Total Population</th>
<th>Kindergarten</th>
<th>Primary</th>
<th>Junior High School</th>
<th>High School</th>
<th>University</th>
<th>Vocational Training</th>
<th>Illiterate</th>
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<td>136</td>
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<td>778</td>
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<td>30</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>13</td>
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<td>Total</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>30</td>
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Besides demography and access to education, it is also important to highlight the living condition of Sein Serrey villagers in general to later identify their vulnerability profiles. Majority of the population lives in a minimalist Cambodian traditional house made of wood and grass roof. Each house, even when inhabited by more than one family, generally consists of one common bedroom and one outdoor kitchen where all the food is processed.

Culturally, bathroom or toilet is not an integral part of a house. There are only two cabins of toilets in the entire village that were built by local NGOs and are now out of order due to abandonment by the villagers. Most of the villagers collected the house materials when they cleared the residential land granted in 2009 from surrounding areas. Majority of the houses are built by the household members themselves in two to three days time. The minimum quality of the material as well as the construction made them vulnerable to weather and climate changes. Different NGOs came to Sein Serrey and built 26 wells, which are the main source of drinking water in the village. Each well is shared by minimum ten households. Less than ten households in the village actually own private wells. There is no electricity in the village, most of the houses electrical needs (lights during the night and phone charging) are run by batteries.

When it comes to locations, Sein Serrey has better access to physical capitals compared to the demolished village in Bonteay Rongeang. The closed district town, Kampong Thma is now located only 25 km away. Previously, they had to travel almost twice the distance to reach the district town where relatively big markets, health clinics, banks, and other facilities are

Picture III.II. Typical housing in Sein Serrey

Picture III.III. Typical Outdoor Kitchen in Sein Serrey

Picture III.IV. Main road to Sein Serrey
located. Financial services are now something that is within their reach. For instance, financial institutions that had never reached Bonteay Rongeang regularly come to Sein Serrey to provide credit and loans for the villagers.

When it comes to physical access to food, the closest group of grocery shops are located 2.1 km from the centre of Sein Serrey. The next closest village scale markets are located 9.27 km and 15.8 km away. To bring the goods even closer, several people from the neighbouring village started ‘mobile grocery shops’ business on motorcycles. These people travel to the markets to buy groceries, put them in large baskets they installed at the back of their motorcycles, and ride around villages in the area providing house-to-house services. This ‘moving market’ is the most popular shopping option in Sein Serrey. Since the villagers now have to buy most of their food as oppose to grow them in their chamkar, most of the interviewees admitted that there has been a diversification of food they consumed due to the closer access to markets. Some of the food that is included in their diet after moving to Sein Serrey are processed food (canned fish, dried and salted meat), bread, lake fish, shellfish, as well as snacks and sweets in general. Most of the interviewees welcomed this diversification and perceived them positively. They also see that moving to Sein Serrey brought them some benefits when it comes to access to goods and services.

Moreover, villagers’ activities and special events throughout the year is also very helpful in creating deeper understanding of rural living in Sein Serrey especially in identifying potential lean period. The following is the seasonal calendar developed based on various interviews with the villagers of Sein Serrey.
### Table III.II. Seasonal Calendar

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rainy Season</th>
<th>Dry Season</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>November</td>
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<td>May</td>
<td>December</td>
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<td>Jun</td>
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<td>Sep</td>
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<td>Oct</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

- **Flood**: April, May, June
- **Local Storm**: May, June, July
- **Cassava Farming And Drying**: April, May, June
- **Cassava Scavenging**: June, July
- **Rubber Farming**: June, July, August
- **Well digging**: July, August
- **Slash and Burn/ Forest Clearing**: August, September
- **Clearing**: September, October
- **Grass collecting and Roof Making**: October, November
- **Home vegetable gardening**: November, December
- **Fishing**: December
- **Influenza and fever**: January
- **Typhoid and Dhiaarea**: January
- **Lunar New Year**: January
- **Khmer New Year**: February
- **Pchum Ben Festival**: February

- **Transplanting**: April, May, June
- **Clearing**: June, July
- **Weeding**: July, August

- **Harvest+Drying**: July, August, September
- **Harvest+Drying**: August, September, October
- **Lunar New Year**: January
- **Khmer New Year**: February
- **Pchum Ben Festival**: February
While the detailed explanation of each activities will be elaborated later in chapter IV, it is important to note that September-October period has the highest chance to be the lean period. The main reason is because most of the activities are stalled due to heavy rainfall. Besides reducing the daily income significantly, the ‘moving markets’ on motorcycles also stop operating due to the flooded road. Moreover, October is the month of Pchum Ben festival, is a 15 days ritual celebrated by the Buddhist laity to pray for their deceased kin and ancestors. During the half-month of continuous ritual, the income generating activities are suspended since people are moving around the country to gather with their kin.\textsuperscript{34} Hence people’s spending is higher than the income they generate during this period especially for those who are paid daily. More than anything else, the lean period is mostly caused by the lack of physical and economic access to food.

\textsuperscript{34}Although only for several days as oppose to two weeks Pchum Ben celebration, this tradition of travelling to get together with kin is also practiced during Lunar and Khmer New Year.
Chapter IV

Livelihood Strategies and their Food Security related Outcomes
This chapter analyses the livelihood strategies Sein Serrey’s villagers used in dealing with the common external shock of land grabs. In addition to the external shock, the set of income generating activities chosen by households will also be determined, among other things, by their internal characteristics. While the external shock and the overall situation in Sein Serrey were outlined in Chapter III, this chapter starts with the explanation of the internal of household livelihoods. Subsequently, it individually explores income-generating activities undertaken by the villagers. This thesis argues that the villager’s main approach is to diversify their income generating activities. The chapter classifies households into 11 categories based on the different combinations of income-generating activities they engage in. Finally, the outcomes of those combinations on food security are assessed.

IV. I. Internal Sides of Livelihood Vulnerabilities

This section basically argues that in addition to the common external shock of land grabs, there are also ‘internal sides of livelihood vulnerabilities’ that create different levels of vulnerability and/or opportunity for each type of household (Niehof, Op. Cit.). This section also integrates the discussion on access to capital, namely human, natural, financial, physical and social. The ‘key internal sides of livelihood vulnerability’ identified in Sein Serrey include dependency ratio, ownership/possession of land, location of residential lands, access to machines and vehicles, and social network. This sub-section now examines these indicators in more detail.

IV. II. I. Household Composition: gender, age and physical ability

Dependency ratios, which show the ratio of persons who are economically dependent on those who provide, are particularly relevant in the case of Sein Serrey. This is especially true when it comes to the discussion of human capital. Factors such as age (children and elderly) and medical and maternal conditions (pregnancy and breastfeeding, long term illnesses) all contribute to explaining the unproductiveness of certain household members. Moreover, children and sick people cannot be left unattended; hence, other potential labourers must remain at home as a caretaker and consequently cannot directly contribute to the household’s economy (usually the female

35 Physical capital related to infrastructure and technology were detailed in the previous section.
of the house). Households with more productive members (low dependency ratio) evidently earn more than those less. Naturally, the former is thus also less vulnerable to food insecurities. In Sein Serrey, 59 of 365 households are recorded to have more dependents than productive members, as a 2013 survey conducted by the commune officials shows. This represents approximately 16% of the total households in Sein Serrey.

V.II.II. Access to Land Ownership

Access to land is the core of rural living especially in agricultural societies. Land is also by far the most wanted asset according to the villagers. Every registered family which moved to Sein Serrey from Bonteay Rongeang was granted a piece of residential land sized 20x40m. Of 365 households, only five, or 1.3% of the total households, own additional land. Let us analyse these five households in more detail.

One of these households received one hectare from the ‘cultivation’ land granting process phase II. However, as mentioned in Chapter 3, the land is unproductive. The researcher visited the site and while some parts of the land were very dry, other parts were flooded. Furthermore, the land was densely forested with large trees. Clearing costs, we should note, would thus be very high. Two years after having been granted the land, the family was still without the necessary resources to clear the land. The land could also not be sold or used as a collateral for loans because the quality is too poor. Therefore, the family was the de jure owner of the land, yet it was de facto useless land.

Two landowners actually bought their cultivation plots. One household got the money from a daughter engaged to a foreigner (hence the plot is in the daughter’s name) and the other used his savings from when he was working as a mechanic in his hometown (before Bonteay Rongeang). Needless to say, these two land buyers are the exception since they possessed resources others simply could not afford or obtain. However, since both of them did not have much money in the first place, they could only afford land with poor quality. Both land plots were not densely forested; however, they were prone to flooding during rainy season.

The fourth landowner cleared 3ha of state forest near Ou Beoung Raong, close to where the demolished village of Bonteay Rongeang was located. In late 2012, the earlier mentioned student volunteers (Directive 001) demarcated the land the fourth owner had cleared; she therefore received the land title soon after. The fifth and last

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36 land re-distribution project by the Prime Minister Hun Sen. Please refer to Chapter II.
landowner inherited 100m² of land in Kampong Cham (neighbouring province). The village chief mentioned that there might be more unidentified landowners in the village. These are presumed to have made the land transaction secretly without declaring their ownerships. Most likely, these people are afraid that the government would not grant them cultivation land knowing that they already bought land.

In summary, the importance of this is that all five landowners in Sein Serrey acquired their land through the help of external factors, whether it be the government, marriage/engagement gift, inheritance, or savings from a prior jobs. None of them acquired the land by using the income they generate from the strategies applied in Sein Serrey—something that remains impossible in the light of very low income and almost no chance of profitability.

IV.II.III. Geographical Location of Residential Land

Steppacher (2008) made a distinction between two elements of property, namely possession and property rights. Steppacher defines possession as the “inclusive bundle of rights and duties connected with the concrete material use and return of resources, production technologies, products, and waste”. Property rights, on the other hand, are “de jure claims” which entitle the holder to intangible capacities for the conduct of economic activities such as using it for collateral (Steiger 2006). While the previous chapter revolved around access to land ownership, this chapter focuses more closely on access to land possession.
Chapter III explained that households that arrived in Sein Serrey because of the eviction process in 2009 had to randomly draw a number that determined the location of their land plot. Even though the size of the land plots is identical, some households were more fortunate than others. The map IV.I reveals that household plots coloured orange (close to the stream) feature the advantage of providing the possibility to clear extra land behind their official plots; a strategy that most households in those plots took up. The cleared land ranged from 50x20m to 200x20m (20 m is the official width of their land plots in the front). Needless to say, this allows them to increase their agricultural output. Moreover, access to water makes the crop choices more varied; for example, instead of cassava, the orange households grew sugar cane and vegetables. In total, the orange coloured households represent 7% of the total number of households in Sein Serrey.

Blue plots, accounting for about 5% of the total households, indeed also feature empty spots.
behind the residential land; however, those areas are located too close to the stream and are hence prone to flooding during rainy season. Additionally, blue land plots are exposed to another hazard. During the rainy season when precipitation is very heavy, both plots of land, i.e. residential and extra land, are flooded. This decreases the incentive for home gardening. Moreover, their crop options are, as an effect of the proximity to the stream, limited to water intensive crops, e.g. morning glory/water spinach and sugar cane.

The majority of land plots in Sein Serrey are located far from the stream (purple). Apart from the fact that purple households cannot clear more land to cultivate, they are also limited crops with low water requirements since their residential plots feature water unavailability. Purple land plots usually plant cassava since it does not require a regular water supply apart from the normal rainfall.

IV. II. IV. Access to Vehicles and Machines

As most agricultural societies, every household in Sein Serrey owns at least the most basic farming tools. However, no household owns agricultural machinery. Since they only have limited land to cultivate, there is no incentive to invest in machinery. In the entire village, there is only one household that owns a chainsaw, which is mostly used to clear land and to prepare house construction materials.

Vehicles, especially motorcycles, are seen as an important asset to secure livelihood. The further the distance that the villagers can travel, the more opportunities they have to get jobs. Motorcycles also help households to increase the productivity of disabled or old household members since the walking distance is minimized. Motorcycles are also used for such activities as mobile food selling (cakes and desserts), the collecting of recyclables, etc. Unfortunately, there are only a few households that can afford motorcycles. Bicycles are, when necessary, considered a more affordable alternative. Nevertheless, for many households in Sein Serrey, the prices of bicycles (even second hand ones) are still beyond reach.

IV.II.IV. Social Network

In rural context, as in any other context, connections and networks co-determine chances and opportunities in life. In the case of Sein Serey, a household’s social network can be, and often was, of significant value, especially in regard to jobs, access to abandoned land in the village, and access to loans.
As explained in previous sections, the former subsistent farmers were now forced to compete in the labour market to generate income. In the agricultural sector, social networks are useful since every plantation in Cambodia employs a labour supervisor or meka. Mekas are responsible for recruiting plantation labours and supervise their work. Interviews with mekas revealed that they recruited labours they already know, mostly through kinship ties and/or friends. Rarely do they recruit people they do not know. This is, as they claim, due to trust issues. Another option to working with mekas is to seek a job from neighbours with crop production in chamkar. Here as well, employers prefer to hire people whom they already know. Finding a job outside the village is extremely hard for rural people without education backgrounds, limited access to media, and almost no experience of living outside of their village. Relatives or friends are their main sources of information on job recruitments in the city. These relatives or friends are also the ones who usually helped them settle in the new place. This remains also true for the case when villagers conduct international migrations, especially to Thailand. Rural people usually go abroad through brokers, or meksal, that happen to be their relatives or friends.

Outmigration in Sein Serrey is steadily increasing over the years, leaving behind empty land plots. Several out-migrating households granted the possession without charge of the residential land (not the property right) of their neighbours in the village for the duration of their absence. Several households also admitted that due to their close relations with the monks in the pagoda, they are allowed to plant some crops in the pagoda yard.

Regarding loans, despite the presence of financial institutions in Sein Serrey, kin and close friends still play the key role as moneylenders. This is a very important factor since kin and close friends usually do not charge them for interest and give them more flexibility regarding the duration of loan. Hence, good connection to potential moneylenders can add another layer to the villagers’ buffers.

IV.III. Income Generating Activities

This sub-chapter elaborates the various activities undertaken by the villagers of Sein Serrey in order to generate income. In responding the common shock that caused them to lose their land, diversification of income generating activities seems to be the
common ‘strategy’\textsuperscript{37} that villagers applied. Hence, in general, households combine at least two income-generating activities to secure their livelihood. The followings are the type of income generating activities undertaken by the villagers to secure their livelihood, including food consumption.

A. Farming at the Residential Land

With the absence of \textit{chamkar} for most of the people in Sein Serrey, reliance on household farming was significantly reduced. However, household farming was never discounted entirely. Every household in Sein Serrey owns crop cultivations in their 40x20m residential land. Due to the poor quality of the soil, cassava became the most popular crop. Cassava grows even on very dry land with minimum irrigation. Rainfall during rainy season is enough to maintain the crop. Every interviewee declared that, due to the poor soil quality, the cassava yield in Sein Serrey is half of the yield obtained in Bonteay Rongeang. Furthermore, almost all interviewees also submitted that yield had declined in the last years. For this type of farming on residential land, villagers do not invest in fertilizer since their income is mostly used to buy food. Since their production scale is very small, they also do not spend money to hire labourers.

The annual yield ranges on average from 500 to 2,000kg. The 2013 price of 1kg of fresh cassava is KHR 250 (USD 0.06) and the price of dried cassava (peeled, chopped, dried) is KHR 700 (USD 0.17). Hence, the annual income generated from this activity ranges from 125,000 (USD 31.25) to 1,400,000 (USD 350\textsuperscript{38}). There is indeed a large discrepancy and it is mostly determined by capital a household invested in their \textit{chamkar}.

The range also depends on the yield, as

\begin{figure}[h]
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\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{picture.png}
\caption{Picture IV.I. A basket of dried cassava}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{37} This thesis is careful in using the term ‘strategy’ since it implies a plan of action chosen by an actor. The diversification of income generating activities and the ‘de-agrarianisation’ were not necessarily a choice wittingly entertained. The villagers were/are forced to ‘choose’ merely by the fact that they had lost their land and lacked financial means. They diversified their income generating activity and moved away from farming activities by necessity instead of by choice. However, it is also important to underline that within the framework of the given circumstances, their ability to ‘choose’, and thus their agency, remained intact.

\textsuperscript{38} Explanation on whether this number is ‘much’ or not will be elaborated in section IV.V. when the thesis compares the annual income with daily food expenditures.
well as farmers’ decisions to sell their crops fresh or dried; and, if mixed, the proportion of cassava production that is sold fresh and dried respectively. What is important to understand in this respect is that already poor households tend to also generate a lower income from this activity. This is because they are not able to invest as much as ‘less poor’ households into their cultivations. Because poorer households require immediate income, they also tend to sell fresh cassava which requires less time to process.

Several households with access to the stream and/or an irrigation system also plant sugar cane in addition to their cassava cultivation, even though there is no high demand for sugar or sugar cane pool around the area. Most of the villagers with sugar cane sell it to their neighbours for fresh snacks. The sugarcane is harvested three times in one year. The villagers stated that from each harvest they could earn KHR 100,000 (USD 25), hence each year they would earn KHR 300,000 (USD 75).

In relations with pastoral activities, even though it is common in Cambodia for agriculture families to own big animas like cows and buffalos, none of the people in Sein Serrey do own them. Most of them own cattle like chickens and ducks. The majority of them only have five to ten chickens with ten to twenty chicks. Cattle owning in the case of Sein Serrey is not perceived as a profitable. Most of the interviewees who own them had only been selling one to two chickens in the past year. Rather than income generating, these types of activities are seen as future insurances. The villagers claimed that they mostly eat the chickens or ducks whenever they do not have enough food to eat.

B. On-Farm Agriculture on Chamkar

Several households in Sein Serrey own crop cultivations on chamkars or additional cultivation lands apart from their own residential land. Capital allocation is mainly concentrated on farming activities and only few villagers are still not involved in other sectors (labour force selling, small business, etc.). Some of the households rented cultivation land from the villagers of Thmar Samlieng, a neighbouring village located two kilometres away from Sein Serrey, for KHR 400,000 (USD 100) per ha. Farmers that cultivate crops in the cleared areas around the stream and irrigation system mostly fall under this category of activity. The people who ‘borrow’ residential land plots from their neighbours who are migrating outside Sein Serrey usually also conduct on-farm agriculture activities on chamkars. The soil in the area is most suitable for cassava cultivation. Moreover, a large cassava pool is located near the border of Thmar Samlieng,
making it logical for villagers to focus on cassava cultivation. Unlike farming activities in the residential land, households cultivating crops on chamkar usually invest in fertilizer and herbicide\(^{39}\). Therefore, their cassava production on their chamkar is much higher than those in residential land farming. Moreover, since they cultivate slightly larger land plots, they need to hire agricultural labourers to work on their land. They usually hired up to five people around five times a year (each time for two to five days) to plant, weed, harvest, peel and chop the cassava.

One interviewee maintained that he harvested 18 tons of fresh cassavas in 2013 from two hectares of chamkar. This household sold five tons of dried cassava\(^{40}\) for KHR 3,500,000 (USD 875) and eight tons of fresh cassava for KHR 1,800,000 (450). After deductions of production costs (labours, chemicals, transportations, etc.), the net income from cassava farming on 2ha chamkar is KHR 2,325,455 (USD 581).

Some of the households who do farming activities on chamkar also own land (by inheritance) outside Sein Serrey where they grow rice. Ownership of more than one land plot (residential land and inherited land) also gives the aforementioned households more flexibility regarding loans from financial institutions. To get loans, households can use their land as collateral, as mentioned earlier. Usually, the households will use only one of the land plots they have as collateral and use the rest as a buffer. Therefore, in case they cannot pay their debts, they will still have land to cultivate.

Interviewees also mentioned that the rice they produce could cover three to four months of household consumption. Even though not necessarily wealthier, on-farm activities are highly respected in the society since by recruiting local workers, it is regarded as a contribution to the village’s economy.

**C. Off-Farm Agricultural Labours and Service Sector in the Kraya Commune**

When the villagers of Sein Serrey sell their labour in the off-farm sector, they almost exclusively do so in the agriculture and service sectors. This includes those who sell their labours and provide services in Kraya Commune without going beyond the commune level. Normally, households that sell part of their labour force have more productive household members than dependents. Most of the time they are involved in

\(^{39}\) The herbicide product that can be easily found in Sein Serrey costs 55,000 per can (5 litres). 1 ha of land requires 15 cans of herbicide. The fertilizer product cost 13,000 per can (0.5 litres). 1 ha of land requires 8 cans.

\(^{40}\) After drying process, cassava loses half of its weight. Hence, five tons of dried cassava are produced from ten tons of fresh cassava.
agricultural off-farm activities at rubber companies around Sein Serrey, on *chamkar* of other farmers from neighbouring villages and for the Military Development Unit. Several villagers with slightly higher skills can also benefit from selling their labour in the service industry, e.g. in the transportation and construction sector.

**Off-farm agricultural labour**

Four major rubber companies are in the area surrounding Sein Serrey, and villagers almost exclusively work for them. These are Baria, CCV, Gold Foison, and Tan Bien. As mentioned in earlier sections, recruitments are completed by labour supervisors (*mekas*) who originally come from outside the commune. The *mekas* prefer labourers to stay in the free housing provided by the companies. On the one hand, this is because the company can then increase the hours worked as well as the days spent at the company. Workers returning home tend to skip workdays. On the other hand, most *mekas* run small grocery businesses on the housing compound. *Mekas* usually price their goods approximately 10% higher than regular market prices. While workers are theoretically free to shop outside of the company’s parameters, most of them were scared that if they did not buy the grocery from the *mekas*, they would not be rehired in the future. Needless to say, *mekas* actually do hold the power to hire worker, not only on the field but also after the initial hiring.

The villagers of Sein Serrey in fact hesitantly stated that working for the rubber companies has never been their first choice for various reasons. The most popular answer as to why they did not want to work for the companies was that they do not want to stay inside the company compound since they still wanted to work on their cultivation on the residential land. They also want to remain flexible for the possibility of a better job offer. Only two households let two/three of their productive household members stay and work at the company compound. The rest only accepted job offers when the companies let them to go home at the end of the day. The second most popular reason was that the rubber companies did not pay them daily. Every *mekas* is given a portion of land plots to manage (either to clear, to plant, or to weed—depending on the season).
The *meka* only pays the labourers under his supervision after the work on the field was finished; something that usually takes one to two weeks depending on the size of the field. The villagers of Sein Serrey almost always spend their earnings on the very same day; they thus manage their expenditure on a daily basis. Long term financial planning is not practiced. Hence, the villagers, whose financial strategy depends on a daily spending routine, cannot afford or, at the very least, are not willing to consider a less frequently paid salary than daily. This has to do, I would like to think, more with psychological reasons rather than financial ones. “I feel insecure if I am not paid daily,” said a villager during an interview who was later echoed by other villagers.

The third reason why the villagers are reluctant to work for the rubber companies is because there are many cases where the *mekas* ran away without paying their salary. Being cheated, or having heard of others being cheated, by *mekas* has also intensified their feeling of insecurity towards working for the rubber companies. Only one interviewee stated that he and his household members did not want to work for the companies because of the past land conflict or land grabbing phenomena. However, because the demand for other types of labours is relatively low, villagers were forced to overcome their aversion of working for rubber companies.

Other types of off-farm agricultural labour jobs, for example in surrounding *chamkar* or in the Military Development Unit, provide more flexibility in terms of payment and accommodation. The labourers are paid daily and they can always live in their own houses. There is no *mekas* involved and they can decide on which days they want to go work and when they want to stay at home working on their residential land farming. However, the labour demand in surrounding *chamkar* and Military Development Units is not as high. Sein Serrey’s labourers rarely stick to one type of agricultural work exclusively. Normally, they will combine both activities depending on demand.

Except for the peeling and chopping works, the labour payments are the same for work in the company or outside of it, i.e. KHR 15,000 (USD 3.75) per day. For

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41 The villagers in fact have several options to support themselves financially during the first two weeks of works at the companies. The local grocery shops allow the villagers to get interest free loans from them. They will take note what the villagers ‘buy’ and allow them pay later when they have money. Hence, it provides an alternative for the villagers who want to work for the company and need money to support the first two weeks of food consumption. Moreover, the *mekas* usually offer to lend money to the villagers without interest. This is also another mean to increase their control over their workers.

42 Personal communication.

43 Even though Tan Bien’s tractors and heavy machines were burned by protesters in 2008, throughout the interviews the villagers rarely villainized the companies for their lost of land. Rather than blaming the companies, the villagers vituperated the government for not fulfilling their promise to give them the cultivation land.
cassava chopping and peeling, the payment is based on how many basket of cassava a labourer can peel and chop. Each basket is worth KHR 500 riel. In one day, a worker can peel and chop around 20 baskets of cassava and earn KHR 10,000 (USD 2.5). A labourer can work up to four days in one week, except for September and October. As can be seen from the seasonal calendar in the previous section, agricultural activities are mostly halted in September and October due to heavy rain, flood, and Pchum ben festival. Hence, the annual individual income from off-farm agricultural labour ranges from KHR 1,600,000 (USD 400) to 2,400,000 (USD 600). On average in one household, there are two to three people who sell their labour. Hence, annually a household can earn KHR 3,200,000 (USD 800) to KHR 7,200,000 (USD 1800).

Service Sector and the Villagers

In addition to off-farm agricultural activities, those villagers of Sein Serrey who additionally possess non-agriculture skills can become involved in the service sector, most often in transportation and construction. There is a collective taxi (van) that covers return voyages from Kraya to Phnom Penh. The taxi's owner is from Serrey Monkul, a neighbouring village. She hires two drivers from Sein Serrey. Each of them could earn USD 100 per month if they worked full time. However, since there are two drivers and one car, the drivers have to alternate every several weeks. Their maximum annual salary is approximately USD 1,000, which is similar to agricultural labour.

There are also several villagers who work as construction workers (usually building houses). Their pay is KHR 15,000 per day.

There are also less regular service jobs like well digging which pays KHR 70,000 per meter. The average well depth in Sein Serrey is three to four meters. Annually, a labourer can only get two to three well digging jobs and earn about KHR 630,000 (USD 157.5). This income can only cover 1 month of expenditures. Another less regular job is fortune telling. Cambodians consult fortune tellers when facing important decisions in life (e.g. marriage, jobs, family matters, life choices, etc.). Sometimes they merely seek for insight into the future or potential problems. This tradition

\[44 \text{10,000 (income) x 28 (days of work per month) x 10 (active months in one year)}\]

\[45 \text{15,000 (income) x 28 (days of work per month) x 10 (active months in one year)}\]
is deeply culturally rooted and makes fortune telling a serious occupation. However, since the surrounding villagers are poor and cannot make big financial contributions, fortune tellers can only generate a small additional income, around KHR 10,000 (USD 2.5) per week. Several villagers also possess mechanic skills to repair motorcycles. However, the demand for this skill is not high in Sein Serrey. In a month, they can usually only earn around KHR 60,000 (USD 15). To meet their needs, the fortune tellers and mechanics are forced to engage in off-farm agricultural labour.

D. Small Scale goods production and the Processing Sector

The small scale goods production and processing sector category includes activities that transform raw materials into intermediate or finished goods, including food processing. Households that conduct these activities are usually equipped with non-agricultural skills that they acquired from outside Sein Serrey. Moreover, these villagers normally started their small-scale goods-producing and processing business before moving to Sein Serrey.

The first activity that falls into this group is the production of charcoal. Charcoal production in fact used to be one of the most popular income generating activities in Bonteay Rongeang. However, the number of households conducting this activity decreased substantially since it requires a large space to make charcoal.

There are only a handful of households left that still undertake this activity. Most of them do it secretly in the middle of state forest, approximately 5km away from Sein Serrey. This forestland is not supposed to be used by unauthorized parties. The state forest provides them with the space they need as well as with logs, the main material of charcoal making. It takes two weeks to produce 600 to 700kg of charcoals. Since it is small scale, they do not usually hire labourers to help them. When the charcoals are ready, the buyers normally come to pick them up by car in the state forest. The price of each kg of charcoal is KHR 450 (USD 0.1). If the producers could take their charcoal product to the market in Kampong Thmor, the selling price would double. However, no producer in Sein Serrey owns a
truck or other mean of transportation. Just like other activities, charcoal production is halted in September and October due to the heavy rain and floods. The annual income of the producers is thus approximately KHR 5,850,000 (USD 1,462). However, the charcoal producers are under continuous threat due to the breaching of forest regulation.

When combined with other activities, the villagers of Sein Serrey also consider food-processing jobs as a relatively reliable source of income. The most popular choice of food processing is sweet snacks that can be easily packaged. These households usually possess cooking equipment that is not usually part of Cambodia’s traditional kitchen, e.g. grinders or special cooking pans. They also usually have access to bicycles and/or motorcycles to carry their goods around the village for sale. In a day, they can make up to KHR 30,000 (USD 7.5). In one household, usually only one person is responsible for this business (most commonly the female of the house). Some producers submitted that due to some ingredient shortages in the village, they could only produce and sell the foods four days a week. During heavy rainy season, they usually stop producing and selling goods due to the higher prices of the ingredients. Flooded roads often also prevent the selling of these types of foods. Therefore, producers can only conduct this activity for ten months a year. Their annual income is on average KHR 4,800,000 (USD 1,200).

The last good that is commonly produced and traded in Sein Serrey are roofs made of braided reed grass. The producers collect stacks of reed grass which grow wildly in the surrounding area of Sein Serrey. This type of artisan work depends very much on the season. The grass-collecting season starts normally from December to March. The producers usually spend four days in one week collecting grass. One day, an artisan can make seven to eight pieces of roof. However, the buyers started buying roofs near the beginning of rainy season, which is late April. A piece of roof (1.5m long) is sold for KHR 1000 (USD 0.25). In one year, a producer can sell up to 100 pieces. Hence, their annual income is roughly KHR 100,000 (USD 25). Obviously, to meet their basic needs, they have to combine this activity with other sources of income.
E. Small Shops, Rotating Savings and Credit Association (ROSCA)

Households conducting the above-mentioned activities most often own small convenience shops and/or are engaged in ROSCA. They sell consumer goods ranging from instant and processed food, cigarettes, beer, tea, sugar, etc. Their stock is usually limited to very small quantities. They buy the supplies from Kampong Thmar market and transport them using motorcycles or collective taxis. The ‘shop’ is not really a separate place, but rather the front part of their house. Normally, these households lack agricultural background knowledge. Rather, they used to work in the service industries outside Sein Serrey, e.g. as teachers, medics or in different organizations (including AHADA). Typically, they switched to small shop activities for various reasons, e.g. retirement, dismissal from the organization, etc. These households tend to be literate and have higher educational qualifications. They are familiar with different credit schemes and took the advantage to get and manage loans to start a business. Normally, the shop is run by one household member, leaving other members free to engage in other income generating activities.

Having small shop as income generating activity is more permanent compared to the others explored so far. It is also less influenced by changes in seasons. In one day, a household’s net income from the shop is on average KHR 35,000 (USD 8.75). Because their shops are essentially their homes, they can conduct this activity everyday. It should be noted, however, that since most of the villagers of Sein Serrey have a lower income during the rainy season, which obviously then has repercussions on the sale numbers of the shops. In a year, they can earn KHR 10,675,000 (USD 3000).

In addition to this, households of this type organize their own ROSCA. ROSCA is defined as “an association formed upon a core of participants who agree to make regular contributions to a fund which is given, in whole or in part, to each contributor in rotation” (Ardener 1964 cited in Hevener 2012, p. 6). There is one person responsible as an organizer and collector of the money contributions. There are different types of ROSCA but the one evident in Sein Serrey is the ‘bidding type’ which uses ‘bidding’ to determine who receives the pot of money. The basic contribution for each member is KHR 20,000 (USD 5) and it is conducted in a daily rotation basis. A participant’s bid amount is the amount of each other bidder’s daily contribution that the bidding participant is willing to sacrifice in exchange or early receipt of the pot. The person who receives the pot is the person with the highest bid. The highest bid for that day then translates into a discount
for some of the participants (who have not received a pot). Therefore, the participants who have not received pot, instead of paying full, only pay the basic contribution (KHR 20,000) minus the highest bid of the day. Discounts are not applied to the participants who have won the bid. They would have to pay the full basic contribution until all participants have received a pot. When every participant has received a pot, the round will start over. The ROSCA scheme can be seen on the table below.

Table IV.I. ROSCA Scheme in Sein Serrey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>D 1</th>
<th>D 2</th>
<th>D 3</th>
<th>D 4</th>
<th>D 5</th>
<th>D 6</th>
<th>D 7</th>
<th>D 8</th>
<th>D 9</th>
<th>D 10</th>
<th>D …</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Highest Bid (KHR 000) (Hypothetical)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>…</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Participants</td>
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<td>P1</td>
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<td>20</td>
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<td>…</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
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<td>20</td>
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<td>20</td>
<td>…</td>
<td>195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P3</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
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<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>…</td>
<td>191</td>
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<tr>
<td>P4</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>20</td>
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<td>186</td>
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<td>P5</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16</td>
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<td>182</td>
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<td>P6</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16</td>
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<td>…</td>
<td>177</td>
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<td>P7</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16</td>
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<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
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<td>173</td>
</tr>
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<td>P8</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>…</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P9</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>…</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P10</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>…</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
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<td>…</td>
<td>…</td>
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<td>…</td>
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<td>…</td>
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<td>…</td>
<td>…</td>
<td>…</td>
<td>…</td>
<td>…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Received (TR)</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>…</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The blue shades signify the day when a participant receives his or her pot.

Here it becomes apparent that the participants who need the money immediately will bid higher to win the pot early. They are usually the ones with a weaker economic standing and therefore cannot wait until the last turn of the bidding. They do this knowing well that in the end, this might mean that they lose money. Meanwhile, the

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46 The numbers are randomly chosen for illustration. In reality, the highest bid depends on the preference of the participants.
participants who do not need the money immediately (mainly because they have other sources of income) can wait until the later stage of the round so they can generate higher profit.

The Sein Serrey ROSCA had 35 members at the time of my research and they are all shop owners since they are the ones always easy to find by organizers for money collection (they are always at their shop instead of working in the field or companies). They are also the ones who can afford contributing KHR 20,000 everyday. Lastly, they are the ones who are familiar with credit and micro-finance schemes. In the local society, this type of households is considered wealthier and more educated than the rest.

F. Migration of Household Members

Limited opportunity and low labour rewards in Sein Serrey have led household members to emigrate to various places in Cambodia and abroad. Households where a member has emigrated rely on the migrating member(s) to earn money to support the livelihoods of the household. These households usually have more dependents than productive members. The productive members feel the necessity of going out of the village to find a job that is more promising in terms of income. Moreover, they are usually the ones with stronger connections and networks compared to the other households. As mentioned earlier, information sharing is very limited among the villagers in the village. Therefore the existence of a network of recruiters and intermediaries that help facilitate migration, as well as kinship relations at migration destinations play an essential role.

The statistics for migrating individuals in 2011 can be seen in Table 2 below.47

Table IV.II. Migration Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Migration</th>
<th>Destination</th>
<th>Number of Migrant</th>
<th>Percentage of total population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Domestic</td>
<td>Phnom Penh</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other Provinces</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International</td>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>251</td>
<td>18.75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

47 Source: Sein Serrey Survey
Since the villagers do not have a strong education background, they tend to work as low-skilled labourers in the destination locations, mostly as agricultural and industrial (garment factories) labourers.

What is interesting to observe is that for the domestic migration, the income migrants can earn and thus send back is equivalent to the income a local household member can generate as an agricultural labourer in Sein Serrey; however, because migrants still need to pay for expenses at the host location, the remittance amount is slightly below the earning of a local agricultural labourer. The older generation (normally household heads) migrated simply because of the tight competition in the Kraya Commune job market. The case is different with the younger generations (normally the eldest children). Their aspirations to living outside Sein Serrey are also an important factor pushing them to migrate. Some of the younger generation asserted that they did not want to engage in outdoor work in the field as agricultural workers. Even though it is paid the same, they would rather move away from their family and work elsewhere.

For international migration, in addition to the prospect of a better life abroad, the pull factors are the high demand for less skilled labourers in 3D jobs (dangerous, demanding, dirty) from neighbouring countries like Thailand and Malaysia (Maltoni, 2007). If we take a closer look at the statistics, the number of people who migrated to Malaysia is significantly lower than other migration destinations. The main reason of the low number of migrants, despite the high demand, is because Cambodia issued a moratorium on sending migrant workers to Malaysia due to reports of abuse and death of Cambodian workers in Malaysia since 2011 (VOA 2013). According to the migration agent in Sein Serrey, Malaysia used to be a popular destination since the placement process takes shorter time. The wages that the migrants can earn range from USD 180 to USD 200 per month. Their salary will be deducted by the labour supplying company up to USD 80 per month for six months. The highest demand from Malaysian labour supply companies is for domestic and construction workers. Prior to the departure to Malaysia, the migrants were given free English course by the recruiting company in Phnom Penh for three months, including accommodation and food. During the course, they were also given USD 100 to support their family back home in Sein Serrey and USD 80 for themselves (buying clothes, suitcase, etc.). Even though it sounds promising, working condition in Malaysia do not show a good record in terms of the safety of workers. One villager’s daughter had worked in Malaysia for two years as a domestic assistant; she maintained that she only spoke to her daughter twice in two years. She had
never told her mother when she is going to come home and she had never sent any remittances home. Her family suspected that her employer kept her salary and prevented her from calling home, which is often the case (HRW 2011).

Thailand is now the main international migration destination. For villagers of Sein Serrey, the transfer of migrants to Thailand is basically conducted by Cambodian Labour Supply (CLS), a Phnom Penh based labour supply company that holds an official license from the government. The company appointed one local agent to recruit potential workers and coordinate the licensing and travel documentations at the local level. The jobs offered by CLS are mainly industrial and construction labour related. Factory workers can earn THB 9000 to THB 15000 (USD 300 to USD 450) a month while construction workers can earn THB 9000 (USD 300). Through this channel, the migrants have to wait seven to eight months before they can migrate and commence their work in Thailand.

For this reason, many people chose the informal (and mostly illegal) migration channels. There are established migration networks that bring people across borders. People transferred to Thailand through this border, spread the words to their kinship and bring along more people to join. To be transferred to Thailand, a potential migrant must pay THB 1700 (55 USD), but they can then go right away without having to wait seven to eight months. People who are migrating through this channel usually do not have passports and working visas. Instead, they only apply for what they call daily border passes issued by the immigration office at the border. This fact makes them vulnerable to trafficking, abuse, and deportation.

The family members who stay in Sein Serrey attested that the remittances that were sent home range from KHR 300,000 (USD 75) to 500,000 (USD 125); hence, their annual income is USD 900 to USD 1500.

Households that successfully send some of their members to the cities and, especially, abroad are perceived to be upper class households. This is supported by the fact that when the migrants return to Sein Serrey, they became more ‘modern’ in the way they dress and present themselves. Furthermore, the ones who worked abroad spoke foreign languages. Unlike the others, they also display ownerships of jewelries and modern electronic devices (run by batteries) such as portable DVD player and small television.
G. Collection and Trade of Goods

In addition to residential land farming, the collection and trade of goods household collects goods and/or natural resources to be traded subsequently. Households that undertake this job stated that this is one of the last things they could do to generate income without selling their assets. They said that, if they could, they would rather do agricultural or construction labour.

The most common item collected by the households is cassava. The collected cassava are planted by other households in their chamkar. Normally, after a harvest, there are some leftover cassava or cassava trees in the chamkar. Starting in the harvesting season, the ‘scavengers’ go around Kraya Commune to find harvested chamkar to collect the leftover cassava. This activity continues until the beginning of the next planting season. It gets harder over time to collect cassava and towards the end of the scavenging season the abandoned chamkars turn into small forests with spiny shrubs. Another challenge is that sometimes scavengers are accused of being thieves who steal crops even though the chamkar had been long abandoned after harvested. With this type of activity, in one day, a household (normally with two members working) can collect up to 80kg of cassava. They usually sell it fresh for KHR 250 per kg. They normally go four times a week, seven months in the year. Hence, their annual income from this activity is KHR 2,240,000 (USD 560).

Some of the households who fall under this type also collect bamboos near the stream. Bamboos are sold in a bunch of 15 stakes. It usually takes a household (normally with two members working) two to three days to collect one bunch. Each month, they can only sell two to three bunches for KHR 25,000 each. Thus, annually, this activity only generate up to KHR 750,000 (USD 187.5)

The last items discussed in this sub-section are recyclable items collected by some villagers. They not only collect recyclable items, they also buy used items like iron, beer cans, plastic bottles, and ordinary tin, to then sell them later for a higher price. Households who undertake this activity usually own a motorcycle to transport the items to the pool in the provincial capital of Kampong Thom (2 hours by motorcycle). Due to
the distance of the recycling pool, these households cannot conduct this activity often, maximum twice a month. Only one member of each household is involved in this activity. Each time they go to collect and sell the recyclable items, they can earn KHR 30,000 (USD 7.5) to KHR 40,000 (USD 10). Therefore, in a year (excluding September and October when the rain is heavy), they can earn USD 150 to USD 200.

H. Outmigration of the Entire Household Members

Even though it is argued to be one of the latest responses in livelihood strategies (Watts Op. cit.; Frankerberger and Goldstein Op.Cit.), outmigration of the entire household was also one of the first moves that the villagers of Sein Serrey made after they realized that they did not have enough land to cultivate and that Sein Serrey can only offer limited opportunity for a sustained livelihood. As described, figure I.I. that is adapted from Frankerberger and Goldstein as well as Watts, does not reflect the reality especially in eviction cases. Evicted people are usually resettled in less productive area. Some victims choose to move somewhere better. Based on 2013 village census undertaken by the commune officers, 99 households have moved out of Sein Serrey since 2009. Household outmigration is different from the outmigration activities in Section 3 that still leaves some of the household members in Sein Serrey. For the type H migration mentioned here, the entire household migrated, leaving the house (or no house) empty. Some of the households sold their residential land right away, but most of the people kept the ownership of the residential land. They hoped that one day the government would give them the promised cultivation land plots; they will then move back or sell the land. They still visit Sein Serrey once in a while to do some administrative matter such as registering for poverty ID card.

Most of these households migrated back to their homeland (near the evicted village?) or to other villages where their relatives live. Based on an interview with one household member who was back in Sein Serrey to register for a poverty ID card, some of the households even have the entire family living separately in different places. Since the research team could not interview most of the migrated households, no data about their income and livelihood was collected. However, this type of response is obviously worth to be taken into account.
IV. IV. Household Typologies Based on Sets of Income Generating Activities

As mentioned earlier, diversification of income generating activities is the main strategy applied by Sein Serrey’s villagers vis-à-vis the external shock that caused them to lose their *chamkar* with eight outstanding income-generating activities as listed below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Combination of Activities</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Sector</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1    | A, B: Farming at the Residential Land & On-Farm Agriculture in Chamkar | ● Own access to *chamkar* (bought, rent, borrow, clear illegally)  
● Own access to land outside Sein Serrey (inherited)  
● HH resources mostly allocated into farming  
● Higher investment in farming (chemical materials, employed labors, etc) | Pure farming activities |
| 2    | A, C: Farming at the Residential Land & Off-Farm Agricultural Labours and Service Sector in Kraya Commune | ● No access to *chamkar*  
● Productive HH members> dependents  
● Highly affected by seasonal changes  
● Have to deal with job uncertainty and insecurity (competition in labor market, exploitation and fraud by meka, etc) | Mixed: Farming and non-farming |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Limited Network</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 3 | **A,D**<br>Farming at the Residential Land & Small Scale goods producing and processing Sector | **Limited Network**<br>- No *chamkar*
- Possession of additional productive skill
- Access to productive machines, tools, and utensils.
- Access to transportation system
- Higher level of job certainty (self-employed) | Mixed: Farming and non-farming |
| 4 | **A,E**<br>Farming at the Residential Land & Small Shops + ROSCA | **Limited Network**<br>- No *chamkar*
- Better education background
- More stable incomes
- Exclusivity in their micro-finance activity | Mixed: Farming and non-farming |
| 5 | **A,F**<br>Farming at the Residential Land & Migration of Household Members | **Limited Network**<br>- No *chamkar*
- Dependents > Productive HH Members
- Good connections and network
- Exposure to 3D jobs (low safety)
- High risk and insecure (trafficking, deportation, exploitation, abuse, etc) | Mixed: Farming and non-farming |
| 6 | **A,C,D**<br>Farming at the Residential Land, Off-Farm Agricultural Labours and Service Sector in Kraya Commune, Small Scale goods producing and processing Sector | **Limited Network**<br>- No *chamkar*
- Productive HH members > dependents that allows further diversification
- No access to *Chamkar*
- Possession of additional skill and equipment
- Limited network
- Higher level of job certainty compared to ‘A,C’ since some members are self-employed | Mixed: Farming and non-farming |
| 7 | **A,C,G**<br>Farming at the Residential Land, Off-Farm Agricultural Labours and Service Sector in Kraya Commune, & Collection and Trade of Goods | **Limited Network**<br>- No *Chamkar*
- Limited skills
- Limited network
- Highly affected by seasonal changes
- Lack of job certainty and security
- High risk of abuse, exploitation, and fraud. | Mixed: Farming and non-farming |
| 8 | **A,B,C**<br>Farming at the Residential Land, On-Farm Agriculture in *Chamkar*, & Off- | **Chamkar is less than 1 ha (cleared by the stream/irrigation system)**
- Productive members > dependents
- Limited network
- Highly affected by seasonal changes | Mixed: Farming and non-farming |
Due to its ease and simplicity, many households still farm their residential land even though the income it generates is relatively low. Meanwhile, larger farming scale in chamkar does not seem to be a frequently chosen option since it requires high investment. Overall, non-farming activities seem to be the preference of villagers. I argue that this is not because the villagers prefer non-farming activities. Rather, this ‘de-agrarianization’ is the rational choice farmers were forced to take due to the loss of land and the lack of capital. Most of the interviewees attested that if the government granted them the promised cultivation land with good soil quality, they would return to farming for the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Farm Agricultural Labours and Service Sector in Kraya Commune</th>
<th>C,E</th>
<th>D,F</th>
<th>H</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Lack of job certainty and security</td>
<td>No chamkar</td>
<td>No chamkar</td>
<td>Empty houses and land</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Facing high risk of abuse, exploitation, and fraud.</td>
<td>Limited network</td>
<td>Dependents &gt; productive members</td>
<td>Administratively bound to Sein Serrey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Laborers in service and construction rather than agriculture</td>
<td>Access to equipment, tools, and transportation</td>
<td>Frequent visit to Sein Serrey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of agricultural skill and experience in the family</td>
<td>Good network</td>
<td>Possibility to come back once the cultivation land is granted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Better education background</td>
<td>Higher level of job certainty compared to ‘A,F’ since some members are self-employed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Exclusivity in their micro-finance activity</td>
<td>Exposure to 3D jobs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>High risk and insecure (trafficking, deportation, exploitation, abuse, etc)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pure non-farming</td>
<td>Pure non-farming</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
main livelihood strategy since they do not fancy working for other people even though there is no guarantee that their income will be higher.

IV. V. Household Types and the Outcomes of their Set of Income Generating Activities on Food Security

IV.V.I. Approximate Maximum Annual Income

From the data in aforementioned discussion on the activities and typology, maximum annual incomes can be estimated by adding the maximum income of each activity mentioned in sections A to H, assuming that there are three productive household members. The combinations of activities found in Sein Serrey consist of two to three activities. When there are three activities combined (types 6, 7 and 8), it is assumed that each productive member does one activity. When there are two activities combined (Type 1 to 5 and 9 to 11), two members conducted activities with higher income except for activity C (Off-Farm Agricultural Labours and Service Sector in Kraya Commune; one household only owns one shop). Data on income type H is unavailable. The results of these calculations are shown below.

Figure IV.2. Maximum Annual Income of Each Type
IV.V.II. Outcomes of Sets of Income Generating Activities on Food Security

This section presents the outcomes of livelihood strategies (set of income generating activities) on food security. The analysis is based on several assumptions and premises, viz.:

1. In order to compare the outcomes of combinations, each household is assumed to consist of six members, three productive members and three dependents. This number is used to calculate the household incomes, expenditures, and required servings of a balanced diet\(^48\).

2. ‘Food expenditures’ are calculated by subtracting 30% of the total income; they thus equal 70% of the total annual income. The 30% of total income cover non-food expenditures including gasoline, sanitary and hygiene, battery charging for electricity, cell phone credit, leisure (cigarette and alcohol), medication, tool/equipment as well as household maintenance, etc. It is assumed that the larger the income (e.g. type), the larger its overall consumption. This is a justified assumption because larger income households have a higher cost for maintaining assets. I also observed that households with higher incomes eat more expensive and larger quantities of food. In addition, they have the option to choose more expensive items with better quality.

3. The idea of ‘healthy and balanced diet’ was adopted from the ‘healthy eating pyramid’ implemented by Nutrition Department of Harvard School of Public Health (2011) as well as from the ‘food guide pagoda’ promoted by the Chinese Nutrition Society (2013). Both classify a balanced diet into food groups and suggest the amount of serving per person. The following table listed the suggested healthy and balanced diet for moderate calorie intake of 2,200 calories. The table also listed available options of food in Sein Serrey under each food group and their prices in the local market (market survey). This table calculates the ideal daily expenditure for a healthy and balance diet in Sein Serrey (three meals per day).

\(^{48}\) Due to several limitations, the distribution of data cannot be obtained. If the distribution of data was available, this thesis would use either median or mean to determine this number. The number six used in this assumption comes from interviews with village authority when explaining average number of household members.
Table IV. The Ideal Daily Expenditure for a Healthy and Balanced Diet in Sein Serrey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Options Available in SS</th>
<th>Suggested size/serving/person for daily 2200 cals</th>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Ideal Daily HH Consumption (6 members, 3 meals/day)</th>
<th>Price (USD)</th>
<th>Unit of price</th>
<th>Average Price of items in Each Group (USD)</th>
<th>Daily Expenditure (USD)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Staple food</td>
<td>Rice</td>
<td>100 grams</td>
<td>grams</td>
<td>1800</td>
<td>0.625</td>
<td>kg</td>
<td>0.625</td>
<td>1.125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meat and Eggs</td>
<td>Egg</td>
<td>100 grams</td>
<td>grams</td>
<td>1800</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>kg</td>
<td>3.84</td>
<td>6.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fish</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pork</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>kg</td>
<td>3.84</td>
<td>6.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fermented Fish</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Beef</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milk and dairy</td>
<td>Soy Milk</td>
<td>50 ml</td>
<td>pack</td>
<td>900</td>
<td>0.125</td>
<td>pack (50 ml)</td>
<td>0.125</td>
<td>2.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegetable</td>
<td>Cabbage</td>
<td>50 grams</td>
<td>grams</td>
<td>900</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>kg</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>0.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cucumber</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bhok Choy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Carrot</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tomato</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fruit</td>
<td>Mango</td>
<td>150 grams</td>
<td>grams</td>
<td>2700</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>kg</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Banana</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0 (plant)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jackfruit</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0 (plant)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Daily Expenditure for a balance diet (2200 cal) 11.11

Based on these assumptions and premises, outcomes of livelihood strategies (set of income generating activities) on food security are as follow:

49 Average Price of items in ‘meat and egg’ group = (Price of egg + price of fish + price of pork + price of fermented fish + price of beef)/5. This method also applies to ‘vegetable’ and ‘fruit’ groups.
Table IV.V. Outcomes of Livelihood Strategies on Food Security in Sein Serrey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Combination of Activities</th>
<th>Maximum Annual Income (USD)</th>
<th>Annual Food Expenditures</th>
<th>Ideal Annual food expenditure for a healthy and balance diet</th>
<th>Gap</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>A,B</td>
<td>1168</td>
<td>817.6</td>
<td>4055</td>
<td>-3237.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>A,C</td>
<td>2400</td>
<td>1680</td>
<td>4055</td>
<td>-2375</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>A,D</td>
<td>1862</td>
<td>1303.4</td>
<td>4055</td>
<td>-2751.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>A,E</td>
<td>3441</td>
<td>2408.7</td>
<td>4055</td>
<td>-1646.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>A,F</td>
<td>3400</td>
<td>2380</td>
<td>4055</td>
<td>-1675</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>A,C,D</td>
<td>2862</td>
<td>2003.4</td>
<td>4055</td>
<td>-2051.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>A,C,G</td>
<td>2150</td>
<td>1505</td>
<td>4055</td>
<td>-2550</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>A,B,C</td>
<td>2168</td>
<td>1517.6</td>
<td>4055</td>
<td>-2537.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>C,E</td>
<td>5041</td>
<td>3528.7</td>
<td>4055</td>
<td>-526.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>D,F</td>
<td>4462</td>
<td>3123.4</td>
<td>4055</td>
<td>-931.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The figure below indicates the number of months each type of household would be able to cover if it is assumed that they ate healthy and balanced diet everyday (with USD 11.11 food expenditure).

**Figure IV. IV. Number of Month Covered by Maximum Annual Income**

As we can see from the table IV.V, even though each type has different characteristics and employs different combinations of activities, none of them generates the income
necessary to afford a healthy and balanced diet for the whole year. It is indeed important to highlight that within the failures across all types, there are different degrees of failing. The pure non-farming strategies resulted in the highest degree of food security while pure farming activities yielded the lowest degree of food security.

**Probable Explanations of Failures**

Revisiting the theoretical framework, it becomes clear that one factor that every type and its respective strategies lack is access to entitlements, namely *productive and fertile* agricultural land. This factor was indeed the main pillar of their past subsistence lives in the demolished village of Bonteay Rongeang. Putting together the theoretical framework and the research findings, post-eviction resilience is unlikely to increase without proper access to entitlement, namely productive *chamkar*.

The phrase ‘productive/fertile land’ needs to be emphasized. ‘Access to land’ and ‘secured land rights’ have been glorified in recent debates as the panacea of rural food insecurity. However, as proven in this dissertation and shown by the graphs, the largest gap in the context of evictions in Sein Serrey is experienced by households that still completely rely on farming activities and actually have access to agricultural land. As can be seen in the figure below\(^\text{(50)}\), size of cultivation land does not have a positive correlation with the level of food security.

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\(^{50}\) This plotting based on typology and characteristics described in typology.
This begs the question of why does the size of cultivation land not have a positive correlation to the level of food security? The suggested answer is the low quality of the soil. Compensation lands in forced eviction cases are usually less productive with lower economic value (Special Rapporteur on adequate housing, *Op. Cit*). When the land is not productive enough, as is the case in Sein Serrey, ‘access to land’ still cannot serve the nutritional requirements of households. The quality of the soil is not suitable to grow rice and vegetable for subsistence. The dry soil is mostly suitable to grow cassava, rubber, cashew nuts, mango and jackfruit. Since the people were facing financial difficulties and needed immediate income to meet their daily expenditures, villagers mostly choose to plant cassava that requires the least investment while having the shortest harvest cycle. It has, however, also the lowest profit margin. In summary, this thesis finds that different strategies applied by different types of households failed not simply because they are lacking access to agricultural land but lacking access to productive/fertile land.
Further Implications of Failing Strategies

Given their respective incomes, the villagers of Sein Serrey can only afford an insufficient diet, both in terms of quality and quantity. As a consequence of this reality, villagers are forced to adjust to the changing circumstances, that is to say, they have to reduce the quality and quantity of their diets. This, as it were, is an inevitable reality. One type 7 household, for instance, hesitantly declared that they have been eating leftover rice from a funeral ceremony that occurred the previous month. One lady of this household sundried the rice and re-cook it repeatedly. She also admitted that she often ate rice porridge since it requires less grain to cook. During lean period in September and October, interviewees mentioned that they eat more staple food (rice), but reduce the intake of other food groups significantly. They also mix the rice with more water to trigger a feeling of satiation. Soup is one of the most often cooked foods since villagers can cook with lots of water while adding less ingredients (vegetables or stock). They maintain the taste of the food not by adding more ingredients but by adding monosodium glutamate, a cheap chemical appetising substance that is very dangerous for the human body.

Another follow up approach to overcome food shortages is to send away non-productive household members, especially children and elderly, to their kin who are wealthier. Interviews also revealed that some women with newly born babies were abandoned by their husbands who could not handle the economic ‘burdens’. I acknowledge that abandonment might also occur in situations where the households’ economies are better but the frequent reoccurrence of similar abandonment cases throughout my fieldwork, I presume, signifies that there might well be a looser family bond due to economic pressure. Some families also give away their children to wealthier people from other provinces (non-kin) who might or might not give them money in return. From my observation, they do not see this as trafficking; the villagers think that this is for the sake of the children. Merely to demonstrate the frequency of this phenomenon, during my first two weeks in Sein Serrey, three families offered me their children for adoption. These families did not asked for money, instead they wanted me to send their children to school. Thus, in addition to reducing the number of mouths to feed, there is also an increasing awareness of the importance of education, even when the resources therefor are lacking/absent.
The villagers also take loans to cover their food spending. They owe the grocery shop owners for the grocery that they buy. The villagers are supposed to pay it back when they receive money from their employers. However, some of grocery vendors declared that they had to stop giving loan to certain household since they are unable to pay back. For credit schemes that involve financial institutions and private moneylenders, even though most of the loans taken are used for healthcare and small investments (migration fee, tools and equipment, etc), interviewees also mentioned that almost half of the money that they borrow was used to buy food. The number of people who use the loan to open shops or to rent cultivation land is very small. To get loans, they have to use their residential land plots as collateral, as mentioned earlier. This also means that they actually increase the risk of losing their asset for the sake of short-term food consumption. Overall, these kinds of situations thus render villagers even more food insecure than the income indication alone would lead one to suspect.
Chapter V

Conclusion
The phenomenon of ‘land grab’ has received close attentions from different international scholars, fora, and organizations, yet there has been very few literature exploring well-grounded local contexts. Until recently, most literatures and reports have treated ‘land grab’ as a uni-faceted phenomenon. This thesis has provided ample evidence to suggest otherwise. Analysing the grassroots level, it becomes abundently clear that different drivers and processes of land acquisitions a can be identified. For example, in addition to government and large companies, which have always been accused of being the main drivers of land grab, this thesis has evidenced that military units, smallholders (including local and immigrants), and organizations play a significant role in land expropriations. Moreover, while some areas experienced partial land grabs (meaning that there are some agricultural land plots left), other areas experienced total relocation and forced eviction that resulted in total agricultural-landlessness.

Pointing to, criticising and filling these literature gaps, this thesis aims to examine the link between land grab, rural livelihood, food security, and forced evictions—one of the many facets of land grab that exacerbates the vulnerability of victims by triggering the loss of access to productive/fertile agricultural land. The granting of Economic Land Concessions (ELCs) to the Tan Bien rubber company in Kraya Commune of Cambodia entailed a process of forced evictions of more than 600 households that settled in Bonteay Rongeang village. They were relocated to Phum Thmay, an area 12km away from the demolished Bonteay Rongeang. After two years, Phum Thmay was divided administratively into two smaller villages, namely Sein Serrey and Serrey Mongkul. This study focuses on the livelihood and food security in Sein Serrey, a village that, after its forced eviction in 2009, is populated by 365 households.

V.I. Answers to Research Questions

1. What are the main processes, contexts, and drivers of LSLAs in the case study?

The main driver of LSLAs in the studied area was Economic Land Concessions granted by the Cambodian government to the Tan Bien rubber company. In addition, this event was exacerbated by the activities of AHADA, a development organization that has been controlling the evicted village and antagonised the government by selling state forest land to poor families as well as forbiding local authorities to enter the village. The government has the legal right to determine the location and size of ELCs granted and it
chose to grant the concession to Tan Bien mainly because the area used to be controlled by this Association. The adversarial actions showed by the organization has given stronger justification for the government to confiscate the land. Furthermore, apart from LSLAs, smaller scale land acquisitions (<100ha) were identified. The main drivers of this type of land acquisition are rich individuals and military units.

Tan Bien was not directly involved in the negotiation and eviction processes that was conducted mostly by the local authorities as well as military personnels. The eviction took place in 2009 when a military battalion picked up the villagers with numerous trucks. Electroshock/Taser weapons were displayed to intimidate the villagers. There was no information on whether they were actually employed. The local authorities promised the villagers compensations in form of residential land and agricultural land. Up until April 2013 (four years after the eviction), most of households only received 20x40m of residential land with poor soil quality. One household was granted an agricultural land plot. However, the land plot is not productive since it is very dry during dry season and flooded during rainy season.

2. **What are the immediate consequences of land grabbing and forced eviction on local food (in)security viewed through the prism of the livelihood approach?**

Loss of cultivation land and agricultural assets (including crops that had been cultivated in the demolished *chamkars*) were evidently the immediate consequences of land grabs and forced evictions. There was also a shift in terms of food sources and types, from their own *chamkar* to local market resulting in higher consumptions of processed food that is cheaper than more nutritious fresh food. Since the villagers no longer have access to productive *chamkar* and need to buy their food, the former subsistence farmers were now fully integrated into a cash economy, yet they entered this new economy on much lower terms then their initial situation would allow.

Sein Serrey provides households with better access to markets, public facilities and wage labours since it is closer to the district town than Bonteay Rongeang, which was located in the middle of the state forest. The table below summarizes the key differences between livelihood in Bonteay Rongeang and Sein Serrey.
Table V.I. Livelihood in Bonteay Rongeang and Sein Serrey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bonteay Rongeang</th>
<th>Sein Serrey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Possession of 1-2ha residential land + chamkar</td>
<td>- Property rights to 40x20m residential land</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Soil quality: good</td>
<td>- Majority has no chamkar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Main livelihood mode: subsistent farming</td>
<td>- Soil quality: poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Main crops: rice, vegetables, and fruits</td>
<td>- Main livelihood mode: mixed of farming and non-farming modes with</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Other activities:</td>
<td>more weight on non-farming mode</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Hunting (wild boar, water monitor, snakes) and fishing. The catches were</td>
<td>- Main crops: cassava</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>self-consumed (source of protein) and (if it is excessive) sold to</td>
<td>- Activities:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>neighbours.</td>
<td>- Farming at the Residential Land</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Charcoal making and selling.</td>
<td>- On-Farm Agriculture in Chamkar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Gathering herbal medicine</td>
<td>- Off-Farm Agricultural Labours and Service Sector in Kraya Commune</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Food producing and selling “etc.”</td>
<td>- Small Shop and Rotating Savings and Credit Association (ROSCA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Unreached by formal credit schemes/ financial institutions</td>
<td>- Migration of Household Members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Less access to market and public facilities</td>
<td>- Collection and Trade of Goods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Better access to financial institutions, market and public facilities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. How do people attempt to adapt (‘strategies’ as responses to land grabbing)?

The households of Sein Serrey designed a diverse activity portfolio to improve their livelihood and food security. Depending on the capital they have at their disposal, one household combines two to three activities to earn income. There are three main categories of households based on their dependency on farming activities; 1) households who rely entirely on farming activities, 2) households who mix farming and non-farming
activities, and 3) household who rely entirely on non-farming activities. Most households fall into the second category while the least numerous ones fall into the first one. Households who rely entirely on farming activities usually have access to chamkar outside their residential land (inheritance, rental, purchase). The quality of land in Sein Serrey is poor and mostly suitable to grow cassava, rubber, cashew nuts, mango and jackfruit. Since the villagers were facing financial problems and needed immediate income to meet their daily expenditures, they mostly choose to plant cassava because it requires the lowest investment and has the shortest harvest cycle. Nevertheless, cassava also features the smallest margin of profit, as mentioned above.

Meanwhile, households with members who are better educated tend to have access to financial capital (familiarity with credit schemes, savings from former non-farming jobs) as well as social capital (networks and connection they get from the place of origin, previous occupation, etc.). These households usually conduct non-farming activities and thus fall into category three. The majority of the household have less access to natural, financial, and social capital and try to compensate it by mobilizing their human capital in various sectors to grab as many opportunities as possible (this type of household usually has at least two to three economically active members). However, for the people who chose to get involve in wage labour, their low education backgrounds tend to hinder them from getting higher paid jobs. Outmigration from Sein Serrey was also a path taken by numerous households.

As we can also conclude, de-agrarianization seems to be the trend among the households in Sein Serrey. Occupational modification and income generating reorientation away from exclusively peasant modes of livelihood are not only widely evident, but also widely preferred. People opt for non-farming activities since, in the case where they do not have access to productive land, farming activities are less profitable. Among younger generations, farming activities and agricultural sectors in general have been devaluated. Their aspirations for a more ‘modern’ lifestyle in the city as well as for indoor jobs (with no exposure to dirt and soil) lead them towards de-agrarianization.

4. What are the outcomes of those strategies on food security?

Even though the three portfolio types imply different degrees of food insecurity, all of them failed to ensure a households’ overall health and indeed a balanced diet for the entire year. One thing that all types have in common is that they lack access to
entitlements, namely productive land. This particular finding confirms the theoretical framework advanced in this thesis, namely a framework that emphasises the importance of access to entitlements in securing households’ food security.

To bridge the income-expenditure gaps, as evidenced in table IV.V., households also exercise non-income generating strategies like modifications of daily diets. Villagers consumed less food overall (quantity) while also, and more importantly, they settled for foods of lesser quality compared to the diets in Bonteay Rongeang. Getting loans (from grocery vendors, formal financial institutions, and informal moneylenders) by using their land plots as collaterals is another non-income generating strategy that households adopted. Households send away economically inactive household members to wealthier connections (kin or non-kin), among other reasons, to reduce the amount of mouths to feed. Although it needs further confirmation, there are first indicators that suggest that economic pressures cause looser family ties, e.g. the above mentioned giving away of dependents. There are also cases where individuals decide to abandon their family or cases where parents give away their children in return for money (a practice they believe is for the benefit of the child(ren)). Still, all of the villagers reported that their past lives with access to productive land in Bonteay Rongeang were better. Of course, my research also demonstrates that there is a clear tendency to romanticise the past; however, on the one hand, the evidence presented in this thesis has shown that this is at least partially true and, on the other hand, as emphasised in my qualitative methodology, that villagers’ judgements regarding their life conditions is an important index for assessing security as well as happiness and health. Furthermore, looking at judgements and sentiments seems to be a worthy research path to follow in the future.

In summary, villagers’ livelihood strategies are enough to survive and keep them from chronic hunger and starvation (they can eat two to three times a day); yet they are not enough to sustain a balanced and healthy diet for the entire family throughout the entire year. Likewise, it is important to note that in the case where the only available land is less productive, sticking to pure farming activities resulted in the lowest food security level. Activity diversification and finding a way out of the peasant mode of livelihoods were observed to be higher paid options. Still, both income generating and non-income generating activities cannot return villagers back to Bonteay Rongeang, whether physically or sentimentally, whether economically or socially. Put simply, the villagers of Sein Serrey were not resilient enough, and one of the main reasons for this, as this thesis suggests, was that they lacked access to productive chamkar. Although this thesis does not
aim to provide policy suggestion, this finding can be very significant for policy making, especially related to land distribution and ensuring land rights. Land policy might need to go beyond securing land rights and property documentations in order to ensure rural development. The quality of land also needs to be ensured.

V.II. Critical Reflections: the Importance of the Cultural Dimension in Understanding People’s Behaviour in a Food Insecure Situation

Contrary to the arguments advanced in livelihood approaches on food insecurity that put food not as the foremost priority of households, but rather only as one of many dimensions of livelihood, the evidence of this research refutes this premise and suggests that food is the most important factor for the households of Sein Serrey. Interviewees clearly attested they repeatedly decided to increase the risk of losing their livelihood assets (e.g. land) in order to secure a more or less solid food consumption by using their residential land as collateral for loans (which they use to buy food). Most of the villagers use less than half of their loans to invest in their income generating activities. It is important to note that it is not the agricultural field that they risk; it is their residential land on which their family lives. Additionally, most of the households in Sein Serrey do not own land other than their residential land plots. Hence, their coping strategies are indeed designed to optimize immediate food consumption.

Moreover, it must be noted that by ‘food consumption’ this thesis connotes not any kind of food, but ‘culturally accepted food’. Sein Serrey villagers refused to eat cassava, despite the fact that it is their main crop and the third most important carbohydrate source and a staple to many people in South America, Africa and the Pacific. For them, cassava is not an aliment; rather, for them it is ‘animal food’. Instead of choosing cassava, the ‘easy’ carbohydrate source option available in their back yard, as it were, the villagers of Sein Serrey preferred to sell the cassava harvest for little money (i.e. to cheap prices) while having to buy four times more expensive rice (per kg). Even in the case of significant food insecurity, the cultural perception of ‘what is food and what is enough food’ persisted. This fact shows that the households are, to some extent, ‘fish that swim’ not ‘fish that float with the current’. They still have their agency to make a decisions and preferences.

51 One can argue that it is not their ‘decision’ to take loan; that they are forced by the financial shortage to do so. But I would argue that it was indeed their decision to allocate bigger proportion of the loan to buy food (immediate consumption) rather than to invest in their income-generating activities.
Based on this, this thesis argues that in order to comprehensively assess food insecurity and to understand the behaviours of rural populations in varying circumstances, the ‘cultural dimension’ cannot be ignored. Cultural preferences, habits and usages must be integrated into any analysis that seeks to take the reality of food (in)security serious. When perceived through the conventional prism of food security, which puts forward the analysis of food availability, access to food, and food utilization, Sein Serrey’s population might well be argued to be much less food insecure than what this thesis argues. There is enough ‘food’ available in Sein Serrey to secure people’s calorie intake and the people possess relatively free access to the ‘food’ since they plant and grow the calorie source in their backyards. However, this conventional assessment lacks in understanding and comprehensiveness. It leads to a false image of a reality that does not exist in the form conventional theories postulate it. The villagers of Sein Serrey are indeed food insecure. They lack the means to secure the ‘food’ needed throughout the year and they have their own, clear understanding of what counts as food. The observation that other foods (cassavas) are ignored, even when they are abundantly available, is interesting and unconventional to say the least. Food insecurity ought therefore to be understood as a term denoting the lack of ‘food’ in a particular context, yet it is the context and its traditions, customs and knowledge that determine the form food can take.

V.III. Future Research Paths

Taking this thesis as a vantage point, there are various possible research paths that can be explored in the future. However, there area several paths that intrigue me personally the most.

First, it would be interesting to compare the livelihood strategies and food security of this particular study case with the livelihood strategies and food security of a population in Cambodia that is affected by partial land grabbing, that is land grabbing that does not involve forced eviction and still leaves villagers with some chamkars to cultivate. Cases of the later can be found also in the same District (for instance Boeng Lvea commune) or other areas in Cambodia since land grabbing have affected the entire country.

As reiterated in Chapter III, by the time this thesis was written, the Cambodian government has started to grant agricultural land plots 12km from Sein Serrey. It is indeed too early to theorize the consequences of this new land granting to the dynamics
of household livelihood in Sein Serrey. I am thrilled, however, to welcome the opportunity to return to the field in a few years to see the changes that this new land might bring. Will there be another (voluntary) total relocation of the village? Will there be a tangible ‘re-agrarianization’ of livelihood activities? Will they switch to another type of crop, and why? Will the household reverse to subsistence modes of food production and consumption? Will villagers be more food secured?

Another important point is about the level of analysis of the research. The scope of this research only includes the analysis of the household level. It is acknowledge that further research needs to be conducted to assess how different modalities of land grabbing and forced eviction affect different members of the households (intra-household), as well as inter-household affairs. In many cases ‘land grabs’ represent opportunities, threats, and exposures to lifestyles that might not be familiar to rural people. One of the most apparent gaps in the current land grabbing discourse is the downplayed gender dimension. I am particularly interested in analysing how these aspects contribute to the constantly negotiated gender roles within the households, if there is a shift in resource and time allocation among male and female household members, the respective bargaining position in the household decision-making, and the outcomes of these processes. It is also interesting to see how the dynamic of land grabs affect the inter-generational relations and aspirations.

Since the findings suggest the importance of cultural dimension in completing the larger picture of food security discourse, there is a need to follow up this research path. When comprehensive understanding of food security has been drawn, the discussion can also be taken further to include the rights to food that “protects the right of all human beings to live in dignity, free from hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition” (Ziegler 2013)

In short, this thesis contributed various different nuances to the discussion of the implications of land grabbing on food security by exploring the case of forced evictions and total relocations. Such cases have been largely sidelined in the otherwise vast academic literature on this subject. This thesis has shown that land grabs and forced evictions caused households to lose access to productive agricultural land. This thesis suggests, and has provided evidence, that the lack of access to productive agricultural land determines, or at least exacerbates, the failure of their post-resettlement livelihood strategies hence makes them more vulnerable to food insecurity. This research should thus be understood as a small but no less meaningful step in the direction of new research on land grabs, forced evictions, food security and rural livelihood in general.
The findings of this thesis clearly problematize and put into conversation current debates on the correlations between these different study areas and broadly indicate ways of synergizing them.


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Annex I

Interview Guidelines for households

This interview guideline is based on:

- The SNIS research plan and the various contents of the planned research
- The questions developed by Patricia Paramita and Samuel Segura in the frame of the Applied Research Seminar and related to Research Question 3 (Human Rights)
- The field research carried out in Ratanakiri by the ‘team’ (Amaury Peeters, Soop-Mai Tang, Marie-Solène and Christophe Gironde)
- The questionnaire by Patricia Paramita

Survey #
Date:
Done by:
Location: district, commune, village
Name of interviewee
Gender of the interviewee
Age of the interviewee
Position in the household
Telephone of interviewee

1. **Household composition**
   - Number of adults (from 18)
   - Number of others (below 18)

2. **Household workforce**
   - Number of members working regularly in/for the household
   - Does the household hire workers?
     - Occasional
     - Permanent hired workers (number)
   - Does any member of the household work for other household or any other economic actor (concession, non-farming company, public office, etc.)
     - Let’s try to qualify, e.g. permanent work off-household, occasional, etc. Quantification is too difficult.

3. **Geographic origin and ‘movements’ of the household**
   - Have you ever been living in this location (village, commune)?
   - Has your spouse ever been living in this location?
   - If yes
     - Have you ever been living in this house? Exploring eventual displacement…
   - If no
     - When did you settle here?
     - Where were you living before?
     - What was your main activity when you settled here?
Elaborate on the reasons and circumstances when moving here (how they got access to the space where they live, access to agricultural land, acquaintances before coming, etc.) and on their history (settlement, activities, land and other assets accumulation) since arrival.

Do/did you have a land title? Under whose name? How did you obtain it? What were you entitled to do with the land, could you lease or sell it? When you do something with the land, who are you discussing with? Do you discuss with the entire family? Was it common practice to consult other family members about the acquisition agreement?

What is the custom of inheritance in your family/community?

Did your wife/husband bring her/his property or land into the household when you got married? If so, under whose name is that land registered?

Land, location, area, use

4. Arable land location and change related to land acquisitions
   - Where in the communal territory are located the land plots you use? Sure they will not provide an ‘address’... but the idea is to identify the various spaces within the village/commune where agriculture is performed.
   - Do you have any land plots located on the territory of an economic land concession?
     - If yes, where?
     - What is the area?
     - Since when were you notified that the plot ‘belongs’ to the concession/company?
     - Do you still have access to this plot? Do you still cultivate it? If so, what are the activities you do there? Who in your household is responsible in cultivating that land?

- Arable land area and type of land
  - Record the various plots and respective area
  - Record for each plot the type of land (low-land, uphill) and the eventual irrigation facility

- Arable land use
  - Land currently cultivated
  - Land reserve (fallow land)
    Investigate how people manage their land (cropping system over a couple of years; this may not apply to Kampong Thom where land might be permanently cultivated…)

- Cropping system – crop distribution
  - Record the various crops and respective area
    Any small landholdings investing in rubber? Who manage this?

- Husbandry
  - Record the various animals and numbers
    Who manage this?
    Attention paid to husbandry is to be adjusted given its importance in terms of income or possibly fertility transfer. A classic important difference for cattle and pig is if there is reproduction or just fattening of the animals.
• Non-farming activities (for the household’s own account)
  o Record the activities, since when they started, and incomes ranges/estimates
  Who manage this?

• Off-farm activities (i.e. for others, other households, companies, etc.)
  Record the activities, locations, since when they started, the actors households members work for - Who manage this?
  o -, and incomes ranges/estimates
  o Qualify the magnitude of those activities: permanent, regular, occasional, exceptional …

• Other outputs and resource
  o Collection of NTFP
  o Fishing
  o Eventual loss of access to the areas from where peoples derive natural resources (forest, rivers, grazing lands, etc.)
  o Transfers, from relatives, …

• Land transactions since 2008 (you might choose another date of reference which is more relevant …)
  o Have you bought any arable land since 2008? Type? Area? Price?
  o Have you sold any arable land since 2008? Type? Area? Price?
  o Have you rented any arable land since 2008? Type? Area? Price?
  o Have you rented-out any arable land since 2008? Type? Area? Price?

• Extra financial resources / credit
  o Have you borrowed money since 2008?
  o Record for each operation: From who/which institutions? How much? For any specific use? Loans often ‘go’ into the general pool of resources of the households but there are also loans that are specifically dedicated. What we look for is to distinguish between loans for productive investment vs. loans for ordinary expenses/consumption (‘emprunt de fonctionnement’)
  o If the household is rather well-off, ask if they lend money to other households (a classic indicator of social status, useful for the typology …)

• Food security
  o General. In general, would you say that your household had enough resources (own-crops or/and cash for purchasing food) to feed its member over the last year? You will need to find a reference for the beginning of last year, probably easy with reference to the Khmer New Year
  o If the answer is no, try to qualify or quantify the lack of food, e.g. number of months during which the household witnesses lack of food
  o Rice needs satisfaction. Last harvest (ask when and if it is annual), did you produce enough rice to feed the members of your household. Adapt the question depending on the calendar → in Ratanakiri, the annual and only harvest is in October.
  o Rice sales. Did you sell some of your rice from the last harvest?
  o Rice purchase. Do you buy rice to feed your household?
o **Rice purchase capacity.** Over the last year, have you always had the resources (cash) to buy the rice needed for your household?

o **Diet.** Can you tell me how many times during the last 7 days you have eaten: **-draw table with them-.**

o **Lack of food:** Over the last week, has it happened that you did not have enough food for your household? *Might be repetitive with the General question but it is core to the research …*

o **Coping with lack of food.** What did you do the last time/day you did not have enough to feed the household members?

• **Vulnerability**
  o *They might emerge throughout previous topics being discussed during the interview; it is rather a reminder …*

• **Productive capital**
  o *Record the various productive equipments / machines which you consider are crucial to households’ economic activity systems and which will differentiate them (typology)*

• **House and belongings**
  o Year of construction, value *(people often have an estimate about how much they spent)*
  o *Characteristic of the house, i.e. size, construction material. Take pictures!*

• **Community involvement**
  o Have you met personally with the chief/head of your village/commune over the last year?
  o If yes, for what issue(s)/reason(s)?
  o Have you participated to any meeting with the population of the village/commune over the last year?
  o If yes, for what issue(s)/reason(s)?

• **Communal decision making process: land selling specific**
  o Who made the decision to sell/lease the land? How did the decision making process work, did you have a say? **Consultations with the entire village? Only the village chief? Did the local government play any role? What was the role of intermediaries?**
  o Where you promised compensation for the land? Money, other benefits?
  o Where you promised a job for the company/new owners of the land in return for the transaction? *Was there any discussion on the working conditions at the time of negotiations?*
  o Do you think you could have refused to sell/lease your land? What do you think would have happened if you refused? **Where you forced to lease/sell the land? Did you contact or consider contacting NGOs or others to get advice/help? Whom did you contact?**
  o Was there any female member of the community members participating in the negotiation or consultation process for the land transaction?

• **Execution of Land Transaction**
  o Did you receive a contract stipulating compensation, relocation and other agreed aspects?
- How was the enforcement of the acquisition of land conducted? Who was involved in it (villagers, army, police, authorities, company, private security forces)?
- Did you get any notification prior to the land clearance or the start of company activity in the area? If so, when did you receive it and what was the content?
- Did you receive compensation? In what form, money, land, other?
- Was there resistance from you or members of your community? If so, how was that conveyed? Did you go to court? Contact an NGO? Complained to the local authorities? What was the result of your contestation? Do you know what mechanisms are there available to contest land transactions or their effects?
- Did you have to resettle? Was it within the same village or outside of your village? Where you forced to resettle by authorities/company or did you choose to?
- If you had any land titles, were they respected or contested?