

A study on the Application of the NCDD's Poverty Alleviation Program: The Case of the People's Participation in Rural Development in Cambodia

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ABSTRACT

This paper analyzes the level and means of the people's participation in the sustainable development program of the NCDD (National Committee for Democratic Development) in order to alleviate the poverty via the survey of community development in Cambodia where the decentralization and deconcentration had been introduced since 1996 via Seil program. The people's participation in rural development was a lesson learnt, which created and funded by UNDP/CAREER and Cambodian Government, for local authority in term local governance delegation in investing in public goods. In the program, grassroots and local authorities play active role in planning, implementing, and monitoring the projects, especially rural physical infrastructures.

The development challenges basically are education and income of the grassroots, which undermine a social capital accumulation. The education plays the influent role in planning phase while the income does in implementing phase, where the grassroots are altruism. The low educated and earned people lost their social value in expressing their opinion and idea in planning and implementing phase.

The program could be developed slowly the influent factors when the many supports are needed.

Keywords: sustainable development, people's participation, decentralization, and deconcentration.

I. Introduction

Economic sustainability is a goal, which should be reached to insure that an economy can survive until infinity. To do this, poverty alleviation is a main objective of the nation, which was mentioned by Robertson (1997), Harris (2000), Kate et al. (2005). In order to apply the concept of sustainable development, in general, the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) under cooperation with the United Nation Development Program (UNDP) had formulated the Millennium development goals (MDGs) as the main world development goals especially for under-developed countries, especially Cambodia. As a target of the RGC and UNDP, Cambodia was a country which has absolute poverty nearly 29% (under the poverty line of about \$1 per day) in 2007 getting development fund from the UNDP via CAREER (Cambodian Resettlement and Reintegration) on the one hand. On the other hand, due to the daily consumption of the poorest quintile had been improved by 8% while the richest quintile had been increased by 45% between 1994 and 2004 and the country was rescued from the civil war, Cambodia was a target country to urgently develop. Most of the poor people in Cambodia are living in the rural area where the total average of daily consumption had been increased by 120%, and the poverty rate had decreased by 12% (World Bank, 2007). How to develop Cambodia?

The people participation is a modern economic sociology in compromising grassroots to go through, accept, and receive reasonably the development process. This idea was also mentioned by Huynh (1986), Biddulph (1996), and ADB (2001) to reduce poverty and income inequality, where the

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Royal Government of Cambodia, UNDP and other non-government organization (NGOs) developed many development programs, especially the NCDD (National Committee for Democratic Development) program or, to invest on public goods, especially for rural infrastructures. The aim of the program was to improve the supply of economic physical infrastructure (roads, irrigation systems, culvert pipes, bridges, wells, ponds, etc.), and the social physical infrastructure (schools, and health centers) by carrying out the participatory of the grassroots. It is well known, from the literature that investments in physical infrastructure are important ingredients to accelerate economic development (Todaro and Smith, 2009). The intention of the NCDD program, which was installed in 1996 under Seila program, is to promote the decentralization of economic decision-making at the grassroots level. In the program, not only by government, local authorities, UNDP, and NGOs, but also by local people should participated which can be called as an experiment of the RGC in poverty alleviation via local planning process by contributing of grassroots (Henny Andersen, 2004). It is well known that the NCDD is a complex program which is believed that the program was developed from Saemaul Undong methodology by UNESCAP-United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNDP, 2003).

The people's participation here referred to the diverse decision-making made by local people, which Jackson (1996), Seibol (1999), and Patti (1993) focused as the benefit for community. The participation of people in rural development in Cambodia is a lesson learnt which provided grassroots, and local government were able to develop the development plan by using the local government fund after ending of the support from UNDP/CAREERE. The process leads Cambodia reaching a sustainable development by introducing village development committees (VDCs) which assigned from grassroots as an activist of the development program.

According to the aims above, the people's participation in NCDD had contributed achievements to change Cambodian political economy, especially in some parts of Millennium Development Goals: (1) Poverty reduction by applying the strategy of constructing and rehabilitating rural infrastructure; (2) Improvement of health of the people by the application of the strategy to construct ponds as well as to increase the number of families, who have access to fresh and clean water as drinking water, and latrines; (3) Improvement of the enrollment rate and literacy rate by making it feasible for school children to walk to school on roads and over bridges.

The goal of this paper is tries to find out the main influent factors of the people's participation in planning, implementation phase by using quantitative data. In order to understand what are the motives which drove people to participate in the rural development, two objectives were taken into account. The first is the influence of households' income on the participation rate of the people. And the second one is the influence of educational level of the households on the planning and implementing stage of the development in the NCDD. To observe this objectives, we choose Banan district in Cambodia as the target area of the research (see section II).

II. Research Methodology and Literature

This is a descriptive research, where quantitative data is used as basic information from a survey which was conducted in 2018 by comparing with the data in 2003 by Ky (2003). The dimension of this research is a cross sectional research data, where the data collection has been done only for one time. The data collection is based on a questionnaire designed in Cambodian language with 29 questions which focused on ways and level of people's participation in the development process in the target area. It was asked to the grassroots which was assume as beneficiary or target group of the research. The sample size is 170, selected randomly among 3 communes in the target area due to the criteria below: 1) covering by the Seila (NCDD) since 1996; 2) representing of Banan; 3) being big communes; and 4) being data collection feasibility. The communes are Chheu Teal, Phnom Sampov, and Takream.

The questionnaire focused on demographic data, and the people's participation in planning, implementing, evaluating, and maintaining process based on the scopes of the of the development process of the NCDD program. In addition, the primary data was analyzed on frequency, cross-tabulation, and factor analysis by using SPSS version 16.0 (statistical package for social sciences). As the results of the data analysis, the most of cross-tabulation analysis, the Chi-square value is greater than 2 and level of significant p-value less than 0.05.

In the first piloted phase of this program, there were existed failures in participating from the grassroots especially in the decision-making of planning stage and implementing stage (Henny Andersen, 2004), due to the lack of education and limited income. Of course, as well known, education is a very important factor of economic development, which played an important role in accelerating development speed in the past Lucas (1988), and Helpman (2004). As well as this idea, Todaoro and Smith (2009), and Perkin, Radelet, and Lindauer (2006) mentioned in their book that human capital, education and health, are the basic objectives of development to grow the economy rapidly. On the one hand, the human capital helps the families escape some of the vicious circles of poverty in which they are trapped (Todaro and Smith, 2009). On the other hand, the income, age structure, and sex of head-household are important variables that can influence the level of participation in economic development (Levy and Walton, 2009, Belbin, 1993). In order to fulfill the basic needs, money comes first for surviving. Therefore, the short-term needs are what people demanded to survive (Keynes, 1936). How much did the level of education and income influence the participatory in the rural development in Banan?

III. Empirical Results

The results of the research were taken from data analysis by using SPSS, which divided in 4 parts, (1) the Socio-economic situation in Banan in which the social and human capital were illustrated; (2) the people's participation in planning stage of the development; (3) the people's participation in project implementing, and monitoring; and (4) the people's participation in the maintenance.

1) The age, education, incomes, health of the respondents are the human development indicators which explained the situations and conditions whether how and in which level people participated in the development process.

<Table 1> cross-tabulation between education and income

			Total Income per month				
			< \$5	[\$5-\$20]	[\$20-\$35]	> \$35	Total
Education	Not Study	Count	20	31	17	5	73
		% within Education	27.4%	42.5%	23.3%	6.8%	100.0%
		% within Monthly income	51.3%	43.7%	37.8%	33.3%	42.9%
		% of Total	11.8%	18.2%	10.0%	2.9%	42.9%
	Primary School	Count	18	32	19	4	73
		% within Education	24.7%	43.8%	26.0%	5.5%	100.0%
		% within Monthly income	46.2%	45.1%	42.2%	26.7%	42.9%
		% of Total	10.6%	18.8%	11.2%	2.4%	42.9%
	Secondary School	Count	1	7	7	3	18
		% within Education	5.6%	38.9%	38.9%	16.7%	100.0%
		% within Monthly income	2.6%	9.9%	15.6%	20.0%	10.6%
		% of Total	.6%	4.1%	4.1%	1.8%	10.6%
	High School	Count	0	1	2	3	6
		% within Education	.0%	16.7%	33.3%	50.0%	100.0%
		% within Monthly income	.0%	1.4%	4.4%	20.0%	3.5%
		% of Total	.0%	.6%	1.2%	1.8%	3.5%
	Total	Count	39	71	45	15	170
		% within Education	22.9%	41.8%	26.5%	8.8%	100.0%
		% within Monthly income	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
		% of Total	22.9%	41.8%	26.5%	8.8%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	20.970 ^a	9	.013
Likelihood Ratio	17.344	9	.044
Linear-by-Linear Association	10.787	1	.001
N of Valid Cases	170		

a. 7 cells (43.8%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .53.

Source: Authors' calculations

By surveying randomly, 54.8% of head-households are female in which their age was between 21 and 40 years old. Those of them were poor family whose husbands migrated to work in other provinces in Cambodia. Furthermore, some of men at that time were working abroad as worker, especially in Thailand. Most of households have daily consumption between \$5 and \$20, where the level of education is positive relationship with the income level. Most people in Banan are low educated people - 86% of them studied up to primary school (see table1). The education and income are positive relation but not so strong. How can these factors influence the level of participation of grassroots in rural development, especially, in need assessment and project prioritizing stage?

2) In making a village development plan, not only village and commune authority has prepared, but also the common people (grassroots) had participated in this process which is examined by the NCDD. The most effective way to maximize the number of people attending a meeting, is realized if the VDC informs them just few hours before the meeting take place. Otherwise, most of the grassroots do not attend the meeting. However, it seems to be less motivation in participating among the people, due to the first start of the program. According the interview with VDC, people will not attend the meeting even it was announced few days before, but few hours before. As the result, people have no idea in meeting, because the time of thinking and considering is too short. People seem to be less care on this process, even the VDC explained the benefit of the participation. According to the survey, the rich and the poor did not attend the meeting, because it was not effect to the rich's income, and the poor had to work for daily life again starvation. So, commonly in the meeting only people whose income were between \$5-\$35 attended on the one hand. However, only 35%, and 44% of them whose income was \$5-\$20, and \$20-\$35 (see table 3) shared idea in the meeting (Pearson chi-square=2.428, Asymp. sig (2-sided)=0.028). On the other hand, the level of sharing idea in the meeting was influenced by the level of education of the participants. According to the survey, 36%, 56%, and 67% (see table 3), of people whose education level is primary, secondary, and high school identified problems and made discussion in the meeting, respectively (Pearson chi-square=6.478, Asymp. sig (2-sided)=0.091). So to say, income and education are influent factors in motivating people to participate in the rural development. Now let us go through the factor analysis of these two influent factors (see table 2).

<Table 2> Factor Analysis

Total Variance Explained^a

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	1.424	35.606	35.606	1.424	35.606	35.606
2	1.069	26.725	62.331	1.069	26.725	62.331
3	.919	22.966	85.297			
4	.588	14.703	100.000			

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

a. Only cases for which People's action in meeting = "Share idea" are used in the analysis phase.

Source: Authors' calculations

In the table 2, we tried to find out the main factor, which influences the activities of people in need assessment process (component: 1=education, 2=income, 3=sex, and 4=age). The Initial Eigenvalues of education and income are greater than 1. So we can say that -the level of education is the strongest influent factor on the activities of the people in the meeting-. 67% of high educated people share an idea in the meeting while only 30% of uneducated ones do.

Additionally, 67% of the richest, whose monthly income is more than \$35, share idea in the meeting, while only 18% of the poorest do. Also, the level of education influent in this process which the data analysis shows that 67% of head-households who studied up to high school share more idea, while the 30% of uneducated people do (see table 3).

<Table 3> cross-tabulation (income*meeting) and (education*meeting)

			People's action in meeting		
			Share idea	Hand up	Total
Total Income per month	≤\$5	Count	7	32	39
		% within Total Income	17.9%	82.1%	100.0%
	]\$5-\$20]	Count	25	46	71
		% within Total Income	35.2%	64.8%	100.0%
	]\$20-35]	Count	20	25	45
		% within Total Income	44.4%	55.6%	100.0%
	≥\$35	Count	10	5	15
		% within Total Income	66.7%	33.3%	100.0%
Total	Count		62	108	170
	% within Total Income		36.5%	63.5%	100.0%

			People's action in meeting		
			Share idea	Hand up	Total
Education	Not Study	Count	22	51	73
		% within Education	30.1%	69.9%	100.0%
	Primary School	Count	26	47	73
		% within Education	35.6%	64.4%	100.0%
	Secondary School	Count	10	8	18
		% within Education	55.6%	44.4%	100.0%
	High School	Count	4	2	6
		% within Education	66.7%	33.3%	100.0%
	Total	Count	62	108	170
		% within Education	36.5%	63.5%	100.0%

Source: Authors' calculations

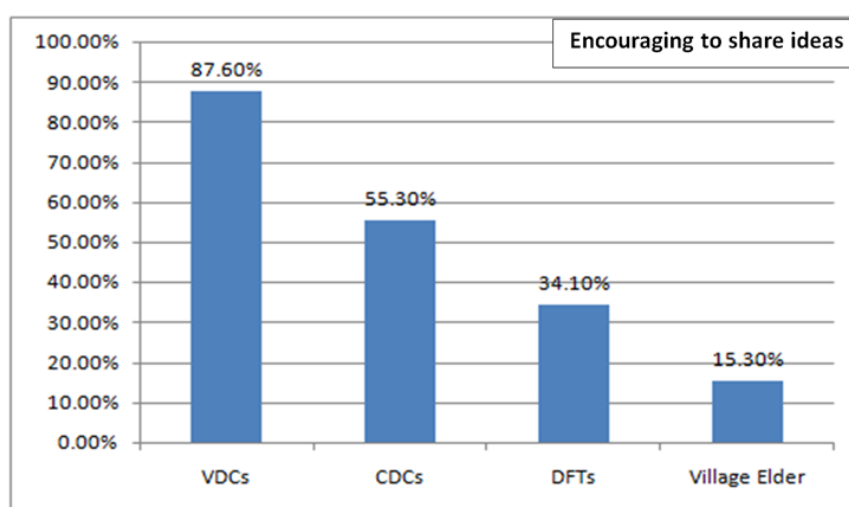
The table 3 shows that the richer and higher education people share more idea in the meeting.

For further process of planning, after listing the needs in the village, the priority identifying process has been done. In this process, the grassroots join in the priority identification which is occurred two times. At first, the identification is conducted at the village level, participated by grassroots people. The second identification is occurred at the commune level, joined by commune council members, district facilitator team (DFT), and member of planning and budgeting committee (PBC). At grassroots level, the list of

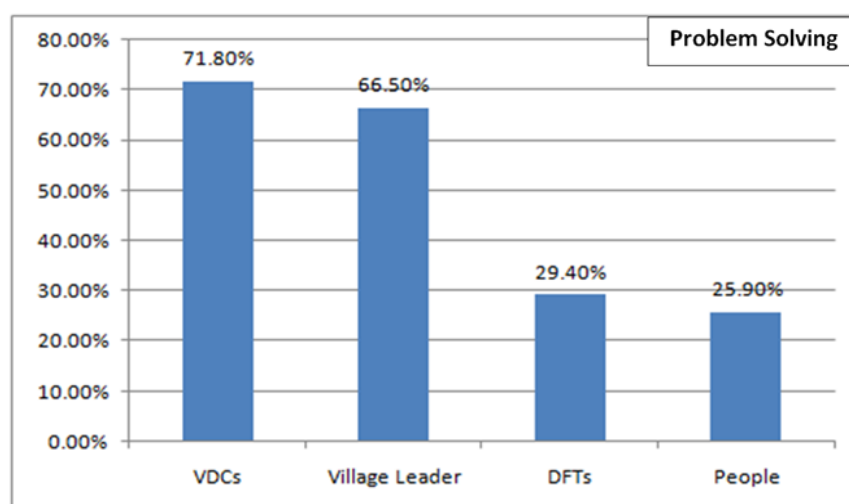
people's needs had been shown on the white board one by one. People are requested to accept the first, second, or third priority which will be implemented three-year development plan (the first priority will be implemented in the first year of development plan). The people make decision in the step of setting priority based on their current significant needs. After setting priority projects, PBC opened a plenary session of meeting to set up the communal development plan basing on set priority project proposals and funded budget.

In the process, the VDC is type of grassroots who plays active role in all phases of the program, especially to encourage people to show their needs in order to make development plan, and to resolve the problems happened in project implementation. According to the survey, 87.6% of people express that VDC strongly involve in facilitating the land dispute while the project was implementing (see figure 1).

<Figure 1> VDCs participate in encouraging people to share idea in planning phase and problem solving



in implementing phase



Source: Authors' calculations

If it is out of ability of the VDCs, the CDCs, DFT, and Village Elders also involve in the coordinating and facilitating that problem with land owner in order to develop their village perfectly

3) The participation of grassroots in the project implementation plays an important role in sustainable development due to two reasons. First, those of them can see what they requested in the development plan will be implemented. Second, people feel that, those achievements are belonging to them; they, therefore, should use them carefully and protect them for long-life use. In Banan, grassroots should contribute in 2 ways in this implementation phase. Totally they should contribute 10% of total amount of the specific project in their village, in which 3% by cash, and 7% by labor force. In this phase, there are many processes, project budgeting, implementing, and evaluating, to be done.

To participate in the project implementation, the local people should contribute 10% of total amount of the project, officially, 3% by cash and 7% by labor force. However, in some case a few high earning households could contribute by cash 10% without labor force (see table 4).

<Table 4> cross-tabulation between income and participation means

			The way of people participation in practice			
			Labor	Money	Labor & Money	Total
Level of Income per month	≤\$5	Count	32	4	3	39
		% within Income	82.1%	10.3%	7.7%	100.0%
	]\$5-\$20]	Count	27	17	27	71
		% within Income	38.0%	23.9%	38.0%	100.0%
	]\$20-\$35]	Count	12	25	8	45
		% within Income	26.7%	55.6%	17.8%	100.0%
	≥\$35	Count	0	15	0	15
		% within Income	0.0%	100.0%	.0%	100.0%
	Total	Count	71	61	38	170
		% within Income	41.8%	35.9%	22.4%	100.0%

Source: Authors' calculations

Table 4 shows that the means of participation depends on the level of income. The lowest-income people contribute only labor force by 10%, while the richest share totally in money and the rest participates in both money and labor. During project implementation, grassroots must participate not only for the project activities but also monitor, and evaluate after the project had been done up to 95%.

The monitoring and evaluating during and after the project implementation play a significant role in the village development. The CDC and VDC have monitored since the project is started until finished by making monthly report regarding to the activities and the progress of the project. Moreover, the PBC and technical supported staff (TSS) sometime come to the project site for checking and controlling the project progress and accuracy of the implementation, for example, measure the volume, dimension, and pressure of pebbles for making a road (PRDC/Ex-com, 2001).

The survey shows that the level of education (see table 5) is strongly positive relationship with the participation in the project implementation, especially monitoring and evaluating stages. Table 5 shows that 85% of non-education, 77% of primary education, and 67% of secondary education head-household do not participate in monitoring stage. However, 100% of people who study until high school play their active role in monitoring the project, while only 10% of uneducated people do. The next step after completing the project implementation is maintenance which the participation of people is needed.

<Table 5> cross-tabulation between education and monitoring the project

			People participate more in project monitoring			
			none	monitor	help others	Total
Education	Not Study	Count	62	7	4	73
		% within Education	84.9%	9.6%	5.5%	100.0%
	Primary School	Count	56	8	9	73
		% within Education	76.7%	11.0%	12.3%	100.0%
	Secondary School	Count	12	6	0	18
		% within Education	66.7%	33.3%	.0%	100.0%
	High School	Count	0	6	0	6
		% within Education	0.0%	100.0%	.0%	100.0%
	Total	Count	130	27	13	170
		% within Education	76.5%	15.9%	7.6%	100.0%

Source: Authors' calculations

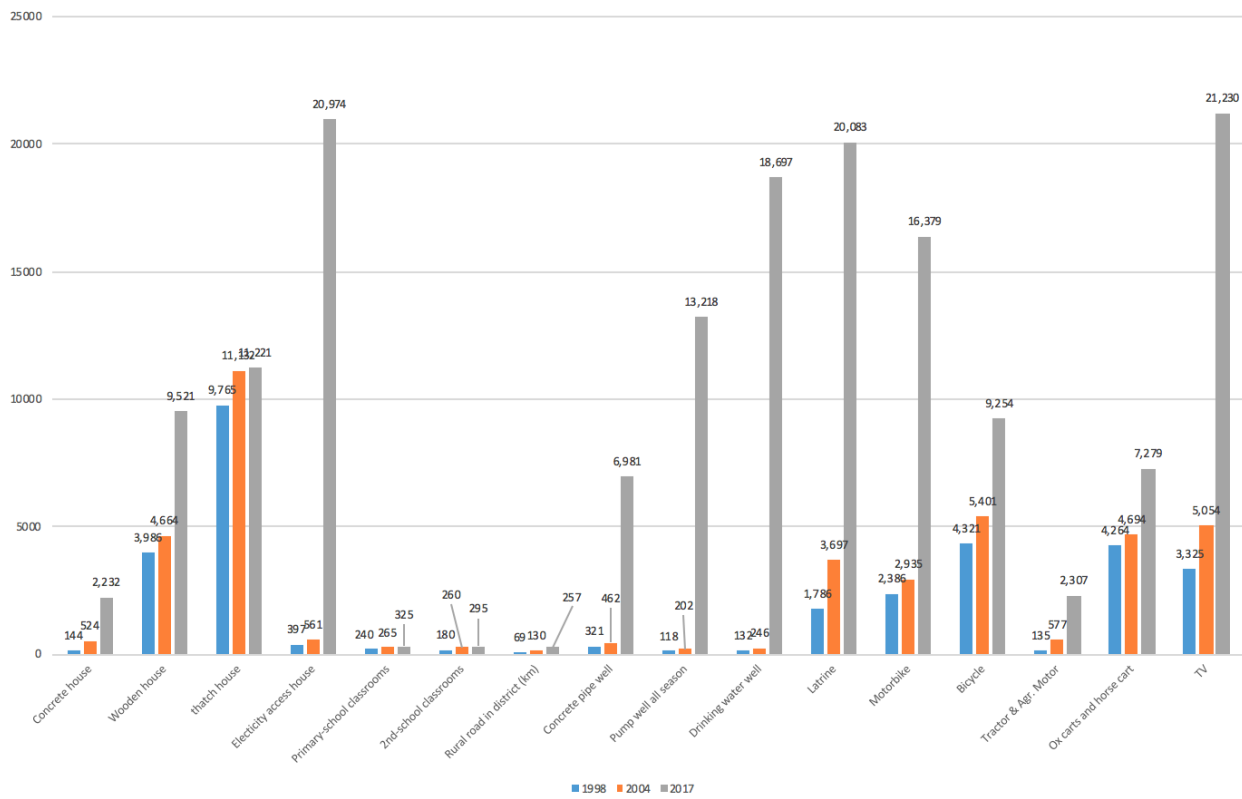
4) The maintenance of the village achievements such as roads, bridges, water canals, pipe culverts, wells, ponds, and so on, had to be done by local people after completing. The people in the village was assign as group of maintenance team by assigning different tasks for the different projects. The aim of this participation is to look after the achievements for sustainable uses. However, in reality, grassroots did not pay attention on the stage. It seems to be a prisoner's dilemma game was applied in the community where the participants did not cooperate each other. Therefore, the result was running to the worst, where the achievements were undermined by less care usage. To improve the situation, VDCs, and CDCs, as well as local government ought to provide more explanation and to show the advantages of this participation process to the grassroots with the real good results.

IV. The impacts of the NCDD program on the Banan

After completing of the first five-year phase of the program, the socio-economic situation in Banan had been improved. However, before 1998, the key indicators were revised that make an inconvenience on indicator comparison. As the result the Banan's indicators are shown from 1998 to 2001 as in the figure below.

The amount of changes in these indicators above is small may be due to a little affect of the Asian Financial crisis in 1997. In addition, at that year, the Cambodian agricultural productions were declined due to the natural drought and flooding (Chan Sophal et al., 1999). Moreover, Cambodia just got peaceful from civil war in 1998 (Hun Sen, 2006). Therefore, these are the restriction of socio-economic growth in Cambodia as the same as in Banan.

<Figure 2> Socio-economic indicators 1998-2017



Source: Provincial Dept. of Planning (1998) and Provincial Dept. of Planning (2003) Provincial Dept. of Planning (2007)

After first stage of Seila, people developed their living standard, especially, the number of concrete house changed by 262%. People can access the electricity in the change of 55% compared to those in 1998. Road and drinking water supply could be improved by 89% while the number of household who can access the latrine increased 107%. Moreover, the number of vehicles included bicycle and motorcycles increased around 25%. By the ways, the number of agricultural equipment, especially hand-tractor increased by 428% due to the road condition had been improved. Last but not least, more than enough to eat, people had enjoyed their life with entertainment, which is shown the graph that the number of TV increased by 52%.

The proportional growth of these indicators above is high, but it is not enough for the people. These indicators contributed to the medium and high income level of people only, but not for the poor and poorest.

V. Conclusion

The people's participation in rural development in Cambodia, especially for the first five-year piloted phase of the Seila program through the decentralization and deconcentration can be realized as the sustainable development, even it does not provide a highly effective results. The development in Banan was relied as sustainability what people had learnt from their participation which provide the right projects fulfilling their needs. However, there are few challenges in the process which undermined the level and means of the participation.

This research provides two advantages, level of education and income, in pushing development onward. Moreover, the two factors are the motivation of the people's participation; on the one hand, education is the main point which plays an important role in rural development in Banan as well as in Cambodia in long run. The participation of low educated ones leads to ineffectiveness of priority setting. On the other hand, income plays motivated role in the participation. So to say, to accelerate the development speed in Banan, RGC ought to consider on how to improve the rural education first, and to provide incentives for the poor to attend the need assessment process at village level. As a public good, physical infrastructure can be used sustainably due to the participation from the grassroots in looking after and maintaining that achievements. However, the results of the research show that people's participate in this process was restricted by the low level of head-households' education and income which drove them into the loss of social value.

However, the representative community organizations, such as VDC and CDC, can effectively plan and prioritize development needs and efficiently utilize development assistance. Therefore, the effective and active participation of the grassroots has been found to be important elements of efficient rural poverty reduction efforts in Cambodia, which gives the grassroots control over decisions and resources for local development activities. We realize that after improving the education as well as the income, people have more time in making decision for the need assessment process, which is a tool encouraging the rural development on track. The education plays influent role in all phases of rural development in Cambodia, especially at grassroots level even the decentralization and deconcentration were introducing. The RGC and other related institution ought to pay more attention on the education system, training, informing, and explaining the benefits of the participation to the grassroots especially in the countryside.

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